

## Written Answers.

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

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*Questions Nos. 1 to 7, inclusive, answered orally.*

*Questions Nos. 8 and 9 resubmitted.*

### Cabinet Committee Meetings

10. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Taoiseach when Cabinet committee E (Health) will next meet. [11548/18]

**The Taoiseach:** Cabinet Committee E (Health) is scheduled to meet on 11 April.

### Cabinet Committee Meetings

11. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Taoiseach when Cabinet committee F (National Security) will next meet. [11651/18]

**The Taoiseach:** Arrangements are being made for the next meeting of Cabinet Committee F, will be finalised as soon as possible.

The role of cabinet Committee F is “to keep the State’s systems for the analysis of, preparation for, and response to, threats to national security under review and to provide for high-level coordination between relevant Departments and agencies on related matters”.

The Committee last met on 8 February and was attended by Ministers and Senior Officials from the Departments of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform; Foreign Affairs and Trade; Justice and Equality; Health; Communications, Climate Action and Environment; Transport, Tourism and Sport; Housing, Planning and Local Government; and Defence.

Also in attendance were key personnel from the Defence Forces and an Garda Síochána.

*Questions Nos. 12 to 29, inclusive, resubmitted.*

*Questions Nos. 30 to 37, inclusive, answered orally.*

### Defence Forces Reports

38. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to address the issues raised by the Kemmy report; and the timeframe for implementing same. [12954/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Defence Forces Climate Survey was commissioned on foot of a recommendation contained in the third and most recent Report of the Independent Monitoring Group (IMG) which was established to oversee the implementation of recommendations relating to harassment, bullying, discrimination and sexual harassment within the Defence Forces.

Follow up work to the initial findings in the Survey was conducted by the University of Limerick researchers via use of focus groups. The resulting report was published in July 2017 and further explored the issues raised in the original survey. The comments quoted therein cover a wide range of issues relating to human resources management. These include pay and conditions, vacancies, recruitment and retention, promotion systems, performance management, leadership, culture, morale, stress and work-life balance.

The report pre-dated the significant improvements in pay that have taken place in the intervening period. Successful negotiations with the Permanent Defence Force Representative Associations have provided for pay increases to Permanent Defence Force personnel under the Lansdowne Road Agreement.

The finalisation of negotiations under the agreement allowed for the commencement of the process for the implementation of pay increases and arrears, which have now been applied to the Permanent Defence Force. An increase of 2.5% from 1 January 2016, for annualised salaries up to €24,000 and 1% for annualised salaries between €24,001 and €31,000 was paid in July 2017. An increase of €1,000 from 1 April 2017, on annualised salaries up to €65,000 per annum was also paid in July 2017.

In addition, improved payscales for general service recruits and privates who joined the Permanent Defence Force post 1 January 2013, were backdated to 1 July 2016 and paid in August 2017.

The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020, contains proposals for further pay increases over the period of the agreement ranging from 6.2% to 7.4% with the benefits to weighted towards those on lower pay. The agreement also provides for the restoration of the 5% reduction in allowances under FEMPI by the end of the Agreement. By the end of the agreement, the payscales for all public servants earning up to €70,000 will be restored to the levels that existed prior to the FEMPI legislation. The first increment under this agreement of 1% in annualised salaries due from 1 January 2018 has been paid to members of the PDF.

There is ongoing recruitment to the Defence Forces and a range of initiatives are being developed including commissioning from the ranks, criteria for the re-entry of former Permanent Defence Force personnel with specific skills and consideration of increased use of direct entry for specialist posts. The Public Service Pay Commission will also be examining recruitment and retention issues in its next tranche of work.

There is an ongoing programme of HR development within the Defence Organisation. As well as pay and recruitment, other issues highlighted in the Survey are being addressed. A number of initiatives including a review of the criteria governing contracts of enlisted personnel and a comprehensive skills gap analysis across the Defence Forces have been announced. I also initiated a review of the C&A scheme which is underway. These directly address issues raised in the Survey.

In tandem with these actions the Department is also engaged in planning on a longer term basis. Many of the recommendations arising from the Climate Survey have been captured in and will be progressed by White Paper projects. Projects arising from the White Paper on Defence around topics such as medium term manpower planning and encouraging as wide a pool

as possible for recruitment are already underway.

With regard to other issues relating to human resource management highlighted in the Climate Survey, there are extensive support systems currently in place for members of the Defence Forces. The Personnel Support Service is available to provide information, assistance and counselling on a range of matters including interpersonal problems and stress.

*Questions Nos. 39 to 41, inclusive, answered orally.*

*Question No. 42 answered with Question No. 39.*

### **Defence Forces Data**

43. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of Permanent Defence Forces personnel expected to serve on UN-led missions in 2018; the locations of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10381/18]

60. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of Permanent Defence Forces personnel serving in UN-led missions; the location of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10380/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 43 and 60 together.

As of 1 March 2018, Ireland is contributing 586 Defence Forces personnel to 9 different missions throughout the world and also to a range of international organisations and National representations.

The United Nations missions in which Defence Forces personnel are currently deployed are the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) with 377 personnel, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in Syria with 135 personnel, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) in Israel and Syria with 12 personnel, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) with 3 personnel and the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) with 4 personnel.

The 377 personnel in UNIFIL serve alongside Finnish Armed Forces as a part of a joint battalion of which Ireland took over command in November 2016. As a consequence of taking over command, an additional Company of some 150 personnel were deployed as part of Ireland's contribution to this mission.

Ireland has a long and continuous record of contributing to peacekeeping missions. Participation in these missions demonstrates Ireland's strong support for the role of the United Nations in international peacekeeping. The current contribution of some 586 personnel to overseas missions reflects the Government's continued commitment to our responsibilities in this area.

The Department of Defence constantly reviews the deployment of Defence Forces personnel overseas. With regard to any future deployments of Defence Forces personnel overseas, Ireland receives requests, from time to time, in relation to participation in various missions and these are considered on a case-by-case basis.

At the Government Meeting on 27 February 2018, I secured approval for the deployment in 2018 of a contingent of the Permanent Defence Force to serve once again as part of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy naval mission in the Mediterranean, Operation So-

phia. Arrangements are currently being made for two Irish naval vessels to deploy consecutively under rotation for a period of approximately 32 weeks in total.

Full details of all personnel currently serving overseas are listed in the tabular statement below and will be circulated with the Official Report.

**MEMBERS OF THE PERMANENT DEFENCE FORCE SERVING OVERSEAS  
AS OF 1 MARCH 2018**

UN MISSIONS	Amount
UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) HQUNIFIL 111th Infantry BattalionUNIFIL Sector West HQ	303398
UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation) Israel & Syria	12
MINURSO (United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara)	3
MONUSCO (United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic of the Congo)	4
UNDOF (FHQ Staff, Camp Ziouani - Alpha side)UNDOF (COS Staff - Camp Faouar - Bravo side)UNDOF 56th Infantry Group (Camp Ziouani)	62127
TOTAL	531
UN MANDATED MISSIONS	
EUFOR (EU-led Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina)	5
EUTM Mali (EU-led Training Mission)	20
KFOR (International Security Presence in Kosovo) HQ	12
Operational HQ/Floating HQ (Operation Sophia HQ)	4
TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONNEL SERVING WITH UN MISSIONS	572
ORGANISATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)	
Staff Officer, High Level Planning Group, Vienna	1
TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONNEL SERVING WITH OSCE	1
EU MILITARY STAFF	
Brussels	3
MILITARY REPRESENTATIVES/ADVISERS/STAFF	
Military Adviser, Permanent Mission to UN, New York	1
Military Adviser, Irish Delegation to OSCE, Vienna	1
Military Representative to EU (Brussels)	4
Liaison Officer of Ireland, NATO/PfP (Brussels)	2
EU OHQ Operation Althea, Mons, Belgium	1
Irish Liaison Officer to SHAPE & Military Co-Op Division, Mons, Belgium	1
TOTAL NUMBER OF DEFENCE FORCES PERSONNEL SERVING OVERSEAS	586

**Defence Forces Properties**

44. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the Curragh Forum's work programme for 2018; the status of the establishment of a new lands management team for the Curragh Plains; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12945/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** As the Deputy will be aware, the Curragh Forum was established to provide an opportunity for key stakeholders to consider and progress a wide range of issues regarding the use and management of the

## Curragh Plains.

The most recent meeting of the Forum took place on Friday 12 January 2018. It was attended by representatives of the Department of Defence, the Defence Forces, An Garda Síochána, Kildare County Council, Curragh Racecourse Ltd, the Irish Racehorse Trainers Association and Horse Racing Ireland. The issues discussed included legislation, traffic, signage and parking issues, illegal encampments, sheep grazing rights, and the ongoing land management and maintenance of the Curragh Plains. It was agreed that progress in all of these areas requires Forum members to take ownership and work collaboratively in identifying and working towards implementing solutions.

A number of key actions were agreed by the members of the Forum to assist in addressing some of these issues. A work-programme was established for 2018 that will build on the progress made in the areas under discussion and will be supplemented by new issues arising. In addition, Kildare Co. Council has agreed that in conjunction with Kildare Fáilte, it will produce a Vision document for the Curragh that will be presented to the Forum for discussion.

On the work-programme, work has been undertaken in identifying suitable locations for the construction of car parking spaces on the Curragh, thus reducing damage to grasslands. The design and associated costings will be progressed in 2018. The new lands management team that the Deputy refers to will be put in place in 2018 and in this regard, it is hoped to appoint a new Curragh Maor very shortly. This team will oversee all activities on the ground including, but not limited to, litter, sheep branding, patrolling, monitoring users of lands, inspection of property boundaries, and engagement with the public. When the new team is fully in place, it is hoped that there will be a new role of engaging in education and outreach.

A new environmental maintenance contract will be sent to tender shortly and there will be ongoing review of the legislation governing the Curragh in parallel with the use of other legislation that can more immediately address relevant issues.

All of these actions form part of the Curragh Forum work-programme for 2018.

## Defence Forces Recruitment

45. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the reason a person (details supplied) was refused entry into the Defence Forces despite having passed their psychometric testing, interview and medical examination; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12832/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** In order to be enlisted as a General Service Recruit, applicants are required to pass all stages of the recruitment process. These include Physical Fitness Test, Psychometric Test, Interview, Medical Examination and Security Clearance.

In relation to this particular case, the Military Authorities have advised that the individual referred to did not satisfy all the requirements for enlistment in the Permanent Defence Force. He was informed that his application was unsuccessful on 1st December 2017.

All applications for enlistment in the Defence Forces are treated as strictly private and confidential. I am unable to comment any further on this matter.

46. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the way in which Project Ireland 2040 is likely to affect the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10390/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** Project Ireland 2040 is the Government's overarching policy initiative to make Ireland a better country for all of us, a country that reflects the best of who we are and what we aspire to be. The National Development Plan 2018 – 2027, a key part of Project Ireland 2040, recognises that Defence provides part of the societal bedrock which allows society to function and thus contributes to national wellbeing across political, social, economic and environmental elements. The increased investment in Defence under the Plan will provide a foundation of support in respect of other key sectors.

The importance of capital investment in Defence has been recognised in the National Development Plan by the allocation of €541 million for Defence capital funding for the period 2018 to 2022. This capital funding will allow the Defence Organisation to undertake a programme of sustained equipment replacement and infrastructural development as identified and prioritised in the Defence White Paper.

The principal aim over this period will be to replace and upgrade, as required, existing capabilities in order to retain a flexible response for a wide range of operational requirements, both at home and overseas.

In addition, during the lifetime of the National Development Plan, modernisation and renewal of Defence Forces built infrastructure and barracks will be advanced in military installations throughout the country.

The capital investment in the National Development Plan emphasises the importance attached by the Government to ensuring that the Defence Forces have the capability necessary to deliver on all roles assigned by Government.

*Question No. 47 answered with Question No. 35.*

### **European Security Strategy**

48. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his views on a position paper (details supplied) which proposes moving Ireland into an EU defence union and reviewing the triple lock mechanism for Irish involvement in EU or other military operations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12833/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** Any discussion papers, such as this one, which stimulate debate and discussion in the area of security and defence and contribute to public discourse in that regard are of course to be welcomed. That is not to say that any positions contained within the paper reflect Government policy but they simply contribute to a healthy, inclusive debate which is vital in a fully functioning, robust democracy.

As the Deputy will be aware, discussions within the EU in the area of defence and security take place in the context of the Common Security and Defence Policy for which decisions require the unanimous approval of all Member States. These discussions take place at regular meetings of Heads of State and Government, at Ministerial level meetings and through Council preparatory bodies.

Like any other discussion papers produced in the context of a wider debate on the future of

European security and defence, this will be comprehended as part of the overall consideration by Government of future developments and potential policy responses in this area.

As a policy, the Triple Lock mechanism is not under review at this time. In the Defence (Amendment) Act 2006 the triple lock, which governs the deployment of the Defence Forces on international peace support and crisis management operations, remains unaffected.

In relation to Ireland moving into a defence union, the 2015 White Paper on Defence has clearly reaffirmed “that Ireland will continue to maintain a policy of military neutrality which is characterised by non-membership of military alliances and non-participation in common or mutual defence arrangements”.

Within the EU, it is accepted that defence and security is a national competence and that any decisions require unanimity. Ireland continues to have a strong and equal voice on defence issues within the EU institutions. The treaties require that the EU respects the specific and different policies of Member States in the area of security and defence and that has not changed.

Our approach to consideration of any proposals or potential future implementation on security and defence cooperation will as always remain constructive and realistic. We will continue to carefully consider all proposals and developments in these areas to ensure that that proposals and any potential future development add value and support coordinated capability development in support of CSDP in accordance with EU Treaties and related protocols.

### **Defence Forces Equipment**

49. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the procurement schedule for military hardware for the next five years; the budgetary allocation; the equipment to be purchased; and the suppliers for hardware and ammunition to the Defence Forces. [10201/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** My priority as Minister with Responsibility for Defence is to ensure that the operational capability of the Defence Forces is maintained to the greatest extent possible so as to enable the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service to carry out their roles as assigned by Government.

The acquisition of new equipment and equipment upgrades for the Defence Forces remains a clear focus for me, and the White Paper on Defence recognises that there are several new and or enhanced platforms to be procured. Future equipment priorities for the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service are being considered in the context of the lifetime of the White Paper on Defence as part of the capability development and equipment planning process.

The National Development Plan provides for a Capital allocation of €541m for Defence for the five year period 2018-2022. This allocation will facilitate the investment necessary to ensure that the Defence Forces have the equipment and infrastructure to deliver on all their roles as set out in the White Paper.

The White Paper provides that the Army will continue to retain all-arms conventional military capabilities, and the principal aim over the period of the White Paper will be to replace and upgrade, as required, existing capabilities in order to retain a flexible response for a wide range of operational requirements both at home and overseas.

The major equipment programmes that are currently underway include a strong focus on essential force protection provided by armoured vehicles. In this regard the Defence Organisation

has commenced a maintenance and upgrade programme on the current fleet of 80 Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs). This is being carried out by General Dynamics European Land Systems - Mowag, the original manufacturer of the fleet who are based in Switzerland. In addition, 24 armoured utility vehicles have been procured from Centigon, France and 10 armoured logistical vehicles are currently being manufactured by Westward Scania, Ireland.

With regard to the Air Corps, the White Paper provides for the replacement of the current Cessna fleet with three larger aircraft which will be equipped for Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR). An open tender competition has concluded and a contract has been placed with Pilatus Aircraft Ltd, a Swiss company, for the provision of three PC-12 fixed wing utility aircraft suitably equipped for ISTAR tasks. It is expected that the three aircraft will be delivered by 2020. The planning process for the replacement of the two CASA 235 Maritime Patrol Aircraft has recently commenced in my Department.

In relation to the Naval Service, the White Paper underpins the ongoing replacement of the Naval Service fleet. In this regard, a significant investment over recent years has been on the procurement of new Off-Shore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) for the Naval Service. The fourth ship in the OPV programme, to be named LÉ George Bernard Shaw, is being built by Babcock International, a British company and is scheduled for delivery in mid 2018.

The White Paper provides for the replacement of the current Naval Service flagship LÉ Eithne with a multi role vessel (MRV). Planning has commenced on this project and it is intended to hold a public tender competition in due course to cover the supply of the MRV. This procurement is, of course, subject to the availability of funding within the overall Defence capital funding envelope.

In terms of suppliers of military equipment, the principle of competitive tendering for Government contracts is used by the Department of Defence for the acquisition of defensive equipment for the Defence Forces. Central to those procedures is the requirement to allow fair competition between suppliers through the submission of tenders following advertising of the tender competition on the e-tenders site and on the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU), where appropriate, in line with the EU procurement directives, including the Directive on the procurement of Defensive and Security Equipment. Details of tender competitions can be accessed on the Government's eTenders website [www.etenders.gov.ie](http://www.etenders.gov.ie). In addition, the Department routinely publishes details of purchases orders for goods and services valued over €20,000 on its website at [www.defence.ie](http://www.defence.ie) which provides details of suppliers.

I am satisfied that the current provisions, together with the courses of action in the White Paper, will continue to ensure that the Defence Forces is suitably equipped, in line with international best practice, to fulfil all roles assigned by Government.

### **National Development Plan Data**

50. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the proposed projects under his Department's remit in the new National Development Plan 2018-2027; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10387/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The National Development Plan 2018 to 2027 provides €541 million in capital funding for Defence for the period 2018 – 2022. This level of funding will allow the Defence Organisation to undertake a programme of sustained equipment replacement and infrastructural development as identified and prioritised in the Defence White Paper.

The following priority investment programmes and projects have been identified for inclusion:

- Equipment renewal and replacement programmes including mid-life upgrade of the Army Mowag APC armoured fleet (under way), along with investment in further force protection, transport, communications and information technology, weapons and ammunition systems;

- Procurement of Light Tactical Armoured Vehicles;

- Replacement of the Air Corps Cessna Aircraft (underway);

- CASA Maritime Patrol Aircraft Replacement Programme;

- On-going Naval vessel replacement programme, including acquisition of a multi-role vessel;

- Mid-life refit of the Naval Service vessels LÉ Niamh and LÉ Roisín;

- On-going investment in the modernisation and renewal of barrack infrastructure including accommodation, catering, workshops, storage and training facilities.

With regard to the modernisation and renewal of Defence Forces built infrastructure, projects currently in progress include:

- Ordnance storage facilities in the Defence Forces Training Centre, Curragh, Co. Kildare;

- Training facilities in Sarsfield Barracks, Limerick and Stephens Barracks, Kilkenny;

- Accommodation facilities in the Defence Forces Training Centre, Curragh and Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin;

- Accommodation upgrade in Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnel, Co. Dublin;

- Catering facilities in Custume Barracks, Athlone; and

- Upgrade of fuel storage safety system in the Naval Base, Haulbowline, Co Cork.

In addition, during the lifetime of the National Development Plan, other significant Defence Forces built infrastructure projects will be advanced in military installations throughout the country.

The capital funding provided under the National Development Plan emphasises the importance attached by the Government to ensuring that the Defence Forces have the capabilities necessary to deliver on all the roles assigned by Government.

### **insertheading**

51. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the membership and terms of reference of the medical advisory group to be established by his Department to advise on various medical matters, including malaria chemoprophylaxis, will be made public. [10206/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** As I have outlined to the Deputy previously, I have accepted the recommendations contained in the Working Group's Second Report on Malaria Chemoprophylaxis in principle, whilst recognising that cer-

tain of these recommendations will need to be further developed to allow for their implementation. Many of the recommendations focus on areas including planning, training and education/information sharing as well as the establishment of a Medical Advisory Group.

While proposals will be further developed in relation to this new Medical Advisory Group, it will formalise the provision of ongoing expert advice, including external expert medical advice, to the Defence Forces in relation to a range of medical matters including malaria chemoprophylaxis. As further work needs to be done in relation to the Advisory Group, I am not in a position to comment in relation to the matters raised by the Deputy, particularly in the context of on-going litigation.

### **Defence Forces Properties**

52. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the status of plans for a peace and leadership institute on the Curragh; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10315/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** As the Deputy will already be aware, the White Paper on Defence includes a commitment to evaluate the potential development of a new Institute for Peace Support and Leadership Training at the Defence Forces Training Centre in the Curragh. The current Programme for a Partnership Government also includes a commitment to develop this Institute. It is foreseen that the new Institute will have international standing and contribute to the overall development of knowledge and experience in the areas of peace support, leadership and conflict resolution.

As I indicated in my response to your previous PQ 44032/17 on 17 October 2017, scoping work was carried out on the proposal throughout 2016. A concept paper was developed and some initial consultation with national and international third level and research institutes and potential philanthropic contributors took place.

Arising from this initial scoping work, it was decided to conduct a formal feasibility study. Following a tendering process, a contract was awarded to third party consultants to complete this study. Work on the study commenced in January 2018 and it is anticipated that it will take 7 months to complete. The study will inform next steps and I look forward to reviewing the report in due course.

*Question No. 53 answered with Question No. 39.*

### **Ministerial Meetings**

54. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he has met or plans to meet with the whistleblower that produced the protected disclosure outlining the deaths of 56 members of the Defence Forces. [10203/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I appointed an independent third party to review allegations made in a number of protected disclosures relating to health and safety issues in the Air Corps which were received in late 2015 and early 2016.

I sent the report of the independent third party to those who had made disclosures for their views. I have also received further correspondence from one of the individuals, setting out concerns in relation to a series of deaths. I have previously met with this individual to listen to his concerns. I am considering the next steps in the process having received the views of those who

made disclosures and in the context of ongoing litigation.

Given that context, I have requested further legal advice in relation to the matter. Once I have received that legal advice and am in a position to decide on the next steps in the process, I would be open to meeting the individual at that point.

### **Defence Forces Recruitment**

55. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his recruitment plans for 2018; the extent to which it is planned to increase the strength of the Defence Forces in the course thereof; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10389/18]

69. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the allocation to his Department for the purposes of recruitment of Defence Forces personnel in 2018; and if he has requested an additional allocation to meet the costs of recruitment in the Defence Forces. [10204/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 55 and 69 together.

It is anticipated that in the region of 800 personnel, comprising of General Service Recruits, Apprentices, Cadets and Direct Entry Officers will be recruited to the Permanent Defence Force in 2018. A competition for Air Corps Aircraft Technicians was launched on 2 March 2018 and plans for the initiation of further competitions are currently being finalised.

The White Paper on Defence sets out the roles assigned to the Defence Forces by the Government and the associated capability requirements. The Government is committed to maintaining the strength of the Permanent Defence Force at 9,500 personnel, as set out in the White Paper on Defence, and has provided sufficient funding for this strength level.

### **Defence Forces Reports**

56. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the actions being taken in the Defence Forces to address the findings in the recent climate survey in relation to stress experienced by personnel; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10195/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Defence Forces Climate Survey was commissioned on foot of a recommendation contained in the third and most recent Report of the Independent Monitoring Group (IMG), which was established to oversee implementation of recommendations relating to harassment, bullying, discrimination and sexual harassment in the Defence Forces. The issues highlighted in last year's focus group report included a wide range of issues relating to human resource management such as pay (particularly for the lower paid), vacancies, recruitment and retention, promotion systems, performance management, leadership, culture, morale, stress and work-life balance.

The report pre-dated the significant improvements in pay that have taken place in the intervening period. The Defence Forces Representative Associations have also signed up to the Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020 which will see further pay increases ranging from 6.2% to 7.4% over the lifetime of the agreement.

While work to progress many of the other issues raised was already underway as part of the implementation of the White Paper on Defence, I directed that certain White Paper projects

be brought forward and that work commence on these. I also initiated a review of the C&A scheme which is underway.

There are extensive support systems in place for members of the Defence Forces who may be experiencing stress. Personnel can avail of the Defence Forces Personnel Support Service (PSS) which provides psycho-educational skills training including: stress management, well-being, suicide and self-harm mitigation, and critical incident peer support. It also provides confidential services including Critical Incident Stress Management and psychosocial support, which is available to all Defence Forces personnel through its network of Barrack Personnel Support Service Officers (BPSSO) and occupational social workers (OSW) at formation, unit and barrack level. The PSS also supports contingents before, during and after overseas deployments.

A cohort of Designated Contact Persons (DCPs) provide a local advisory and referral service at barrack level to their colleagues with a particular focus on recruits and new entrants.

A confidential counselling service, provided by an independent service provider and funded by my Department, is available to all members who can access this service by calling a free phone number. A counsellor is available to talk, provide information, discuss needs and advise on follow up counselling. Face to face counselling can also be provided if required.

I am satisfied that these measures provide comprehensive supports to individuals in the Defence Forces who may require such supports.

### **Defence Forces Remuneration**

57. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his views on the recent decision of the European Committee of Social Rights regarding the entitlement of Defence Forces members to better collective bargaining and negotiating rights; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10384/18]

67. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his views on the implications of the ruling of the European Committee of Social Rights to allow the Defence Forces troops affiliate to a trade union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10197/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 57 and 67 together.

The European Committee of Social Rights has considered a complaint submitted by EU-ROMIL, a European umbrella body for military associations, on behalf of PDFORRA, concerning the lack of certain rights for military representative associations in Ireland.

In a non-binding ruling, the Committee has concluded that prohibiting military personnel from the right to strike was not in breach of the European Social Charter, but that the Charter was breached by prohibiting the representative associations from affiliating with a national employee organisation, such as ICTU, and in respect of the right to bargain collectively.

The Government welcomes the conclusion of the European Committee of Social Rights that the prohibition on the right to strike for members of the Defence Forces is not a violation of the European Social Charter.

The Government takes great pride in the dedication of the men and women of our Defence Forces and the enormous contribution which they make to domestic security, international

peacekeeping and a broad range of supports to the civil authorities. The Defence Forces have provided valuable support on many occasions to the civil authorities in maintaining vital services. This was seen most recently in the response to the severe weather event. In this regard, I wish to record my thanks to members of the Defence Forces, Civil Defence volunteers, civil servants and civilian employees for their particular contribution.

It is critically important that the Defence Forces are fully operational at all times. A key concern is that such affiliation with a national organisation would carry obligations that would be incompatible with military operations and the roles assigned to the Defence Forces.

Members of the Defence Forces have a range of parallel complaint and adjudication mechanisms in law to compensate for the limitations on their access to the normal industrial relations machinery, which applies in wider society. This includes a redress of wrongs, a Defence Forces Ombudsman and a Conciliation and Arbitration scheme for members of the Permanent Defence Force.

The C&A scheme, since its inception in the early 1990's has provided the framework to progress many successful negotiated agreements between Defence management and the PDF Representative Associations. However, there have been many changes in the industrial relations landscape in the intervening period. In this regard I have initiated a fundamental review of the scheme to ensure that it remains efficient and effective for all parties.

I have appointed Mr. Gerard Barry to conduct the review. While the focus of the review will be primarily on the operation of the Permanent Defence Force C&A scheme, I have directed that the review considers the findings of the European Committee of Social Rights and this is incorporated into the terms of reference. It would not be appropriate at this stage to pre-empt any conclusions arising from the review.

*Question No. 58 answered with Question No. 35.*

### **Defence Forces Equipment**

59. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans for the acquisition of a multi-role vessel at a cost of approximately €200 million; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10208/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** My priority as Minister with Responsibility for Defence is to ensure that the operational capability of the Defence Forces is maintained to the greatest extent possible so as to enable the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service to carry out their roles as assigned by Government.

The most significant investment of recent years by the Defence Organisation has been on the procurement of the new Off-Shore Patrol Vessels for the Naval Service. This programme has seen the delivery of three new naval Service vessels since 2014. The LÉ Samuel Beckett was commissioned in May 2014, LÉ James Joyce was commissioned in September 2015 and LÉ William Butler Yeats was commissioned into service in October 2016.

In June 2016, a contract for an additional sister ship was agreed, bringing investment in the new ships programme to some €250 million since 2010. The fourth ship, to be named LÉ George Bernard Shaw, is scheduled for delivery later this year.

The requirement for this fourth ship is regarded as urgent and expedient given the age of the older remaining ships in the fleet, LÉ Orla, LÉ Ciara and LÉ Eithne all of which are over thirty

years of age.

This additional ship will allow the Naval Service meet its patrol day targets with due cognisance to the significant additional operational requirements for the Naval fleet in the Mediterranean Sea.

The White Paper provides for the replacement of the current Naval Service flagship LÉ Eithne with a multi role vessel (MRV). It is the Government's intent that this new vessel will provide a flexible and adaptive capability for a wide range of maritime tasks, both at home and overseas.

The acquisition of a modern vessel will ensure that the operational capabilities of the Naval Service, as the State's principal seagoing agency, are maintained to the greatest extent and takes account of the overall policy approach in the White Paper on Defence.

Planning has commenced on this project and it is intended to hold a public tender competition in due course to cover the supply of the MRV. The design and configuration of the vessel, including the approach to helicopter flight operations, will be considered as part of the planning process. This procurement is, of course, subject to the availability of funding within the overall Defence capital funding envelope. The cost of the MRV will only be known once the tender competition is concluded.

*Question No. 60 answered with Question No. 43.*

### **Commemorative Medals**

61. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to award a commemorative medal for 1916 to all former members of the Defence Forces in recognition of their service to the State. [8131/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** As the Deputy will be aware, the Programme for Government provided for the award of a commemorative medal to all Defence Forces personnel, Permanent and Reserve, who were recorded as being in service in the course of 2016. This was a special acknowledgement from the Government to the members of Óglaigh na hÉireann, both Permanent and Reserve, who served during the centenary year of 2016. The 1916 Centenary Commemorative Medal was awarded as a commemorative medal, personal to an individual's service in the Defence Forces in the course of 2016.

There are no plans to award the 1916 Centenary Commemorative Medal to former members of the Defence Forces. Since the foundation of the State many thousands of personnel have served in the Defence Forces. It would not be administratively possible within the resources of the Department to identify and contact all of these persons, decide on eligibility and, in the case of infirm or deceased former members, resolve who should get the medal on their behalf.

At my request, however, discussions took place between the Department and the Veterans' Associations; the Irish United Nations Veterans Association (IUNVA), the Organisation of National Ex-Service Personnel (ONE), and the Association of Retired Commissioned Officers (ARCO), to explore alternative means of recognition of the contribution of veterans to the centenary commemorative events in 2016.

Following these discussions, it was agreed that a single presentation would be made to each of the Veterans Associations of a framed medal with an accompanying citation in recognition of the significant contribution of members of the three organisations to the 1916 centenary com-

memorative events and their service to the State. The medal has a bar with the term Veteran inscribed on it. I agreed that a plaque would be given to each of IUNVA's 21 Posts and to each of O.N.E.'s 41 Branches. I presented one plaque to each of the three Veterans' Associations at the Defence Forces' Veterans' Day which took place in the Defence Forces Training Centre, the Curragh, on Sunday 8 October 2017. The other plaques were presented separately.

### **Civil Defence Training**

62. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the policies in place to ensure that Civil Defence volunteers are given the correct training to effectively deal with extreme weather patterns across the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12622/18]

65. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if training will be provided to Civil Defence personnel to equip them to deal with extreme weather events such as the recent heavy snowfall; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12621/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 62 and 65 together.

On behalf of the government I want to acknowledge the excellent work undertaken by Civil Defence during Storm Emma and the recent heavy snowfall. Over 350 Civil Defence volunteers, using the range of assets available, provided support to the Principal Response Agencies during the course of the Storm and its aftermath. Actions undertaken by Civil Defence included bringing patients and staff to and from hospitals; bringing nurses and home helps out to visit vulnerable people; delivering food, fuel and medicines to elderly people in their homes; transporting urgent medical supplies; assisting An Garda Síochána and assisting the transport services.

Under the Framework for Major Emergency Management, the local authorities have primary responsibility for dealing with severe weather and flooding. Civil Defence have provided great support to the local authorities in dealing with these type of emergencies not just during Storm Emma but also, for example, during last year's flooding both in Mountmellick, Co Laois and in Inishowen, Co Donegal.

The 2015 White Paper on Defence sets out government policy in relation to Civil Defence. It states that the future of Civil Defence will continue to be developed around its central strategic objective of supporting the Principal Response Agencies in a number of emergency and non-emergency situations. This includes a wide range of emergencies at national and local level including severe weather, flooding and searches for missing persons.

The Department of Defence is charged with the management and development of Civil Defence at national level. The Department provides policy direction, centralised training through the Civil Defence College, administrative support and guidance and centralised procurement of major items of uniform and equipment in support of local authority Civil Defence efforts.

Civil Defence is funded by way of a grant from the Defence Vote. Funding for Civil Defence operations at local level is shared on a 70/30 basis between the Department of Defence and local authorities by way of an annual grant to each authority.

Civil Defence services are delivered through the Civil Defence Officer (CDO) of the relevant Local Authority for that area. The CDO is a full time employee of the local authority and is responsible for the day-to-day management of Civil Defence matters under the overall direc-

tion of the relevant Chief Executive. Volunteers join Civil Defence through the local authority for their area and undergo relevant training to deliver activities required by the local authority and the other principal response agencies. A number of volunteers may progress and qualify as Civil Defence Instructors.

The Civil Defence College, which is part of my Department, is recognised as a training institution by regulatory bodies such as the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) and by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). Training in a wide variety of programmes is provided by the College to the Civil Defence Volunteer Instructors. When trained, Instructors return to their respective local authority areas and provide training to the Volunteers based there.

The wide range of roles undertaken is what makes Civil Defence unique among volunteer based emergency response organisations. For this reason, a very wide range of training is provided within Civil Defence. This includes training in first aid up to Emergency Medical Technician level, training in manual handling and people handling, search management training, swiftwater training, map reading, child protection, food preparation, radiation monitoring, pump operation, sandbagging, powerboat operation, use of drones, Critical Incident Stress Management, radio communications, setting up rest centres etc.

The training needs for Civil Defence are kept under review to ensure that the organisation can continue to provide effective support to the Principal Response Agencies in dealing with a variety of emergency and non-emergency situations. This includes assisting the local authorities in dealing with severe weather. My Department will be undertaking a review of Civil Defences response to the recent severe weather in conjunction with Civil Defence Officers from around the country. This review will help identify any needs for additional training or equipment arising from Storm Emma.

The government is committed to continuing to support Civil Defence both in the areas of training and equipment to ensure that Civil Defence can fulfil its important role.

### **Permanent Structured Co-operation**

63. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the scale of Ireland's involvement in the European Union Training Mission Competence Centre and Upgrade of Maritime Surveillance to be developed under PESCO and which were formally adopted by the EU Council on 1 March 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12883/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** As the Deputy is aware PESCO is a mechanism provided for in the Treaty of the European Union to enable participating member States to come together and, on a project by project basis, jointly develop military crisis management capabilities for use in support of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operations and missions in support of international peace and security.

Ireland is a strong proponent of the important role the EU can play in support of international peace and security and the UN. It is important therefore to remain fully engaged in all CSDP processes. Fully participating in these developments ensures that we have a voice and that we can influence their evolution.

Since Ireland joined PESCO in December 2017 the focus has been to identify key PESCO projects which will enhance the capability and capacity of the Defence Forces to successfully undertake modern complex UN mandated missions, including CSDP operations and on supporting interoperability in this regard. With that in mind I have confirmed Ireland's participation in two PESCO projects - (1) The European Union Training Mission Competence Centre

and (2) Upgrade of Maritime Surveillance. The Council Decision of the 6th March reflected Ireland's participation in these projects.

The European Union Training Mission Competence Centre project is a 'train the trainers' initiative that aims to improve the availability, interoperability, specific skills and professionalism across participating Member States of personnel (trainers) for EU training missions. The project is being led by Germany and it will accelerate the provision for EU training missions due to a higher situational awareness regarding trained, educated and available personnel for current and future EU training missions. This is a capability that the Irish Defence Forces continually develop and it is compatible with their efforts in this area.

The Upgrade of Maritime Surveillance project aims to integrate land-based surveillance systems, maritime and air platforms in order to distribute real-time information to Member States, so as to provide a timely and effective response in the international waters. This project is being led by Greece and the main objective is to enhance the Maritime Surveillance, Situational Awareness and potential Response Effectiveness of the EU, by using the existing infrastructure, deploying assets and developing related capabilities in the future. It aims to address timely and effectively new and old threats and challenges (such as energy security, environmental challenges, security and defence aspects); thus ensuring accurate Awareness and Rapid Response, so as to contribute to the protection of the EU and its citizens. This is a capability development area that the Naval Service has already invested in through the MarSur project in the European Defence Agency and this project should develop this expertise further.

The project leads for both these projects are currently developing the full scope of the projects and accordingly the scale of participants involvement has as yet not been determined. The inaugural meeting for the Upgrade of Maritime Surveillance project has been scheduled for the 29th March where further discussions will take place regarding Member States involvement.

The project on EU Training Missions Competence Centre is still at conceptual stage and as such no initial meetings have been scheduled yet.

To the extent that PESCO is designed to provide more effective delivery of enhanced military capability for CSDP crisis management operations at the highest level, I am confident that both projects will benefit the men and women of our Defence Forces.

### **Defence Forces Recruitment**

64. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the recruitment targets for the 2018 intake in view of the opening of RDF recruitment to take place in April 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10196/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The White Paper on Defence (2015) provides for a Permanent Defence Force (PDF) strength of 9,500 personnel and the Government is committed to ensuring that the PDF reaches this strength level. In this context, the Government has ensured that there is sufficient funding in place to provide for a full strength of 9,500 PDF personnel.

The PDF has a higher turnover level than other elements of the Public Service and this is not a new trend. In 2017 there was recruitment at both enlisted and officer level which resulted in 751 personnel being recruited to the PDF during the year. This included general service recruits, apprentices, cadets and direct entry officers.

The strength of the Permanent Defence Force is currently 9,138 whole-time equivalents and

recruitment will continue in 2018. It is anticipated that in the region of 800 personnel will be inducted to the PDF in 2018 and plans are currently being finalised for the various competitions, including General Service Recruits and Cadets.

The White Paper on Defence also provides for a combined establishment of 4,169 personnel for the Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve. The current combined strength of the Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve is 1,777 personnel. A total of 139 new recruits were inducted into the RDF in 2017 and there is on-going engagement with applicants from the 2017 recruitment campaign that should yield further inductions. In addition a new recruitment campaign will be launched in 2018.

As I have previously outlined, there are shortages of certain specialists in the PDF. These include pilots, engineers and certain technicians. Under my direction, the Department brought the issue of recruitment and retention of specialists to the attention of the Public Service Pay Commission. This issue is being further explored in the second tranche of the Public Service Pay Commission's work, which is currently underway. The Department of Defence in collaboration with the Defence Forces is preparing detailed information for the Commission on recruitment and retention trends and I anticipate that this will be submitted in the coming weeks. I have also directed civil and military management to examine alternative approaches to recruiting specialists. This includes options for the re-entry of former PDF personnel with certain specialist skills and consideration of the scope to expand direct entry to a broader range of specialities than currently targeted.

I remain committed to ensuring that the Defence Forces retain the capacity to operate effectively across all roles assigned by Government. I will continue to work closely with the Chief of Staff and the Secretary General to ensure that the Defence Forces are fully supported to enable them to achieve capability targets for personnel.

*Question No. 65 answered with Question No. 52.*

### **Defence Forces Remuneration**

66. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if his attention has been drawn to the fact that only 11 privates are left of the 29 that passed out of the 2015 class; and the steps he will take to improve Defence Forces pay and conditions to address the retention crisis. [12524/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** Given the unique and demanding nature of military life, there is understandably a relatively high level of turnover among Defence Forces personnel. This is not new and the Defence Forces have always had a level of turnover that far exceeds other areas of the public service.

In order to balance personnel turnover there is ongoing recruitment at both enlisted and officer level. 751 personnel were inducted into the Permanent Defence Force during 2017. This includes general service recruits, apprentices, cadets and direct entry officers.

Rates of pay and conditions of employment in the Irish public service have traditionally been set by, amongst other things, reference to levels of pay across the various sectors of the Irish public service. The Government's economic policy has led to economic recovery and a resumption of economic growth. This has provided the fiscal resources to provide for a sustainable and fair recovery in public service pay scales.

Defence Forces pay is increasing in accordance with public sector pay agreements. The

focus of these increases is weighted in favour of those on lower pay. Members of the Permanent Defence Force have received the pay increases due under the Lansdowne Road Agreement.

In addition, following negotiations with PDFORRA on behalf of their members, improved payscales for general service recruits and privates who joined the Permanent Defence Force post 1 January 2013, were backdated to 1 July 2016 and paid in August 2017.

The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020 provides for further increases in pay ranging from 6.2% to 7.4% over the lifetime of the Agreement with the focus of the agreement once again being on the lower paid. The first instalment of phased pay increases under the Agreement was a 1% increase in annualised salaries due from 1 January 2018. This has been paid to members of the Permanent Defence Force.

Following these revisions in pay, the starting pay for a newly qualified three star private, and their Naval Service equivalent, (inclusive of military service allowance) is €27,257, gross annual earnings, with scope for further income from duty allowances. This is a significant increase on the €21,800 per annum which was the annual amount prior to the implementation of the increases in pay received through recent pay agreements.

The starting pay for a Corporal, including Military Service Allowance, is over €37,000 per annum. The first point on the payscale for a Sergeant, including Military Service Allowance, is €40,000 per annum.

In 2017, under my direction, the Department of Defence raised recruitment and retention issues as part of the submission to the Public Service Pay Commission. In a further acknowledgement of these issues the Government tasked the Public Service Pay Commission with examining these challenges in the Defence Sector in more detail.

The Public Service Pay Commission has commenced this work and has requested detailed information from the Department of Defence. Defence management are preparing their submission which will be sent to the Commission in the coming weeks. I understand that both PDFORRA and RACO have made submissions to the Commission.

The Public Service Pay Commission is due to complete this exercise in the second half of 2018. The findings and proposals arising will be considered at that time.

*Question No. 67 answered with Question No. 57.*

### **Army Barracks**

68. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if suitable consultants will be appointed with a view to carrying out a master plan outlining the future use of Columb Barracks, Mullingar, County Westmeath. [10378/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** As the Deputy is aware, since the closure of Columb Barracks in 2012, my Department has explored a number of avenues to try and secure its long term future for the benefit of the local community. Government Departments and other Public Bodies, including Westmeath County Council, have been invited to declare an interest in acquiring the property. However no interest has been expressed from any of these bodies.

In May 2016 officials from my Department attended a public meeting in Mullingar on the future use of the barracks. A local group was subsequently established in order to prepare a fea-

sibility study on community use of the premises. No report from that group has been furnished to my Department.

In April 2017, the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, launched the online Rebuilding Ireland Housing Land Map as a key part of the Rebuilding Ireland initiative. Columb Barracks was included as one of the publicly owned sites having potential for housing development. However, to date there have been no formal approaches under this initiative.

As the Barracks is no longer required for military purposes, the current financial and administrative burden resulting from its retention cannot be sustained. As such, my Department has no plans to appoint consultants to carry out a master plan for its future use. Accordingly, my officials are proceeding with its disposal.

*Question No. 69 answered with Question No. 55.*

### **Departmental Reports**

70. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the publication of the North East Inner City 2017 Progress Report. [12792/18]

**The Taoiseach:** I recently launched the North East Inner City 2017 Progress Report when I visited the area with Minister Donohoe on Monday, 26 February.

The Report sets out the work of the Programme Implementation Board since it was established last June and outlines the progress made under the four priority areas of crime and drugs; education, training and employment opportunities; services for families and young people; and physical improvements.

The Report also sets out details of the spending on the North East Inner City initiative to date. A copy of the Report together with further information on the work can be found at [www.neic.ie](http://www.neic.ie).

During my recent visit to the area I witnessed first hand the commitment and excellent work by a wide range of community projects working hard to develop opportunities for the people of the North East Inner City.

### **Cabinet Committee Meetings**

71. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach when Cabinet committee B (Social Policy and Public Services) last met. [12805/18]

**The Taoiseach:** Cabinet Committee B last met on 16 November and is scheduled to meet again next Monday, 26 March.

The Committee covers the areas of Social Policy and Public Service Reform including education, children, social inclusion, Irish, arts and culture, and continued improvements and reform of public services. This Committee seeks to coordinate the work across Government on planning and implementing policies that contribute to a more equal and socially inclusive society.

## **Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements**

72. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on all of his meetings in the United States of America. [12803/18]

**The Taoiseach:** I visited the United States from 11-17 March for this year's St Patrick's Day programme. My visit included engagements in Austin Texas, Durant Oklahoma, Washington D.C. and New York.

The objective of my visit was to advance Ireland's interests and deepen the bilateral relationship between Ireland and the US.

In Austin, I paid a courtesy call on Governor Abbott, met members of the Irish community in Texas, and spoke at the South by South West Festival, where I also met with Enterprise Ireland companies attending the convention.

In Durant, Oklahoma, I had a courtesy call with Governor Mary Fallin and met the Choctaw Nation of Native Americans, whom I thanked for their act of humanitarianism towards Ireland, during the height of the Great Famine in 1847.

In Washington D.C. I held high-level political meetings with President Trump, Vice President Pence, as well with senior members of Congress including Speaker Ryan, House Majority Leader McConnell, Senators Schumer, Leahy, Neal and King, and the Friends of Ireland Caucus. My priority in these discussions was to further develop the US - Ireland bilateral relationship, and to advance Ireland's interests, including in relation to trade, and the status of undocumented Irish citizens in the US.

Also in Washington D.C. I had a number of economic engagements, including with the US Chamber of Commerce, and a series of meetings and engagements with the clients of Irish state agencies including Enterprise Ireland, IDA, SFI and Tourism Ireland. I also spoke at a number of events, including at the Brookings Institution, at an event hosted by Ireland Funds, at a Reception hosted by Ireland's Ambassador to the US, and at an event marking the 20th Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement.

In New York, I met a number of political leaders including Governor Andrew Cuomo, Mayor Bill de Blasio and Speaker Corey Johnson. I attended a lunch with business leaders, hosted by Michael Bloomberg. I attended an event at the site of the new Irish Arts Center, where I announced additional Government funding for the construction of the Arts Center's new facility.

I also attended a Community Reception at the Irish Consulate in New York, where I met with the representatives of the Irish community, including the leadership of several Irish immigrant support centres.

Finally, I attended the traditional St. Patrick's Day events in New York, including the Mayor's Breakfast, St. Patrick's Day Mass, and the New York St. Patrick's Day Parade, which I walked in alongside Governor Cuomo and with the United Irish Counties.

## **Departmental Advertising Expenditure**

73. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the cinemas in which the strategic communications unit, SCU, booked advertisements for the NDP and NPF; and the cost of same. [10955/18]

75. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Taoiseach the budget for all publicity, advertising and promotional work associated with the national development plan, NDP, and the national planning framework, NPF. [11018/18]

88. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the media buying agency secured by his Department's strategic communications unit; and the spend across national and regional local newspapers and or free sheets on the promoting or communicating the NDP and NPF before and since its launch date. [11026/18]

89. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the media partnerships secured to communicate Project Ireland 2040; the way they are described; if they are the same with all media outlets; and the cost of each one. [11275/18]

90. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the specific instructions that were issued to the media buyer by the SCU that all content should be identified as being in partnership with the Government of Ireland or in association with the Government of Ireland; if there were specific instructions or agreements to ensure that placements were similar to articles rather than advertorials; and the reason the phrase advertisement feature was not stated or made clear. [11276/18]

91. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the person that had responsibility to sign off on communication pieces from the SCU on the NDP and NPF if he or his officials did not have same. [11277/18]

92. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if the media buyer had a sign off on the content of the communication pieces set in the local and national newspapers in regard to Project Ireland 2040. [11278/18]

93. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach when media owners were briefed on Project Ireland 2040 and by whom in his Department and otherwise. [11279/18]

94. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if a terms of reference, memo of understanding or contract was signed with a media agency or buyers in relation to Project Ireland 2040. [11280/18]

95. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the budget given to the media agencies on the citizen engagement initiative on Project Ireland 2040 and the NDP and NPF. [11281/18]

96. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the instructions the SCU gave the media buyers regarding ensuring that the content of Project Ireland 2040 articles would be aware it was paid content. [11282/18]

97. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the way in which his officials and the SCU advised the media buyers regarding localising the content as they saw fit to fit the audience; the parameters which were given; the suggestions which were made; if it was suggested to include experts or local business persons; and the way in which they were approached. [11283/18]

98. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the meetings or discussions the SCU would have had with the media buyers in relation to content and to confirm that, while they may not have had final sign off; and if they would have seen the suggestions made before final sign off was received elsewhere. [11284/18]

99. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the amount of investment the SCU has applied to communicating the NDP and NPF up to now; the plan as agreed to date; and the amount allocated altogether. [11285/18]

100. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if the SCU has the citizen engagement campaign under constant review; and if changes will be made. [11286/18]

101. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the details of the citizen communication engagement as it applies to cinema; and the cost of same. [11287/18]

103. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the number of media agencies involved in the citizen communications engagement on the NDP and NPF. [11290/18]

104. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if the research his Department undertook through the SCU recently and which is due to be published at the end of Spring was utilised or fed into the citizen engagement initiative on the NDP and NPF; and if it is a totally separate initiative. [11291/18]

106. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if the SCU had meetings with officials in the Department of Finance in relation to the citizen engagement initiative on Project Ireland 2040. [11293/18]

112. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Taoiseach the policy of his Department when contracting advertorial type content on the national planning framework or the national development plan regarding the inclusion of negative comment or criticism of the framework or plan in the advertorial type content that was contracted. [11392/18]

115. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Taoiseach the number of bus shelter advertisements that have been purchased to promote various elements of Project Ireland 2040; the location of these advertisements; the cost to date of these; the reason the advertisement at a location (details supplied) was removed; when it was removed; and the number of other such advertisements that were removed prior to their agreed termination time. [11777/18]

120. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach the amount spent on advertising the Project Ireland 2040 plans in cinemas. [11902/18]

125. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the media buying agency secured by the SCU; and the amount spent on the promoting or communicating the NDP and NPF before and since its launch date in national, regional, local newspapers and or free sheets. [11986/18]

126. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the amount spent by the SCU on promoting advertising and information campaigns on social media sites regarding the NDP and NPF; and the length of time this will continue. [11987/18]

127. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if the SCU targeted specific population groups on communicating the NDP and NPF. [11988/18]

129. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if the SCU had particular discussions on the use of pictures of Government politicians or other types of pictures in the information campaign and articles in the national and regional newspapers. [11990/18]

135. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Taoiseach if content partnership agreements were entered into with broadcast media or social media in respect of Project Ireland 2040 similar to content partnership agreements entered into with print media. [12007/18]

136. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the costs of the launch of the NDP and NPF in County Sligo; if it included photography; and if this was extra or included. [12056/18]

149. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Taoiseach the publications, print media or otherwise in which advertisements were placed in relation to the Project Ireland 2040 plan; and the costs

associated with each advertisement. [12545/18]

**The Taoiseach:** I propose to take Questions Nos. 73, 75, 88 to 101, inclusive, 103, 104, 106, 112, 115, 120, 125 to 127, inclusive, 129, 135, 136 and 149 together.

### **Budget**

The campaign for Project Ireland 2040 has an indicative budget of €1.5 million. The cost of the launch in Sligo was €45,000, this figure is inclusive of photography costs as this service was provided in-house.

### **Media Partnerships**

The media buying agency used by the Strategic Communications Unit (SCU) is PHD Media. This company was procured through an open procurement competition, which was overseen by the Office of Government Procurement (OGP).

As Project Ireland 2040 is a plan that will impact upon all citizens and future generations, a comprehensive multi-media campaign was put in place to ensure citizens are aware of, and informed about, the plan.

Media content partnerships were entered into with the following media outlets:

- Irish Times
- INM Group
- Examiner Group
- Journal media
- 30 Regional Newspapers
- 28 Local Radio Stations

The campaign is currently under review, with decisions about the implementation of the various elements of the campaign to follow. In that context, there are no current plans to run a radio campaign.

Cost incurred to date for advertorial content in regional and national titles is €312,498 ex vat.

- Specific instruction was issued to the media buyer by the SCU that all content should be identified as being 'In Partnership with the Government of Ireland' or 'In Partnership with Project Ireland 2040, an initiative of the Government of Ireland'. The use of the Government of Ireland logo was also requested by the SCU. This was to ensure that readers knew that the content was paid for.

- There were no instructions or agreements from the SCU to ensure that placements were similar to articles rather than advertorials.

- Each media organisation was provided with a link to the full Project Ireland 2040 plan as well as a pack of content relevant to their particular region.

- The content pack was compiled by the SCU, working with other relevant Government Departments. Nothing was given in the pack that was not otherwise in the overall Project Ireland 2040 plan. Meetings were held with a number of relevant Departments regarding Project

Ireland 2040.

- The decision relating to editorial style was entirely a matter for each media organisation.
- The SCU had no input in selecting or contracting any external or third party interviewees. No political spokespeople or Government backbenchers were recommended for interview or for pictures to be included by the SCU.
- Decisions about what organisations and individuals would be asked for comment or pictured were entirely a matter for each media organisation.
- The SCU did not have sign off on the copy produced for the media.
- The media buyer did not have sign off on the copy produced for the media.
- Media owners were briefed on Project Ireland 2040 during the week beginning February 13 2018. The briefings were carried out by a cross Government Department team of Senior Officials.
- No contract was signed with a media agency or buyers in relation to Project Ireland 2040. Media buying was carried out by PHD, company with whom a contract was already in place, following an open procurement process.

### **Cinema**

Cinema advertising relating to Project Ireland 2040 appeared in all screens across the country at a total cost of €80,113 ex vat.

The 60 second video was produced by the creative agency in conjunction with the SCU.

### **Social Media**

Costs incurred to date on social media for Project Ireland 2040 across 3 platforms - Twitter, Facebook and YouTube and other digital spend on digital search and display is €75,660 ex Vat.

### **Bus Shelter Advertising**

The National Transport Authority provided space, free of charge, across the Transport network - (Irish Rail, Dublin Bus and Luas) at various locations between 25 February and 26 March 2018.

My Department had no role in selecting locations or in the removal of any posters before their allocated time.

### **Research**

The research referred to is not yet complete. Therefore, nothing from the Research could be fed into the citizen engagement initiative on Project Ireland 2040.

Behaviour and Attitudes research company were commissioned to conduct primary research to understand how best to communicate the work of Government to citizens, and in particular how to communicate the benefits, services, and entitlements relevant to them. This research will now inform appropriate, relevant and targeted citizen-focused communications to increase public engagement and feedback, and will be published when completed. The research methodology and design phase of the project is complete, and the fieldwork is now due to commence. Results will be published by early summer.

## **Departmental Advertising Data**

74. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Taoiseach the details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by his Department and agencies under its remit in the past 12 months; the date this content was published; the purpose of this content; the cost of its publication; and the publication or platform on which it was published in tabular form [11019/18]

76. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Taoiseach the details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by the Strategic Communications Unit since its establishment; the date this content was published; the purpose of this content; the cost of its publication; and the publication or platform on which it was published in tabular form. [11020/18]

84. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Taoiseach the advertisements or advertorials placed by his Department or the Strategic Communications Unit since 1 January 2018, by newspaper or other printed publication; the size of the advert; the cost of each advert; the person that wrote the copy and approved the final advert; if it was an outside agency; the person in his Department that approved the final advert; and the parameters and instructions provided to outside contractors on the placement of adverts. [11022/18]

85. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Taoiseach the amount spent on all cinema and radio advertising placed by his Department or the Strategic Communications Unit since 1 January 2018; the number of adverts placed; the number of times the advert was shown; the radio stations on which it was broadcast; the cinemas in which it was shown; the person responsible for commissioning the content; the person that approved the content; the company that developed the content; the person responsible for booking the content; and the parameters and instructions provided to outside contractors on the placement of adverts. [11023/18]

86. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Taoiseach the amount spent on all social media advertising placed by his Department or the Strategic Communications Unit since 1 January 2018; the cost for each advert placed; the platform that was used; the amount committed in each campaign; the audience that was targeted; the way in which that audience was chosen; the characterisation of the audiences used for social media advertising; the person or body that created the audiences; the person or body that approved the content of the adverts; the person or body that approved the audiences; and the parameters and instructions provided to outside contractors on the placement of those adverts. [11024/18]

87. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Taoiseach the amount that has been spent on newspaper advertisements and advertorials since July 2016; the publications these adverts appeared in; and the person that signed off on each advert. [11025/18]

109. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach the expenditure to date on online content (details supplied) by the strategic communications unit in his Department. [11362/18]

110. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Taoiseach the amount spent by his Department on advertorial type content since he entered office. [11390/18]

**The Taoiseach:** I propose to take Questions Nos. 74, 76, 84 to 87, inclusive, 109 and 110 together.

### **Advertorials**

There were no advertorials commissioned by my Department in 2016 and 2017.

The costs relating to advertorial content commissioned by the SCU in my Department so far in 2018 are listed in the following table:

Media Outlet	Campaign	Costs incurred to date	Date published
Irish Independent	Healthy Ireland	€96,300 ex Vat	3rd February 2018 - Pull-out supplement in Irish Independent Weekender magazine 13th/20th/27th January 2018 - Double page spread Irish Independent.
Irish Independent	Action Plan for Education	€8,600 ex Vat	14th February 2018
Irish Times, INM Group, Examiner Group, Journal Media, 30 Regional Papers	Project Ireland 2040	Regional spend €127,575 ex Vat National spend: €184,923 ex Vat TOTAL: €312,498 ex Vat	Advertorials appeared in national and regional titles from 23rd February to 28th February

Further detail on campaigns run to date in 2018 as follows:

### **Healthy Ireland**

In order to communicate the aims of the Healthy Ireland 2018 programme, a content partnership was entered into with the Irish Independent - this consisted of three double page features in the Weekender magazine and a 48 page magazine in the Irish Independent.

The purpose of this content partnership was to communicate to as wide an audience as possible the importance of making healthy changes in peoples' lives, consistent with the aims of the Healthy Ireland campaign, which focussed on citizen engagement.

All content was clearly identified as being from 'Healthy Ireland an initiative of the Government of Ireland'.

The relevant editorial team from the Irish Independent produced the content in close consultation with the project team comprising staff from my Department and the Department of Health - the project team signed off on the final content.

### **Action Plan for Education**

The Action Plan for Education was identified and approved as a priority campaign for the Department of Education and Skills. Content for the advertorial came from the Plan and was signed off by officials from the Department of Education and Skills in conjunction with the relevant editorial team from the Irish Independent. The advertorial was clearly identified as the Action Plan for Education in partnership with the Government of Ireland.

### **Project Ireland 2040**

As Project Ireland 2040 is a plan which will impact on all citizens and on future generations, a comprehensive multi-media campaign was developed to ensure citizens are aware of, and informed about the Plan. One aspect of this campaign is a media content partnership with a number of National and Regional media organisations.

These content partnerships were handled through a third party media buyer. The SCU supplied the media buyer with key facts in relation to Project Ireland 2040.

Each media organisation was provided with a link to the full Project Ireland 2040 plan as well as a pack of content relevant to their particular region. The content pack was compiled by the SCU, working with other relevant Government Departments. Nothing was given in the

pack that was not otherwise in the overall Project Ireland 2040 plan.

Specific instruction was issued to the media buyer by the SCU that all content should be identified as being ‘In Partnership with the Government of Ireland’ or ‘In Partnership with Project Ireland 2040, an initiative of the Government of Ireland’. The use of the specific Government of Ireland logo was also requested by the SCU. This was to ensure that readers knew that the content was paid for.

The decision relating to editorial style was entirely a matter for each media organisation. The SCU had no input in selecting or contracting any external or third party interviewees. No political spokespeople or Government backbenchers were recommended for interview or for pictures to be included by the SCU in any of the partnerships with regional media organisations. Decisions about what organisations and individuals would be asked for comment or pictured were entirely a matter for each media organisation.

The SCU did not have sign off of the copy produced for the media.

### **Cinema and Radio Advertising**

Cinema advertising relating to Project Ireland 2040 appeared in all screens across the country over a 4 week period, at a total cost of €80,113 ex Vat.

The 60 second video was produced by a creative agency in conjunction with the SCU.

The SCU managed two national radio campaigns since January 2018 - Healthy Ireland 2018 campaign, and the Self Employed Benefits radio campaign. The content for these adverts was produced by the SCU in conjunction with relevant officials from the Department of Health, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the creative agency. The advertising space was booked by the media buying agency and the finished content was supplied to the radio stations by the creative agency. These campaigns were broadcast on all national radio stations.

Costs for the two radio campaigns are as follows:

Healthy Ireland - €104,320.29 ex Vat

Self Employed - €56,132.14 ex Vat

The Project Ireland 2040 campaign is currently under review, with decisions about the implementation of the various elements of the campaign to follow. In that context, there are no current plans to run a radio campaign.

### **Social Media**

The following table lists estimated costs for social media advertising by my Department since 1 January 2018 - advertisements appeared on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube and were targeted to all citizens on these platforms:

Campaigns 2018	Social Media Spend (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube)	Other Digital Spend (Digital Search/Display)	Total (ex Vat)
Education Action Plan 2018	€830.15	Nil	€830.15
Healthy Ireland	€5,989.36	€1,121.24	€7110.60

Campaigns 2018	Social Media Spend (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube)	Other Digital Spend (Digital Search/Display)	Total (ex Vat)
Irish Aid - Children's Educational Video (char- ity abroad)	€1,940.87	Nil	€1,940.87
Self Employed	€2,496.98	Nil	€2,496.98
Project Ireland 2040	€37,583	€38,077	€75,660

*Question No. 75 answered with Question No. 73.*

*Question No. 76 answered with Question No. 74.*

### Census of Population Data

77. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Taoiseach the small area data on County Wexford areas that suffered a population drop between the censuses of 2006 and 2011, 2011 and 2016, and 2006 and 2016; and the percentage of the decrease each area suffered. [11021/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh):** County Wexford contains 616 Small Areas. Small Areas are the lowest level of geography at which Census data is produced and typically contain between 50 and 200 dwellings. These were designed by the National Institute of Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) on behalf of the Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi) and in consultation with the Central Statistics Office. Small Areas are nested within Electoral Division boundaries.

A table is available at the following link:

[[/debates%20authoring/webattachments.nsf/0/567F424C52D7EAE680258259003EA9DD/\\$File/7721318.docx?openelement](/debates%20authoring/webattachments.nsf/0/567F424C52D7EAE680258259003EA9DD/$File/7721318.docx?openelement)]

Small Area level data is not available for Census 2006. The lowest level of geography at which the Census 2006 data was produced was Electoral Division (ED). There are 124 EDs in Wexford. The following three tables list the 16 EDs where population declines were recorded between 2006 and 2011, the 12 EDs where population declines were recorded between 2006 and 2016 and the 33 EDs where population declines were recorded between 2011 and 2016 respectively:

#### Population fall by Small Area in Wexford County, 2016

#### Population decline by Electoral Division in Wexford County, 2006 – 2011

Name	Defacto Population		Actual change	Percentage change
	2006	2011	2006 - 2011	2006 - 2011
Enniscorthy Urban	2723	2384	-339	-12.45%
New Ross Urban	4034	3907	-127	-3.15%
Rosbercon Urban	643	626	-17	-2.64%
Wexford No. 1 Urban	1699	1581	-118	-6.95%

Questions - Written Answers

Name	Defacto Population		Actual change	Percentage change
Wexford No. 2 Urban	4559	4126	-433	-9.50%
Wexford No. 3 Urban	1372	1321	-51	-3.72%
Moyacomb	473	444	-29	-6.13%
Newtownbarry	2326	2315	-11	-0.47%
Gorey Urban	3479	3463	-16	-0.46%
Barrack Village	95	92	-3	-3.16%
Carrickbyrne	545	534	-11	-2.02%
Fethard	919	890	-29	-3.16%
Newbawn	565	564	-1	-0.18%
Drinagh	1191	1166	-25	-2.10%
Kilpatrick	753	741	-12	-1.59%
Taghmon	1124	1078	-46	-4.09%

**Population decline by Electoral Division in Wexford County, 2006 - 2016**

Name	Defacto Population		Actual change	Percentage change
	2006	2016		
			2006 - 2016	2006 - 2016
Enniscorthy Urban	2723	2666	-57	-2.09%
New Ross Urban	4034	3768	-266	-6.59%
Wexford No. 1 Urban	1699	1613	-86	-5.06%
Wexford No. 2 Urban	4559	4087	-472	-10.35%
Wexford No. 3 Urban	1372	1243	-129	-9.40%
Moyacomb	473	409	-64	-13.53%
Newtownbarry	2326	2284	-42	-1.81%
Barrack Village	95	92	-3	-3.16%
Fethard	919	850	-69	-7.51%
Drinagh	1191	1139	-52	-4.37%
Taghmon	1124	1026	-98	-8.72%
Tomhaggard	588	582	-6	-1.02%

**Population decline by Electoral Division in Wexford County, 2011 – 2016**

Name	Defacto Population		Actual change	Percentage change
	2011	2016		
			2011 - 2016	2011 - 2016
New Ross Urban	3907	3768	-139	-3.56%
Wexford No. 2 Urban	4126	4087	-39	-0.95%

Name	Defacto Population		Actual change	Percentage change
Wexford No. 3 Urban	1321	1243	-78	-5.90%
Ballindaggan	806	799	-7	-0.87%
Ballycarney	432	429	-3	-0.69%
Ballyhuskard	1589	1579	-10	-0.63%
Bree	1386	1361	-25	-1.80%
Clonroche	1286	1252	-34	-2.64%
Kilbora	390	387	-3	-0.77%
Kiltealy	461	456	-5	-1.08%
Moyacomb	444	409	-35	-7.88%
Newtownbarry	2315	2284	-31	-1.34%
Ford	538	536	-2	-0.37%
Huntingtown	319	316	-3	-0.94%
Ballyhack	1302	1241	-61	-4.69%
Clongeen	911	886	-25	-2.74%
Clonleigh	448	421	-27	-6.03%
Fethard	890	850	-40	-4.49%
Killesk	713	686	-27	-3.79%
New Ross Rural	4014	3942	-72	-1.79%
Rathroe	838	824	-14	-1.67%
Templetown	585	577	-8	-1.37%
Whitemoor	584	581	-3	-0.51%
Artramon	660	642	-18	-2.73%
Ballymitty	529	524	-5	-0.95%
Bannow	1194	1116	-78	-6.53%
Carrick	1835	1779	-56	-3.05%
Drinagh	1166	1139	-27	-2.32%
Forth	863	831	-32	-3.71%
Kilcowan	521	492	-29	-5.57%
Kilscoran	967	954	-13	-1.34%
Taghmon	1078	1026	-52	-4.82%
Tomhaggard	594	582	-12	-2.02%

### Strategic Communications Unit

78. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the source of a briefing note as published on-line (details supplied); and if a departmental official or member of the strategic communications unit was involved in compiling this briefing note. [11128/18]

**The Taoiseach:** The Strategic Communications Unit in my Department had no correspondence with Mr Ryan and had no involvement in compiling the briefing note referred to by the Deputy.

### Strategic Communications Unit

79. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the details of all 2018 information and communication campaigns that the strategic communications unit is working on or planning for roll-out in 2018 and beyond; and the estimated budget spend projected for each such project in tabular form. [11129/18]

122. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach if the strategic communications unit is working on or planning information campaigns in local regional and national media in 2018 that cover Government programmes (details supplied). [11983/18]

145. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the role envisaged by the strategic communications unit towards the commitment in Enterprise 2025 Renewed to accelerate efforts to diversify source markets for FDI, supported by stronger cross-government strategic communications; if meetings have taken place between the unit and other departmental officials and ministerial advisers in addition to State agencies regarding this objective; and the budget allocation for this objective in 2018. [13020/18]

146. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the plans of the strategic communications unit to coordinate a national Brexit preparedness public information and awareness campaign in 2018 as confirmed in Enterprise 2025 Renewed; the specific Department budget allocated towards this objective in 2018; the amount expended to date; and the number of meetings with other departmental officials and ministerial advisers in addition to State agencies to date on this campaign in tabular form. [13021/18]

**The Taoiseach:** I propose to take Questions Nos. 79, 122, 145 and 146 together.

A number of cross-Government priority communications campaigns have been agreed by Government following consultation with the responsible Minister and Secretary General. However, the work of the SCU is now under review. The review is planned to be concluded by Easter. The results of the review will inform the work plan, structure and scope of activities for the remainder of 2018.

### **Departmental Staff Data**

80. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the number of full-time and part-time staff employed in the strategic communications unit in 2017 and to date in 2018, by staff according to civil service grade, communications personnel and other staff; the funding allocated to the unit in 2017 and expended; and the budget allocation in 2018 broken down between salary and non salary allocations in tabular form. [11014/18]

124. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Taoiseach if a panel has been established in his Department for communications officers; if a Civil Service position of head of communications or similar role or description has been appointed in his Department; if so, when the appointment occurred; the grade at which it occurred; the reason for same; the policy the appointment was based on; the person that approved the appointment; and if he plans to make such an appointment. [11985/18]

130. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach if he has satisfied himself that all Public Appointments Service and TLAC procedures were adhered to in the appointment of a person (details supplied) to the strategic communications unit; the duration of their contract; and if there is an optional extension of the contract. [11991/18]

132. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach the way in which Civil Service staff were redeployed into the strategic communications unit in his Department; the organisational

structure of that section; the grades of staff; the number of non-Civil Service staff in the unit; and the reporting structure for those staff. [11993/18]

133. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Taoiseach the staff complement within the strategic communications unit; the grades and roles and roles of each; the staff that are existing civil servants; the number that have been brought in from outside the Civil Service; and the salary costs of same. [12005/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 80, 124, 130, 132 and 133 together.

The Strategic Communications Unit (SCU) was established in my Department in September 2017 and the work of the Unit is currently under review.

There are currently fifteen staff in the Unit and all work on a full-time basis. The Director of the Unit was seconded to my Department from Fáilte Ireland and remains an employee of Fáilte Ireland. He was previously seconded to the (then) Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht as Director of Ireland 2016.

No other Head of Communications position has been established by my Department.

On establishment of the Unit, staff in the Government Information Service (GIS) and some staff working on communications projects in my Department were redeployed to work in the SCU. The salary scale, employment status and provenance of all staff working in the SCU is detailed in the following table:

Position (relevant salary scale)	Employment Status	Provenance
Director (Assistant Secretary)	Public Servant	Seconded to the Department of the Taoiseach from Fáilte Ireland
Principal Officer	Civil Servant	Seconded to the Department of the Taoiseach from the National Shared Services Office
Assistant Principal Officer	Civil Servant	Redeployed to the SCU from the GIS
Assistant Principal Officer	Civil Servant	Redeployed to the SCU from another communications role in the Department of the Taoiseach
Assistant Principal Officer	Civil Servant	Redeployed to the SCU from another communications role in the Department of the Taoiseach
Assistant Principal Officer	Civil Servant	Seconded to the Department of the Taoiseach from the Department of Health
Higher Executive Officer	Civil Servant	Redeployed to the SCU from the Citizens' Assembly
Higher Executive Officer equivalent	Public Servant	Seconded to the Department of the Taoiseach from Fáilte Ireland
Administrative Officer	Civil Servant	Redeployed to the SCU from the GIS

Position (relevant salary scale)	Employment Status	Provenance
Administrative Officer	Civil Servant	Seconded to the Department of the Taoiseach from the Department of Health
Administrative Officer	Civil Servant	Seconded to the Department of the Taoiseach from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
Media and Communications Assistant (Executive Officer)	Civil Servant	Redeployed to the SCU from the GIS
Media and Communications Assistant (Executive Officer)	Civil Servant	Redeployed to the SCU from the GIS
Media and Communications Assistant (Executive Officer)	Civil Servant	Redeployed to the SCU from the GIS
Executive Officer	Civil Servant	Redeployed to the SCU from another communications role in the Department of the Taoiseach

All staff working in the SCU - with the exception of the two staff members seconded from Fáilte Ireland and existing Department of the Taoiseach staff redeployed to work in the Unit - responded to a cross-civil and public service request for expressions of interest and interviewed for their roles. Arising from this process, four applicants were also placed on panels to fill any vacancies that may arise in the Unit in the future.

The standard civil service reporting structure applies within the Unit and the Director of the Unit reports to the Secretary General of my Department.

Because the SCU was established in Q3 2017, provision was not made for it in my Department's 2017 Estimates. Approximately €50,000 was expended by the SCU from September to December 2017 and was met from my Department's administrative budget.

In Budget 2018, provision was made in my Department's 2018 Estimates for a non-pay budget of €5m to be made available to the SCU.

Salary budgets are not delegated to individual Divisions / Business Units in my Department. All salary costs for the SCU are met from my Department's administrative budget.

### Exports Data

81. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the volume and value of exports in euro terms based on the most recent data on a percentage basis in 2016 and 2017 by country in tabular form. [11015/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The official measure of Ireland's exports is produced by the Central Statistics Office. The value of goods and service exports on a percentage basis with a breakdown by country of destination is shown in the Statistical Yearbook of Ireland. The table below is from the latest edition which contains data for 2016. For Balance of Payments and National Accounts purposes the data include conceptual adjustments for goods exports which relate to the recognition of a change of economic ownership taking place. The volumes of both goods and services exports are not

available.

**Exports of Goods and Services 2016**

Country	€ million	% Share
Andorra	1	0.00
Afghanistan	16	0.00
Albania	15	0.00
Algeria	98	0.03
American Samoa	0	0.00
Angola	27	0.01
Anguilla	0	0.00
Antarctica	0	0.00
Argentina	508	0.15
Armenia	2	0.00
Australia	4,596	1.37
Austria	-1,045	-0.31
Azerbaijan	11	0.00
Bahamas	71	0.02
Bahrain	101	0.03
Bangladesh	18	0.01
Barbados	80	0.02
Belarus	31	0.01
Belgium	19,612	5.85
Belize	1	0.00
Benin	6	0.00
Bermuda	-5,581	-1.67
Bolivia	15	0.00
Bosnia and Herzegovina	24	0.01
Botswana	4	0.00
Bouvet Island	0	0.00
Brazil	1,334	0.40
Brunei Darussalam	9	0.00
Bulgaria	183	0.05
Burkina Faso	33	0.01
Burundi	0	0.00
Cambodia	6	0.00
Cameroon	22	0.01
Canada	2,698	0.81
Cayman Islands	-555	-0.17
Central African republic	1	0.00
Chad	2	0.00
Chile	496	0.15
China	22,058	6.58
Christmas Island	0	0.00
Colombia	-1,244	-0.37

Questions - Written Answers

Country	€ million	% Share
Comoros	1	0.00
Congo	16	0.00
Congo The Democratic Republic	14	0.00
Cook Islands	0	0.00
Costa Rica	48	0.01
Cote d'Ivoire	19	0.01
Croatia	127	0.04
Cuba	9	0.00
Curacao	3	0.00
Cyprus	-49	-0.01
Czech Republic	833	0.25
Denmark	2,716	0.81
Djibouti	0	0.00
Dominica	0	0.00
Dominican Republic	6	0.00
Ecuador	39	0.01
Egypt	241	0.07
El Salvador	22	0.01
Equatorial Guinea	1	0.00
Eritrea	0	0.00
Estonia	81	0.02
Ethiopia	101	0.03
Falkland Islands (Malvinas)	0	0.00
Fiji	21	0.01
Finland	1,746	0.52
France	14,375	4.29
French Southern Territories	0	0.00
Gabon	4	0.00
Gambia	2	0.00
Georgia	17	0.01
Germany	23,869	7.12
Ghana	52	0.02
Gibraltar	70	0.02
Greece	653	0.19
Grenada	0	0.00
Guadeloupe	0	0.00
Guam	1	0.00
Guatemala	61	0.02
Guinea	2	0.00
Guinea-Bissau	0	0.00
Guyana	2	0.00
Haiti	2	0.00
Heard Island and McDonald Island	0	0.00
Honduras	3	0.00

Country	€ million	% Share
Hong Kong	3,961	1.18
Hungary	1,812	0.54
Iceland	228	0.07
India	3,850	1.15
Indonesia	429	0.13
Iran Islamic Republic of	72	0.02
Iraq	88	0.03
Isle of Man	87	0.03
Israel	2,600	0.78
Italy	11,465	3.42
Jamaica	4	0.00
Japan	13,674	4.08
Jersey	104	0.03
Jordan	159	0.05
Kazakhstan	142	0.04
Kenya	81	0.02
Kiribati	0	0.00
Korea Republic of	1,847	0.55
Kuwait	219	0.07
Kyrgyzstan	0	0.00
Lao People's Democratic Republic	10	0.00
Latvia	127	0.04
Lebanon	174	0.05
Lesotho	1	0.00
Liberia	4	0.00
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	86	0.03
Lithuania	147	0.04
Luxembourg	-3,029	-0.90
Macao	68	0.02
Macedonia The Former Yugoslav Republic of	13	0.00
Madagascar	0	0.00
Malawi	6	0.00
Malaysia	905	0.27
Mali	25	0.01
Malta	160	0.05
Martinique	0	0.00
Mauritania	1	0.00
Mauritius	19	0.01
Mayotte	0	0.00
Mexico	2,047	0.61
Moldova Republic of	4	0.00
Monaco	2	0.00
Mongolia	13	0.00
Montenegro	14	0.00

Questions - Written Answers

Country	€ million	% Share
Montserrat	0	0.00
Morocco	150	0.04
Mozambique	10	0.00
Myanmar	29	0.01
Namibia	5	0.00
Nauru	0	0.00
Nepal	1	0.00
Netherlands	13,602	4.06
New Caledonia	7	0.00
New Zealand	359	0.11
Nicaragua	1	0.00
Niger	3	0.00
Nigeria	371	0.11
Northern Mariana Islands	0	0.00
Norway	2,434	0.73
Oman	166	0.05
Pakistan	154	0.05
Palestinian Territory Occupied	9	0.00
Panama	67	0.02
Papua New Guinea	3	0.00
Paraguay	3	0.00
Peru	33	0.01
Philippines	499	0.15
Pitcairn	0	0.00
Poland	2,864	0.85
Portugal	1,835	0.55
Puerto Rico	857	0.26
Qatar	353	0.11
Romania	380	0.11
Russian Federation	2,787	0.83
Rwanda	8	0.00
Saint Helena	0	0.00
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1	0.00
Saint Lucia	4	0.00
Saint Pierre and Miquelon	0	0.00
Saint Vincent and the Grenadin	1	0.00
Samoa	2	0.00
San Marino	0	0.00
Saudi Arabia	1,449	0.43
Senegal	52	0.02
Serbia	38	0.01
Seychelles	2	0.00
Sierra Leone	2	0.00
Singapore	5,651	1.69

Country	€ million	% Share
Slovakia	176	0.05
Slovenia	168	0.05
Solomon Islands	0	0.00
Somalia	1	0.00
South Africa	1,470	0.44
South Georgia and the South Sandwich islands	0	0.00
South Sudan	0	0.00
Spain	8,643	2.58
Sri Lanka	34	0.01
St Maarten	1	0.00
Sudan	15	0.00
Swaziland	10	0.00
Sweden	4,642	1.39
Switzerland	11,039	3.29
Syrian Arab Republic	8	0.00
Taiwan Province of China	1,857	0.55
Tajikistan	0	0.00
Tanzania United Republic of	20	0.01
Thailand	526	0.16
Timor-Leste	0	0.00
Togo	14	0.00
Tokelau	3	0.00
Tonga	4	0.00
Trinidad and Tobago	33	0.01
Tunisia	41	0.01
Turkey	2,576	0.77
Turkmenistan	9	0.00
Turks and Caicos Islands	0	0.00
Tuvalu	0	0.00
Uganda	14	0.00
Ukraine	112	0.03
United Arab Emirates	2,070	0.62
United Kingdom	42,882	12.80
United States	63,734	19.02
Uruguay	39	0.01
US Minor outlying islands	9	0.00
Uzbekistan	18	0.01
Vatican City State	0	0.00
Venezuela	20	0.01
Viet Nam	371	0.11
Virgin Islands British	61	0.02
Virgin Islands US	9	0.00
Wallis and Futuna	0	0.00
Western Sahara	0	0.00

Country	€ million	% Share
Yemen	8	0.00
Zambia	6	0.00
Zimbabwe	19	0.01
Countries not included above	29,808	8.90
Total	335,043	100.00

Source: *The Statistical Yearbook of Ireland Table 16.2*

### Imports Data

82. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the volume and value of imports in euro terms based on the most recent data on a percentage basis in 2016 and 2017 by country in tabular form. [11016/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The official measure of Ireland's imports is produced by the Central Statistics Office. The value of goods and service imports on a percentage basis with a breakdown by country of destination is shown in the Statistical Yearbook of Ireland. The table is from the latest edition which contains data for 2016. For Balance of Payments and National Accounts purposes the data include conceptual adjustments for goods imports which relate to the recognition of a change of economic ownership taking place. The volumes of both goods and services imports are not available.

### Imports of Goods and Services 2016

Country	€ million	% Share
Afghanistan	0	0.00
Albania	2	0.00
Algeria	27	0.01
American Samoa	0	0.00
Andorra	0	0.00
Angola	0	0.00
Anguilla	0	0.00
Antarctica	0	0.00
Antigua and Barbuda	0	0.00
Argentina	237	0.09
Aruba	0	0.00
Australia	335	0.12
Austria	546	0.20
Azerbaijan	62	0.02
Bangladesh	110	0.04
Barbados	117	0.04
Belarus	8	0.00
Belgium	4,994	1.82
Belize	12	0.00
Benin	0	0.00

Country	€ million	% Share
Bermuda	4,062	1.48
Bolivia	3	0.00
Bonaire St Eustatius Saba	0	0.00
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	0.00
Brazil	416	0.15
Brunei Darussalam	1	0.00
Bulgaria	64	0.02
Burkina Faso	0	0.00
Cambodia	37	0.01
Cameroon	16	0.01
Canada	750	0.27
Central African republic	0	0.00
Chad	0	0.00
Chile	65	0.02
China	3,834	1.40
Christmas Island	0	0.00
Cocos (Keeling) Islands	0	0.00
Colombia	83	0.03
Comoros	0	0.00
Congo	3	0.00
Congo The Democratic Republic	0	0.00
Cook Islands	0	0.00
Costa Rica	96	0.03
Cote d'Ivoire	53	0.02
Croatia	81	0.03
Cuba	0	0.00
Curacao	0	0.00
Cyprus	49	0.02
Czech Republic	728	0.27
Denmark	915	0.33
Djibouti	0	0.00
Dominica	0	0.00
Dominican Republic	2	0.00
Ecuador	12	0.00
Egypt	114	0.04
El Salvador	3	0.00
Equatorial Guinea	0	0.00
Eritrea	0	0.00
Estonia	24	0.01
Ethiopia	4	0.00
Falkland Islands (Malvinas)	0	0.00
Faroe Islands	0	0.00
Fiji	0	0.00
Finland	718	0.26

Questions - Written Answers

Country	€ million	% Share
France	12,143	4.43
French Polynesia	0	0.00
Gabon	0	0.00
Gambia	0	0.00
Germany	11,348	4.14
Ghana	6	0.00
Greece	319	0.12
Grenada	0	0.00
Guadeloupe	0	0.00
Guam	0	0.00
Guatemala	3	0.00
Guernsey	24	0.01
Guinea	132	0.05
Guyana	10	0.00
Haiti	0	0.00
Heard Island and McDonald Island	0	0.00
Honduras	4	0.00
Hong Kong	166	0.06
Hungary	264	0.10
Iceland	14	0.01
India	1,100	0.40
Indonesia	73	0.03
Iran Islamic Republic of	0	0.00
Iraq	1	0.00
Israel	250	0.09
Italy	4,971	1.81
Jamaica	0	0.00
Japan	1,817	0.66
Jordan	12	0.00
Kazakhstan	4	0.00
Kenya	27	0.01
Kiribati	0	0.00
Korea (North)	0	0.00
Korea Republic of	542	0.20
Kuwait	1	0.00
Kyrgyzstan	0	0.00
Lao People's Democratic Republic	1	0.00
Latvia	83	0.03
Lebanon	22	0.01
Lesotho	0	0.00
Liberia	8	0.00
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	4	0.00
Lithuania	107	0.04
Macao	2	0.00

Country	€ million	% Share
Macedonia The Former Yugoslav	0	0.00
Madagascar	0	0.00
Malawi	0	0.00
Malaysia	185	0.07
Maldives	6	0.00
Mali	0	0.00
Malta	840	0.31
Marshall Islands	7	0.00
Martinique	0	0.00
Mauritania	0	0.00
Mauritius	12	0.00
Mayotte	0	0.00
Mexico	537	0.20
Moldova Republic of	0	0.00
Monaco	18	0.01
Mongolia	0	0.00
Montserrat	0	0.00
Morocco	65	0.02
Mozambique	2	0.00
Myanmar	7	0.00
Namibia	1	0.00
Nauru	0	0.00
Nepal	0	0.00
Netherlands	22,029	8.03
New Zealand	30	0.01
Nicaragua	2	0.00
Niger	0	0.00
Nigeria	78	0.03
Norway	1,547	0.56
Oman	9	0.00
Pakistan	18	0.01
Palestinian Territory Occupied	0	0.00
Panama	47	0.02
Papua New Guinea	1	0.00
Paraguay	4	0.00
Peru	15	0.01
Philippines	455	0.17
Pitcairn	0	0.00
Poland	1,044	0.38
Portugal	750	0.27
Puerto Rico	8,443	3.08
Qatar	167	0.06
Reunion	0	0.00
Romania	197	0.07

Questions - Written Answers

Country	€ million	% Share
Russian Federation	401	0.15
Rwanda	0	0.00
Saint Helena	0	0.00
Saint Kitts and Nevis	0	0.00
Saint Lucia	0	0.00
Saint Pierre and Miquelon	0	0.00
Saint Vincent and the Grenadin	0	0.00
Samoa	0	0.00
San Marino	0	0.00
Sao Tome and Principe	0	0.00
Saudi Arabia	361	0.13
Senegal	7	0.00
Seychelles	0	0.00
Slovakia	80	0.03
Slovenia	58	0.02
Solomon Islands	0	0.00
Somalia	0	0.00
South Africa	266	0.10
South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands	0	0.00
South Sudan	0	0.00
Spain	3,915	1.43
Sri Lanka	26	0.01
St Maarten	0	0.00
Sudan	2	0.00
Suriname	0	0.00
Sweden	1,001	0.36
Syrian Arab Republic	0	0.00
Taiwan Province of China	2,365	0.86
Tajikistan	0	0.00
Tanzania United Republic of	1	0.00
Thailand	389	0.14
Timor-Leste	0	0.00
Togo	0	0.00
Tokelau	0	0.00
Tonga	0	0.00
Trinidad and Tobago	15	0.01
Tunisia	14	0.01
Turkey	501	0.18
Turkmenistan	2	0.00
Turks and Caicos Islands	0	0.00
Tuvalu	0	0.00
Uganda	2	0.00
Ukraine	59	0.02
United Arab Emirates	217	0.08

Country	€ million	% Share
United Kingdom	33,315	12.14
United States	47,105	17.17
Uruguay	6	0.00
Uzbekistan	0	0.00
Vatican City State	0	0.00
Venezuela	4	0.00
Viet Nam	93	0.03
Virgin Islands US	0	0.00
Wallis and Futuna	0	0.00
Zambia	0	0.00
Zimbabwe	0	0.00
Countries not included above	95,636	34.85
Total	274,398	100.00

Source: *The Statistical Yearbook of Ireland Table 16.3*

### Exports Data

83. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the amount in Euro in value of goods only exported from Irish based firms in 2016 and 2017, by country in tabular form; and the percentage share of such exports to each country in this period as a proportion of the total share. [11017/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The information on the value of goods exported from Irish based firms only as requested by the Deputy is not available. In 2017 Ireland exported goods to 218 countries. The following table shows the top 16 trading partners covering 87% of total exports:

**Table A : Exports of Goods by country 2016-2017 and percentage share of total exports.**

Country	2016 €m	2017 €m	2016 % of Value	2017 % of Value
United States	31,898	33,219	26.7	27.1
Belgium	14,617	13,355	12.3	10.9
Great Britain	13,380	14,476	11.2	11.8
Germany	8,025	10,067	6.7	8.2
Switzerland	6,318	6,212	5.3	5.1
Netherlands	5,895	5,928	4.9	4.8
France	5,069	5,332	4.2	4.4
China	3,102	4,378	2.6	3.6
Spain	2,972	2,597	2.5	2.1
Japan	2,887	2,579	2.4	2.1
Italy	2,415	2,618	2.0	2.1
Northern Ireland	1,655	1,961	1.4	1.6
Australia	1,476	889	1.2	0.7
Israel	1,475	271	1.2	0.2

*Questions - Written Answers*

Country	2016 €m	2017 €m	2016 % of Value	2017 % of Value
Poland	1,371	1,329	1.1	1.1
Mexico	1,358	1,428	1.1	1.2
Rest of the World	15,379	15,900	12.9	13.0
Grand Total	119,292	122,539	100	100

*Questions Nos. 84 to 87, inclusive, answered with Question No. 74.*

*Questions Nos. 88 to 101, inclusive, answered with Question No. 73.*

### **Taoiseach's Communications**

102. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his telephone call with Prime Minister May on 26 February 2018. [11289/18]

**The Taoiseach:** I spoke with Prime Minister May by phone on the evening of 26 February. We discussed Brexit and in particular, the draft Withdrawal Agreement.

I re-iterated our preference that a solution on the border be found within the overall future relationship between the EU and the UK. At the same time I pointed out the necessity from the EU side to have the detail of the backstop option spelled out in the draft legal text of the Withdrawal Agreement, to apply in the event that a better solution is not agreed.

We also took stock of the latest situation in Northern Ireland and our recent contacts with the parties.

I welcome that real progress has been made, since that phone call, between the EU and UK negotiating teams on parts of the Withdrawal Agreement.

On Monday last, the UK agreed that a backstop solution for the border will form part of the legal text of the Withdrawal Agreement.

The UK has also agreed that all the issues identified in the EU text will be addressed to deliver a legally sound solution for the border.

Prime Minister May confirmed these agreements in her letter to President Tusk last Monday, in addition to reiterating the UK's commitment to agreements reached last December on protecting the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts and the gains of the peace process, including the overarching guarantee on avoiding a hard border.

*Questions Nos. 103 and 104 answered with Question No. 73.*

### **Strategic Communications Unit**

105. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the corporate governance structure of the SCU in particular with regard to its budget allocation; and if there is much involvement with the Department of Finance regarding same. [11292/18]

**The Taoiseach:** The programme of work for the Strategic Communications Unit is part of

the Civil Service Renewal Programme, which is overseen by the Civil Service Management Board (CSMB). A subgroup of the CSMB has been established to deal with this initiative. This subgroup has met twice.

An effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated in my Department. Formal reporting arrangements have been established at all levels where responsibility for financial management has been assigned. The financial functions of my Department are also subject to regular audit by both internal audit and the Officer of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Each month, my Department, along with all other Government Departments, provides details of expenditure incurred under various subheads to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. This information feeds into the Exchequer Statements which are published on a monthly basis.

*Question No. 106 answered with Question No. 73.*

### Strategic Communications Unit

107. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach if he will publish a spreadsheet tracking expenditure to date by the strategic communications unit in his Department; if the unit has made an application for additional funding; and the sanctioning process for additional funding of the unit. [11356/18]

**The Taoiseach:** The work of the Strategic Communications Unit is currently under review. Details of expenditure up to the end of February 2018 are contained in the following table:

Details	2017	2018 (to 28 February)	Total
Travel & Subsistence	€3,423.21	€299.34	€3,722.55
Advertising and Incidental Expenses	€35,186.33	€124,385.38	€159,571.71
Postal & Telecommunications	€626.48	€308.27	€934.75
Office Equipment	€10,848.60	€8,212.56	€19,061.16
Total	€50,084.62	€133,205.55	€183,290.17

The figures included above represent actual expenditure incurred and processed through my Department's financial management system to end February 2018. Additional invoices for various projects are currently being processed or are yet to be received.

In Budget 2018, €5 million was allocated to the Unit. The Unit has not made any application for additional funding.

### Strategic Communications Unit

108. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach if the strategic communications unit in his Department has hired or purchased external public relations services, graphic design, consultancy companies and or online digital strategy companies since the unit was formed; and the expenditure on those services by amount spent and company engaged in tabular form. [11361/18]

137. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the cost of the tender for research by a company (details supplied); the persons involved in drawing up the terms of the research; the dates it was undertaken; when it was completed; and when it was sent to his Department. [12057/18]

138. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the plans the Strategic Communications Unit has to integrate creative and digital campaign services; and the person that finalised the terms of the contract awarded to a company (details supplied). [12058/18]

139. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the background to awarding the contract to a company (details supplied) for the provision of media strategy planning and buying services; and the person that will oversee the terms. [12059/18]

140. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the details of the contract awarded to a company (details supplied) for the provision of marketing pitch specialist services; and the length of this contract. [12060/18]

141. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the details of the contract awarded to a company (details supplied) for the development of an identity system for rollout to all Departments. [12061/18]

142. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the provision of digital services and a company (details supplied). [12062/18]

147. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the details of the contracts with companies (details supplied); the date the tender was advertised; the date the tender closed; the number of companies bidding; and the value of each contract awarded. [13022/18]

151. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the status of successful tenders (details supplied) that the Office of Government Procurement ran on behalf of his Department; the amount agreed for each successful tender to carry out the provision for services; when each provision of service will be completed; and the date for publication. [12747/18]

**The Taoiseach:** I propose to take Questions Nos. 108, 137 to 142, inclusive, 147 and 151 together.

Six tenders for specialist advice have been awarded by my Department as follows:

Service	Company	Date Tender advertised	Date Tender closed	Number of bids	Length of contract
Provision of research and insight	Behaviour and Attitudes	19/09/2017	04/10/2017	6	Initial 6 months with 1 x 12 months extension allowable
Provision of digital creative services	Radical (now trading as Core)	26/09/2017	20/10/2017	4	Initial 24 month with 2 x 12 months extensions allowable
Provision of integrated creative and digital campaign services	TBWA	26/09/2017	20/10/2017	3	Initial 24 months with 2 x 12 months extensions allowable
Provision of media strategy planning and buying services	PHD	04/10/2017	03/11/2017	5	Initial 12 months with 3 x 12 months extensions allowable
Development of Government identity system for roll out across Government Departments	Zero-G	27/11/2017	1/12/2017	3	Open

Service	Company	Date Tender advertised	Date Tender closed	Number of bids	Length of contract
Provision of marketing pitch specialist service	Agency Assessments	28/09/2017	13/10/2017	3	Initial 12 months with 1 x 12 months extension allowable

Procurement for five of these contracts was overseen by the Office of Government Procurement (OGP). In line with public procurement, one tender, in respect of identity, was managed by my Department as the estimated cost for services was under the €25,000 threshold.

Contracts were entered into with these companies to facilitate the delivery of the work programme of the Strategic Communications Unit (SCU), particularly in relation to cross Government informational campaigns.

A contract management process is in place within my Department to oversee all contracts.

The value of the contracts for Radical (Core), PHD Media, TBWA and Agency Assessments was set at a level to allow initial work to be carried out by the successful supplier in each case. The contracts put in place are term contracts. This allows for further work to be carried out by the successful supplier during that term period so the final contract value will be in excess of the original stated value if further work ensues. The contracts put in place do not guarantee any volume of business or exclusivity to the successful supplier.

A research tender with estimated costs of up to €130,000 ex Vat was published on September 18th 2017 to commission an initial report of Government and its services, and a rolling tracker of attitudes. After an open procurement process, overseen by the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) the tender was awarded to Behaviour and Attitudes. The research is comprised of an initial survey to determine citizens' view of the role of Government and the areas Government is responsible for in fulfilling its role and, a series of follow-on tracker surveys. The questionnaire which is being used in the research is in the process of being finalised and reviewed and no fieldwork has commenced. Therefore, no findings (preliminary or otherwise) are available. The results and findings of the project, along with relevant collateral such as the questionnaire, will be published once available. This is expected to be during Quarter 2, 2018.

In relation to the contract awarded to a marketing pitch specialist, this contractor provided advice and assistance regarding the appointment of communication agency partners and assists with the appointment of the most suitable agencies for communications tasks. The contract is of a year's duration, commencing in October 2017 with the option of a 12 month extension at the discretion of the Department.

*Questions Nos. 109 and 110 answered with Question No. 74.*

### **Departmental Advertising Data**

111. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Taoiseach the amount spent by his Department on advertorial type content during the tenure of each previous Taoiseach; the month and year that each such advertorial was published; and the cost in this regard in each instance. [11391/18]

**The Taoiseach:** The information sought is not readily available and would require the analysis of records dating back to the foundation of the State. Work on this scale would incur unreasonable cost to my Department

The current Financial Management System used by my Department became operational in 2002 and the information provided here comes from the records readily available.

The costs outlined in the table below relate to advertising spend by my Department, which includes both public service advertising and advertorials.

Year	Advertisements
2002	€20,145.40
2003	€44,437.63
2004	€31,071
2005	€12,988
2006	€377,045
2007	€277,365
2008	€65,525
2009	€12,825.35
2010	€11,578.89
2011	€101,061.92
2012	€562,573.48
2013	€68,128.27
2014	€26,114.75
2015	€60,878.34
2016	€24,330.87
2017	€35,528.55
2018 to mid-March	€144,112.95

*Question No. 112 answered with Question No. 73.*

### **Departmental Banking**

113. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Taoiseach the cost to his Department of negative interest rates on deposits held; and the details of same for agencies under his aegis. [11744/18]

**The Taoiseach:** My Department does not have any deposit accounts. The National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO) – the only body under the aegis of my Department – has one deposit account. It does not incur negative interest rates.

### **Departmental Advertising Expenditure**

114. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach the amount spent by his Department on third party public relations advice, communications advice, online advertising and public awareness campaigns from January 2017 to date in 2018, by year, month and company engaged in tabular form. [11774/18]

**The Taoiseach:** The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the table.

The figures included represent actual expenditure incurred, and processed through my Department's financial management system to the end of February 2018. Additional invoices for various projects are currently being processed or are yet to be received.

2017		
Company	Description	Amount
February		
FCR Media Ltd	Advertising in State Phone Directory	€5,571.90
August		
Mediavest Ireland Ltd	Advertisement regarding process for nomination of a person by the Government to the Office of Chief Justice.	€3,118.53
Q4 Public Relations	Public Relations and Communications Services for the Data Summit 2017	€30,750
October		
Mediavest Ireland Ltd	Recruitment advertisement – Nominee to European Court of Auditors	€1,968.37
December		
Cawley Nea TBWA Ltd	Creative Services in production of Regional Development Fund and Self-Employed videos	€13,351.65
Cawley Nea TBWA Ltd	Creative production for radio and digital media for Healthy Ireland campaign	€16,605

2018		
Company	Description	Amount
February		
Cawley Nea TBWA Ltd	Project 2040 – creative services	€121,661.90

*Question No. 115 answered with Question No. 73.*

### **Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements**

116. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he has spoken with Chancellor Merkel since she formed a coalition government; and if so, the issues that were discussed. [11816/18]

**The Taoiseach:** I met with Chancellor Angela Merkel yesterday in Berlin. We discussed preparations for this week's European Council, including Brexit, trade, EMU, the Western Balkans, and the tax challenges of digitalisation. Our exchanges also covered bilateral relations. I took the opportunity to thank the Chancellor for her ongoing support and solidarity in relation to our unique concerns arising from Brexit. I also congratulated her on her recent re-election as Chancellor.

### **Departmental Communications**

117. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his last meeting with the strategic communications unit, SCU, and the Secretary General of his Department; and if the recent information campaign in local and national newspapers was discussed. [11817/18]

**The Taoiseach:** I have never met the Strategic Communications Unit (SCU). The last time I met the Director of the SCU was at the Project Ireland 2040 event in Cork and Waterford on 9th March 2018. I received a briefing on the broad communications strategy for Project Ireland 2040 at a meeting in December 2017. This meeting was also attended by the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure, the Secretaries General of the Departments of Finance, Public Expenditure & Reform and Taoiseach, the Taoiseach's Chief of Staff and the Director of the SCU.

### **Departmental Staff Data**

118. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Taoiseach the number of persons holding Civil Service positions above clerical officer grade in his Department that entered the civil service via a route other than through an open competition run by the Public Appointments Service or its predecessors; the grades of each; and the basis for the non-standard recruitment. [11865/18]

**Taoiseach (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The majority of civil service positions in my Department above the clerical officer grade are either filled using panels set up by the Public Appointments Service or through secondment arrangements with other civil and public sector bodies.

Exceptions to this would be Special Adviser positions (to which Section 11 of the Public Service Management Act, 1997 applies) and posts filled by way of Excluding Order issued by the Commission for Civil and Public Service Appointments such as the post of Government Press Secretary, Deputy Government Press Secretary, Chief Strategist for the Independent Alliance, Political Coordinator for Independent Ministers in Government, etc.

There are nine Special Advisers employed by my Department: one at Deputy Secretary level; two at Assistant Secretary level; five at Principal Officer level; and one at Assistant Principal Officer (Higher) level.

There are eight positions in my Department which have been filled by way of Excluding Order: one at Assistant Secretary level; four at Principal Officer level; one at Assistant Principal Officer (Higher) level; and two at Higher Executive Officer level.

### **Public Sector Staff Remuneration**

119. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Taoiseach the directions provided to the payment of staff in the public sector and Civil Service that fall under the direction of his Department for the days during Storm Emma when staff were directed to stay at home; and if deductions in pay and annual leave were made to staff in the public sector or Civil Service as a result of days lost during the storm. [11882/18]

**Taoiseach (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Following the advice issued by the National Emergency Coordination Group on the status red weather warning issued by Met Éireann on 28 February 2018, an email was issued to staff in my Department from the Head of Corporate Affairs to advise them that they should not attend work on Thursday 29 February or Friday 1 March 2018. This advice also applied to staff in the National Economic and Social Development Office - the only body under the aegis of my Department.

A small number of staff attended work on 29 February and 1 March 2018, including those involved in the work of the National Emergency Coordination Group, and staff providing emergency cover in Corporate Affairs Division, Cabinet Secretariat, the Government Press Office, the Strategic Communications Unit and the Taoiseach's Private Office.

No deductions of pay or annual leave were made as a result of the days lost during storm Emma.

*Question No. 120 answered with Question No. 73.*

### Census of Population Data

121. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Taoiseach the 35 largest towns in Ireland in order of size; and the populations of these towns. [11430/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Census of Population 2016 publications include a comprehensive report titled Profile 2 – Population, Distribution and Movements which was published on the Central Statistics Office website on 11th May 2017.

For Census 2016, new boundaries for towns were created to replace the former 80 Legal towns, as these boundaries were abolished under the Local Government Reform Act, 2014. The new Census towns are defined as a cluster of at least 50 occupied homes with a maximum distance between them of no more than 100 metres and evidence of an urban centre, such as a shop or school within the cluster, as per the UN settlement criteria.

Towns by Area (sq km), population, gender and density, 2016

-	Towns	Total population	Males	Females	Area (sq km)	Population density (persons per sq km)
1	Drogheda	40956	19993	20963	14.8	2776.6
2	Swords	39248	19337	19911	10.4	3791.7
3	Dundalk	39004	19137	19867	23.6	1651
4	Bray	32600	15712	16888	8.1	4035.7
5	Navan (An Uaimh)	30173	14754	15419	12.9	2332.8
6	Kilkenny	26512	12923	13589	12.5	2115.9
7	Ennis	25276	12069	13207	19.6	1286.6
8	Carlow	24272	11940	12332	11.8	2063.4
9	Tralee	23691	11376	12315	18.8	1260.6
10	Droichead Nua	22742	11203	11539	8.8	2578.2
11	Portlaoise	22050	11380	10670	12.1	1829.3
12	Naas	21393	10492	10901	8.3	2567.7
13	Athlone	21349	10607	10742	15.9	1338.8
14	Mullingar	20928	10190	10738	13.3	1575
15	Wexford	20188	9784	10404	20.2	998
16	Letterkenny	19274	9375	9899	15.5	1240
17	Sligo	19199	9238	9961	10.3	1858.5

Questions - Written Answers

-	Towns	Total population	Males	Females	Area (sq km)	Population density (persons per sq km)
18	Greystones	18140	8799	9341	8.9	2036.6
19	Clonmel	17140	8433	8707	10.5	1636.4
20	Tullamore	14607	7091	7516	13.3	1101.5
21	Killarney	14504	6916	7588	8.1	1796.3
22	Midleton	12496	6101	6395	7.8	1611.6
23	Mallow	12459	6055	6404	8.2	1517.9
24	Castlebar	12068	5789	6279	7.9	1534.8
25	Cavan	10914	5254	5660	8.2	1337.3
26	Ballina	10171	4946	5225	6.7	1508.9
27	Longford	10008	4916	5092	7.2	1387.3
28	Shannon	9729	4829	4900	7	1387.5
29	Tuam	8767	4253	4514	6.5	1354.4
30	Thurles	7940	3821	4119	6.9	1151.3
31	Monaghan	7678	3731	3947	6.7	1146.1
32	Buncrana	6785	3309	3476	8.3	821.9
33	Ballinasloe	6662	3253	3409	8.6	773.8
34	Westport	6198	2936	3262	7.8	798.1
35	Roscommon	5876	2834	3042	9.1	644.8

Question No. 122 answered with Question No. 79.

### Departmental Staff Data

123. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Taoiseach the number of staff assigned in his Department to the press office, public relations or communications roles in each year since 2015; and the positions by staffing grade and designated role and for each new position when it came into existence. [11984/18]

**Taoiseach (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Details of staff assigned in my Department to the Government Press Office, public relations or communications roles as at 31 December in 2015, 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018 are set out in the following tables:

31 December 2015

Office	Position/Grade	No.
Government Press Office		
	Politically appointed staff	
	Government Press Secretary	1
	Deputy Government Press Secretary	1
	Assistant Government Press Secretary	1
	Civil servants	
	Press Officer - Assistant Principal	1

21 March 2018

Office	Position/Grade	No.
	Press Officer- Higher Executive Officer	3
	Press Officer - Administrative Officer	1
	Clerical Officer	1
Government Information Service/Merrion-Street.ie		
	Assistant Principal	1
	Executive Officer	4
Economic Division – Communications on Action Plan for Jobs		
	Assistant Principal	1
	Higher Executive Officer	1
Total		16

31 December 2016

Office	Position/Grade	No.
Government Press Office		
	Politically appointed staff	
	Government Press Secretary	1
	Deputy Government Press Secretary	1
	Assistant Government Press Secretary	1
	Civil servants	
	Press Officer - Assistant Principal	1
	Press Officer- Higher Executive Officer	4
	Clerical Officer	1
Government Information Service/MerrionStreet.ie		
	Assistant Principal	1
	Executive Officer	2
	Executive Officer - vacancy	2
Economic Division – Communications on Action Plan for Jobs		
	Higher Executive Officer	1
International, EU & Nth Ireland Division -Communications on Brexit		
	Assistant Principal	1
Total		16

31 December 2017

Office	Position/Grade	No.
Government Press Office		
	Politically appointed staff	
	Government Press Secretary	1
	Deputy Government Press Secretary	1
	Assistant Government Press Secretary	1

Questions - Written Answers

Office	Position/Grade	No.
	Civil servants	
	Press Officer - Assistant Principal	1
	Press Officer- Higher Executive Officer	4
	Clerical Officer	1
Strategic Communications Unit		
	Director - Assistant Secretary	1
	Assistant Principal Officer	4
	Administrative Officer	3
	Higher Executive Officer	2
	Executive Officer	2
	Clerical Officer	1
Total		22

21 March 2018

Office	Position/Grade	No.
Government Press Office		
	Politically appointed staff	
	Government Press Secretary	1
	Deputy Government Press Secretary	1
	Assistant Government Press Secretary	1
	Civil servants	
	Press Officer - Assistant Principal	1
	Press Officer- Higher Executive Officer	4
	Clerical Officer	1
Strategic Communications Unit		
	Director - Assistant Secretary	1
	Principal Officer	1
	Assistant Principal Officer	4
	Administrative Officer	3
	Higher Executive Officer	2
	Executive Officer	4
Total		24

*Question No. 124 answered with Question No. 80.*

*Questions Nos. 125 and 126 answered with Question No. 73.*

*Question No. 127 answered with Question No. 73.*

### Strategic Communications Unit

128. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the rationale of the strategic communications unit targeting groups on specific information following budget 2018. [11989/18]

**The Taoiseach:** Following on from Budget18, it was decided that the Minister for Finance would visit four locations nationally and present to invited local business groups, organisations

and networks. These presentations were held in Limerick and Galway. A further two presentations planned for Cork and Waterford were postponed due to the severe weather caused by Storm Ophelia.

*Question No. 129 answered with Question No. 73.*

*Question No. 130 answered with Question No. 80.*

### **Strategic Communications Unit**

131. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Taoiseach the number of contracts and description of each contract entered into by the strategic communications unit with individual journalists, freelance or otherwise, for providing content or entering partnership agreements or another purpose. [11992/18]

**The Taoiseach:** No contracts were entered into with individual journalists, freelance or otherwise for providing content or entering partnership agreements or another purpose.

*Questions Nos. 132 and 133 answered with Question No. 80.*

### **Departmental Reviews**

134. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Taoiseach the status of the senior counsel review of the way in which the Department of Justice and Equality dealt with document requests from the disclosures tribunal; if the report has been finalised; and when he plans to publish same. [12006/18]

**The Taoiseach:** 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: ([www.taoiseach.gov.ie](http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie)) on 13 December 2017.

Mr. Collins submitted his report to me on 9 March 2018 and I intend to publish it as soon as possible following the completion of my consultations with the Attorney General on the report.

*Questions Nos. 135 and 136 answered with Question No. 73.*

*Questions Nos. 137 to 142, inclusive, answered with Question No. 108.*

### **Departmental Expenditure**

143. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the payments made by his Department for his mobile phone costs. [12267/18]

**The Taoiseach:** To date, my Department has paid a total of €1,173.48 in respect of my mobile phone costs.

### **Strategic Communications Unit**

144. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach if his or the attention of his officials was

drawn to a briefing given to a person (details supplied) in relation to the strategic communications unit. [12268/18]

**The Taoiseach:** It is routine for Government officials in my Department and across Government to meet with various stakeholders to discuss Government policy. The Director of the SCU met Paddy Cosgrave at his request. At this meeting, an outline of the SCU work plan was provided. All the information that was provided is in the public domain.

*Questions Nos. 145 and 146 answered with Question No. 79.*

*Question No. 147 answered with Question No. 80.*

### National Development Plan Data

148. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the projects mentioned in the National Development Plan 2018-2027 that come under his Department's remit or bodies under its aegis; and the estimated completion dates for each project in tabular form. [13023/18]

**The Taoiseach:** The National Development Plan 2018-2027 together with the National Planning Framework, was published on 16 February, 2018 as Project Ireland 2040.

The National Development Plan (NDP) sets out the Government's intentions for investment in public infrastructure out to 2027, grounded in the strategic investment priorities identified by each Minister and in line with the strategic outcomes developed in the National Planning Framework (NPF).

Given its size and role, my Department does not have any capital expenditure allocation, and therefore there are no projects under my Department or the bodies under its aegis in the National Development Plan.

However, as with other national strategies, my Department does contribute to the overall approach and priorities which are contained in the Plan. Cabinet Committee D provided a forum in which the preparation of the NPF and the NDP were discussed in addition to a number of dedicated Cabinet meetings.

*Question No. 149 answered with Question No. 73.*

### Strategic Communications Unit

150. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Taoiseach the amount spent on the strategic communications unit since its introduction. [12544/18]

**The Taoiseach:** The amount spent on the Strategic Communications Unit since its introduction is listed in the following table:

Details	2017	2018 (to 28 February)	Total
Travel and Subsistence	€3,423.21	€299.34	€3,722.55
Advertising and Incidental Expenses	€35,186.33	€124,385.38	€159,571.71
Postal & Telecommunications	€626.48	€308.27	€934.75
Office Equipment	€10,848.60	€8,212.56	€19,061.16
Total	€50,084.62	€133,205.55	€183,290.17

### **Ministerial Staff Data**

152. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Taoiseach the details of each non-Civil Service appointment he has made to a role in his Department; the persons appointed; the role, qualifications and salary of each; and the guidelines that apply in respect of party political fundraising. [13166/18]

**The Taoiseach:** Special Advisers are non-established civil servants appointed by Government at the request of the relevant Office Holder in line with Section 11 of the Public Service Management Act, 1997. There are nine Special Advisers employed by my Department, working in my office and the office of the Government Chief Whip, one of whom is a public servant (i.e. a non-civil servant).

As the terms of the Ethics in Public Office Act, 1995, and the Standards in Public Office Act, 2001, apply to the appointment of Special Advisers and require that contracts of employment for Special Advisers should be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas, I can inform the House that the Special Adviser in question is paid at Assistant Secretary level. In addition, as the terms and conditions of employment of Special Advisers allow for the laying before the Houses of the Oireachtas of a statement of their qualifications relevant to their official functions, I can inform the House that the Special Adviser in question has a BA in History and Politics from University College Dublin (1994), a Ph.D in History from University College Dublin (1997) and is a Fellow of Trinity College Dublin since 2008.

There are a further three non-civil servants working in my Department; two are public servants working in the Strategic Communications Unit and one staff member is seconded to my Department from a private sector organisation and working on Brexit-related issues in my Department's International, EU and Northern Ireland Division. The two public servants working in the Strategic Communications Unit are working at levels equivalent to the civil service grades of Assistant Secretary and Higher Executive Officer respectively. The staff member seconded to my Department from the private sector is working at Assistant Principal Officer level. While I am constrained by Data Protection legislation in relation to the release of the qualifications of these individuals, I can confirm that they are well qualified to carry out the duties assigned to them.

All staff working in the Department of the Taoiseach are bound by the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour. Section 5 of the Code deals specifically with the issue of civil servants and politics. Apart from the provisions in relation to civil servants and politics, the Code also applies to the posts of:

- Special Adviser;
- Government Press Secretary;
- Deputy Government Press Secretary;
- Assistant Government Press Secretary; and
- all Private Office staff holding temporary non-established positions and whose tenure is coterminous with that of the relevant Office Holder (e.g. personal assistants, personal secretaries, civilian drivers, etc.).

**Economic Data**

153. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Taoiseach the classification of the entertainment sector in the national accounts. [11996/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The entertainment sector is included under NACE REV.2 section R (Arts, entertainment and recreation). An excerpt of Table 21 of the National Income and Expenditure Annual Results showing the Gross value added at current basic prices for section R as well as the total is as follows:

**Table 21 Gross Value Added at Current Basic Prices**

NACE REV. 2 - section	NACE REV. 2 - division	Description	2011 - €m	2012 - €m	2013 - €m	2014 - €m	2015 - €m	2016 - €m
R	90-93	Arts, entertainment and recreation	1,895	1,722	1,782	1,765	1,765	1,863
		Gross value added at current basic prices	157,082	160,308	164,382	177,007	243,181	255,358

1 Preliminary

**Defence Forces Funding**

154. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the Defence Forces are not permitted to retain intellectual property and the associated income in cases in which they contribute innovation, ideas and technology to joint projects with industry partners. [13042/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Government approved arrangements in July 2011, whereby Enterprise Ireland would support the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces capability development through engagement with Irish-based enterprise and research institutes on the use and application of innovative civilian technologies in the military sphere. The White Paper on Defence reinforces this arrangement stating the Defence Forces will make available resources and expertise, including advice and information, to Enterprise Ireland supported companies and research institutes. In return the Defence Forces are exposed to new technologies and research that could inform the direction of defence capabilities.

The White Paper on Defence recognises the need to “resolve the issues of intellectual property rights and possible endorsement of such products or research.” In this context a project has been created, jointly staffed by civilian and military personnel. The project team is currently developing an Intellectual Property Policy for the Defence Organisation. It is expected that the policy will be finalised and approved in the coming months.

Innovation is currently recognised and rewarded in the Defence Forces - the Chief of Staff Innovation Award 2018 was recently launched in recognition of innovative expertise within the Defence Forces. This award offers Defence Forces personnel an opportunity to shape future capability development. The winner(s) of the award will receive a place on the TechInnovate Intrapreneur Training Programme hosted by National University of Ireland.

**Permanent Structured Co-operation**

155. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the steps that have and will be taken to ensure that companies here have the full support of all relevant State agencies in particular Enterprise Ireland and the IDA in accessing PESCO projects (details supplied) and funding; and if Irish companies will be assured that they will not be placed at a competitive disadvantage or precluded from these opportunities. [13043/18]

156. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the discussions or interactions he has had with other Departments and State agencies in respect of PESCO and Ireland's access to research and development and project funding; and the steps being taken to apply for such funding. [13044/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 155 and 156 together.

While PESCO does not provide for direct funding to Member States or to companies established in Member States, some capability development projects developed under PESCO may be eligible for funding from the European Defence Fund, in particular from the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP).

The text of the proposed Regulation to establish the EDIDP was negotiated between Member States in the Friends of the Presidency format in the second half of 2017. My Department worked closely with colleagues in the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation to ensure that the Programme reflected the interests of Ireland, particularly in the area of opportunities for SMEs.

The Regulation is expected to be adopted in May and my staff will continue to work with Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation in particular, through this negotiation process to ensure Irish interests are reflected in the final programme.

In addition to the specific work carried out on the development of the above Programme, my Department and the Defence Forces have an on-going arrangement with Enterprise Ireland. This arrangement provides for Enterprise Ireland to support the Department of Defence/Defence Forces in the development of military capability. This is achieved by raising the awareness of, and engaging with, Irish-based enterprise and research institutes, including third level colleges that are engaged in relevant and related activities. Two committees, comprising of personnel from the Department of Defence, Enterprise Ireland and the Defence Forces oversee this arrangement. (The Defence Enterprise Committee and the Defence Enterprise Ireland Co-ordination Committee). The Committee meetings are regularly briefed on developments in the EU in relation to Horizon 2020, European Defence Agency, EDIDP, European Defence Fund and PESCO.

PESCO also features as a topic at meetings of the Interdepartmental Group on the European Union and Brexit which is attended by senior officials across Government Departments.

I have now confirmed Ireland's participation in two PESCO projects (1) EU Training Mission Competence Centre and (2) Upgrade of Maritime Surveillance. As these projects are still at an early stage it is unclear what opportunities may be available within these projects for Irish industry/SMEs and whether they will be eligible for EDIDP funding. However my staff will ensure that the existing relationship with Enterprise Ireland is utilised to facilitate the onward communication of any opportunities that may arise.

Furthermore a joint Military and Civil project team has been created within the Defence Organisation to establish a Security and Defence Enterprise Group. This Group would support Irish-based enterprise in their engagement with EU institutes and funding programmes,

to the benefit of Irish Enterprise and Defence Forces capability. Once established this Group will provide the Defence Organisation with a further means for communicating opportunities (including information related to accessing EU funding) to interested parties.

### **Humanitarian Assistance Scheme**

157. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if his attention has been drawn to the case of a person (details supplied); and his plans to review the limits for the Donegal humanitarian scheme in this case. [13075/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** In early September, 2017 the Government established an emergency humanitarian support scheme to assist small businesses and community, sporting and voluntary bodies in County Donegal which through no fault of their own were unable to secure flood insurance and were flooded following the exceptionally heavy rainfall of August 22 and 23. A similar scheme was successfully operated countrywide in 2015/16 following Storm Desmond and another one is currently ongoing following Storm Eleanor at the start of this year.

The purpose of the emergency scheme, which was administered by the Irish Red Cross, was to provide a mechanism whereby those small businesses and organisations could apply to receive a once-off ex-gratia contribution towards the costs of returning their premises to their pre-flood condition. The scheme applied to buildings, contents, fixtures and fittings.

The scheme had two stages and the total level of support available for both stages combined was capped at €20,000. The first stage provided a contribution of up to €5,000, depending on the scale of damage incurred and following a quick verification process. The outstanding balance of amounts up to a maximum of €20,000 was paid to applicants following a detailed assessment of the application.

I have made enquiries with the Irish Red Cross and they have confirmed that the Donegal business in question is a property owner/landlord and has received the maximum amount of €20,000 that was available under the scheme.

The scheme was established to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to small business owners to allow them to resume operating as quickly as possible. There are no plans to review the funding limits for the scheme at this stage.

### **Defence Forces Data**

158. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of promotional positions waiting to be filled throughout the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13107/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Government is committed to maintaining a strength level of 9,500 personnel for the Permanent Defence Force (PDF). This comprises 7,520 Army, 886 Air Corps and 1,094 Naval Service personnel, as stated in the 2015 White Paper on Defence.

I am advised by the Military Authorities that the strength of the Permanent Defence Force as of 31 January 2018, was 9,138 (Whole Time Equivalent).

The table outlines the promotional posts vacant within the PDF, by Army, Air Corps and

Naval Service as at 31 January 2018, the latest date for which such figures are available.

The manpower requirement of the Defence Forces is monitored on an ongoing basis in accordance with the operational requirements of each of the three services. In this regard, promotions are ongoing within the Officer ranks in order to fill rank vacancies. The interview stage of the competition, to fill vacancies to the ranks of Sergeants and above, has taken place over the last few months. Vacancies are currently being filled from this competition. It is my intention that targeted recruitment along with promotions will continue to be carried out within the resource envelope allocated to Defence.

#### PDF vacancies as at 31 January 2018

	Col	Lt Col	Comdt	Captain	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	Sgt	Cpl
Army	-1	7	2	26	0	0	9	17	207	99
Air Corps	1	-1	- 2	25	0	0	-1	0	25	48
Naval Service	1	0	-7	28	0	0	1	0	56	33
Total	1	6	-7	79	0	0	9	17	288	180

\* There are currently 77 Army Cadets, 38 Air Corps Cadets and 24 Naval Service Cadets in training.

\*\* Some overseas appointments are currently not filled.

#### Note:

#### Equivalent Naval Service Ranks

Lieutenant Colonel/Commander

Commandant/Lieutenant Commander

Captain/Lieutenant (NS)

Sergeant Major/Warrant Officer

Battalion Quartermaster

Sergeant/Senior Chief Petty Officer

Company Quartermaster Sergeant/Senior Petty Officer

Company Sergeant/Chief Petty Officer

Sergeant/Petty Officer

Corporal/Leading Seaman

#### Defence Forces Training

159. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which Army, Naval Service and Air Corps training continues to be in line with modern and international best practice; if particular procedures are shown to be in need of updating; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13108/18]

162. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the degree to which training of the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps including Reserves is scheduled in

the course of the next three years; the extent to which such ongoing training meets international best practice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13111/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 159 and 162 together.

The primary function of training and education in the Defence Forces is to develop and maintain the capabilities necessary to enable it to fulfil the roles laid down by Government.

The Defence Forces conduct training and education under four broad categories namely; Leadership, skills, career and collective training. Leadership training is the medium through which the Defence Forces ensure that personnel are prepared for exercising command authority across the full range of military functions both at home and overseas in International operations. Skills training is the medium through which the Defence Forces ensure that its personnel have the requisite individual, specialist, and crew skills. Career training and education provides the organisation with the necessary pool of leaders and commanders at all levels. Collective Training allows military personnel to use their individual, crew, specialist and career training together, to develop integrated and coherent combat forces.

The scheduling of training in the Defence Forces, including the Reserve, is underpinned by an analysis of training needed to meet operational output requirements and capability development needs. A long term strategy is adopted with current planning horizons out to 2021.

I am advised that the Defence Forces seek to constantly benchmark training across all three arms against best military and academic practice. Military best practice is ensured by implementing a policy of standardisation that is in line with EU and NATO/Partnership for Peace partners. Academic best practice is ensured by benchmarking courses through accreditation under the National Framework of Qualifications which is validated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland.

The Defence Forces deliver military programmes and modules meeting national and international standards. The Defence Forces also engage with external educational institutions in order to facilitate organisational learning. This engagement with national and international educational institutions, military and civilian, aims to ensure that the Defence Forces retain currency with regards to best international practice and employ all relevant modern training methods.

I am committed to ensuring that the personnel of the Defence Forces continue to be trained to appropriate standards.

### **Defence Forces Personnel Data**

160. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of women in each branch of the Defence Forces at all ranks; the extent to which these numbers have fluctuated in each of the past five years to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13109/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The number of female personnel (Whole Time Equivalent) serving at all ranks in the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service over the last five years is set out in the table below, together with the current strength as of 31 January 2018:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Army	450	464	458	476	496	482
Air Corps	31	35	33	33	34	35
Naval Service	65	64	61	59	70	70
Total	546	563	552	568	600	587

The Government is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for men and women throughout the Defence Forces and to the full participation by women in all aspects of Defence Forces activities. This is underlined by a commitment in the Programme for Government to increase the level of female participation in the Defence Forces.

The Defence Forces have no restrictions with regard to the assignment of men or women to the full range of operational and administrative duties, and all promotions and career courses are open to both sexes on merit.

### Departmental Budgets

161. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which the budget available to his Department remains sufficient to meet requirements in the course of 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13110/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The total gross budget allocation for the Defence and Army Pensions Votes in 2018 is over €946 million. This allocation provides for the pay and allowances of members of the Defence Forces as well as Civil Servants and Civilian Employees of the Department, ongoing Defence Forces standing and operational costs and also facilitates investment in essential equipment and infrastructure. It also provides for the payment of pension entitlements to former members of the Defence Forces.

The budget allocation allows the Defence Forces to deliver on all their assigned roles, both at home and overseas, as set out in the White Paper on Defence.

*Question No. 162 answered with Question No. 159.*

### Defence Forces Equipment

163. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which the Defence Forces are adequately equipped to deal with emergencies in respect of which they might be called upon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13112/18]

164. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which specialist skills in dealing with security threats remain available to the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13113/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 163 and 164 together.

My priority as Minister with Responsibility for Defence is to ensure that the operational capability of the Defence Forces is maintained to the greatest extent possible to enable the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service to carry out their roles as assigned by Government.

At National level, representation on the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning by both the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces ensures the fullest coordination and cooperation in the event of an emergency and that the command structure within the Defence Forces is compatible with the requirements in this area.

In accordance with the Framework for Major Emergency Management, primary responsibility for responding to emergencies such as severe weather events or terrorist attacks rests with the three designated principal response agencies, namely, the relevant Local Authority, An Garda Síochána, and the Health Service Executive. The Defence Forces provide the fullest possible assistance to the appropriate Lead Department in the event of a natural disaster or an emergency situation in its Aid to the Civil Authority and Aid to the Civil Power (ATCP) roles. Major Emergency Plans have been developed by local and regional authorities and these Plans identify the procedures for requesting assistance from the Defence Forces.

I also wish to assure you that the Defence Forces retain a wide range of specialist skills and equipment. The full spectrum of Defence Forces personnel and equipment are available for deployment in response to any emergencies that may arise. The Operations Directorate in Defence Forces Headquarters manages the necessary cross-service coordination in responding to requests for support. In this context, the security environment is kept under constant review. An Garda Síochána can request a broad range of specialist supports from the Defence Forces including Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams and the Army Ranger Wing. These arrangements have proved effective in all emergencies encountered to date.

The acquisition of new equipment for the Defence Forces remains a clear focus for me. Future equipment priorities for the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service is considered in the context of the White Paper on Defence as part of the capability development and equipment priorities planning process and I wish to assure you that significant investment in equipment is taking place in the coming years in this context.

I am committed to ensuring that the personnel of the Defence Forces continue to be equipped and trained to best international standards and I can confirm that the Defence Forces keep their operational plans and response capabilities for dealing with a wide range of threats under constant review. I am satisfied that the Defence Forces are equipped and resourced to respond, as appropriate, to any such events were they to occur in this State.

### **Search and Rescue Service Provision**

**165. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which the Air Corps and Naval Service continue to cooperate in air and sea rescue missions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13114/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Defence Organisation provides a broad range of services in accordance with its primary security role while it also undertakes a diverse range of non-security-related tasks.

With reference to Search and Rescue, since 2004 the Irish Coast Guard has overall responsibility for the provision of Search and Rescue services within the Irish Search and Rescue region. Both the Naval Service and the Air Corps provide support to the Irish Coast Guard in maritime Search and Rescue operations on an “as available” basis. A Service Level Agreement is in place setting out their roles and responsibilities in this regard.

The Defence Organisation will continue to provide support, as available, to the Irish Coast Guard in respect of Coast Guard Search and Rescue operations.

## Defence Forces Deployment

166. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to participate with other European countries engaged in peace keeping and or peace enforcement throughout the EU and other countries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13115/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** As of 1 March 2018, Ireland is contributing 586 personnel to 9 different missions throughout the world. The main overseas missions in which Defence Forces personnel are currently deployed are the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) with 377 personnel and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in Syria with 135 personnel.

Other missions in which Defence Forces personnel are currently deployed are the EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) with twenty (20) personnel; the EUFOR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina with five (5) personnel; the NATO-led international security presence (KFOR) in Kosovo with twelve (12) personnel and the EU Common Security and Defence Policy naval mission in the Mediterranean, Operation Sophia with four (4) personnel. Ireland also has observers and staff in several United Nations, EU and OSCE posts.

In February 2018, I secured Government approval for the deployment of a contingent of the Permanent Defence Force to serve once again as part of Operation Sophia. Arrangements are currently being made for two Irish naval vessels to deploy consecutively under rotation for a period of approximately 30 weeks in total.

With regard to any future deployments of Defence Forces personnel overseas, Ireland receives requests from time to time in relation to participation in various missions and these are considered on a case-by-case basis. In addition at both Ministerial and official level, there is continual engagement relating to current peacekeeping missions particularly with other EU countries.

Due to Ireland's current level of commitment in overseas peacekeeping operations, notably to UNDOF and UNIFIL, we are not in a position to make any significant commitment to other missions at this time.

The current contribution of some 586 personnel to overseas missions reflects the Government's continued commitment to our responsibilities in the area of international peace and security.

## Defence Forces Strength

167. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which membership of the local Defence Forces continues to be maintained at a required level; the extent to which ongoing training standards and requirements are met; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13116/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The White Paper on Defence provides for a combined establishment of 4,169 personnel for the Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve (inclusive of the proposal to increase the Naval Service Reserve establishment from 200 to 300 personnel). I am aware of the shortfall between this figure and the current combined strength of the Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve which, as of 31 January 2018, is 1,777 effective personnel. However, given the competing recruitment

demands at present, where PDF recruitment is and should remain a priority, recruitment to the Reserve is continuing. A total of 139 new recruits were inducted into the RDF in 2017 and there is on-going engagement with applicants from the 2017 recruitment campaign that should yield further inductions. In addition a new recruitment campaign will be launched in 2018.

In terms of ongoing training standards for the Reserve, the White Paper sets out a developmental path for the organisation. On a day to day basis, the Reserve undertakes training in preparation to assist the PDF, when required. Training procedures are constantly reviewed in order to ensure that the men and women of the RDF can meet the roles assigned.

I would like to assure the Deputy that I remain committed to the ongoing development of the RDF within the framework set out in the White Paper on Defence

### **Ministerial Staff Data**

168. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the details of each non-Civil Service appointment he has made to a role in his Department; the persons appointed; the role, qualifications and salary of each; and the guidelines that apply in respect of party political fundraising. [13156/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** Since becoming Minister for Defence, I have made no non-civil service appointments to my Department.

Two Special Advisers were recruited directly and are classed as unestablished Civil Servants. The provisions of Paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2 of the code of Conduct for Civil Servants concerning restrictions on political activity, do not apply to holders of such roles.

Civilian employees are also recruited by my Department on an ongoing basis and are employed at various military installations throughout the country to support the Defence Forces in tasks such as the upkeep and maintenance of military infrastructure and equipment. The grades are spread across a wide spectrum and also include specialists such as healthcare professionals and technicians. Appointments are made following open competition and with the approval of the Minister.

### **Ministerial Staff Data**

169. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the details of each non-Civil Service appointment he has made to a role in his Department; the persons appointed; the role, qualifications and salary of each; and the guidelines that apply in respect of party political fundraising. [13160/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** There are a number of categories of staff in my Department who work for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and who are not established civil servants. They are Special Advisers, civilian drivers, local staff overseas and temporary Clerical Officers.

I have appointed four Special Advisers in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

- Ms. Caitríona Fitzpatrick is my Special Adviser and Political Director. She was previously a Special Adviser in my role as Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

21 March 2018

- Mr. Matthew Lynch is my Special Adviser on Cabinet, Oireachtas and Leader's Questions. He was previously in the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation as Special Advisor to Ms. Frances Fitzgerald TD in her then role as Tánaiste.

- Mr. Chris Donoghue is my Special Adviser and Communications Director. He was previously employed as Political Editor of the Communicorp group of radio stations and before that as a presenter on Newstalk.

The Special Adviser to the Minister of State for European Affairs is Mr. Paul Fox, who was previously employed as a Client Manager with PR 360 and before that as Adviser to Mr. Paudie Coffey TD at the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government.

My Special Advisers are on the Principal Officer salary scale. The Special Adviser to the Minister of State for European Affairs is on the Assistant Principal Officer salary scale.

In addition, I have appointed four civilian drivers to the Department who work with the Ministers of State. Civilian drivers are paid €650.92 per week.

All of these appointments were made in line with "Instructions to Personnel Officers - Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil" which included "Guidelines on staffing of Ministerial offices" issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Every appointment in my Department is subject to the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour.

### **Passport Applications**

170. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if a person who is travelling in over three weeks time can book an appointment with the Passport Office regarding a first-time passport application for an infant; and if this application will be processed. [13199/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Passport Service operates a counter service in both the Dublin (Mount Street) and Cork offices where applicants who need their passport application processed in timeframes shorter than those offered by the Passport Express and the online passport application service can be accommodated. While priority is given to applicants who need their passport issued within these timeframes there are a limited number of appointments for those travelling in more than three weeks. Counter appointments can be booked online at [www.passportappointments.ie](http://www.passportappointments.ie).

Applications must be compliant with the Passports Act, 2008. Detailed information regarding passport application requirements and the various application channels available can be found on the Passport Service's website [www.DFA.ie/passport](http://www.DFA.ie/passport).

### **Undocumented Irish in the USA**

171. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if proposals have been put recently to the United States Administration in relation to immigration reform with particular reference to the undocumented Irish; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13216/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The

Government continues to attach a high priority to achieving a solution for the undocumented Irish living in the United States.

The Taoiseach visited Washington, D.C., from 13 to 16 March, on the occasion of St Patrick's Day and had the opportunity to meet with the President, the Vice-President, Speaker Ryan, and the members of the Congressional Friends of Ireland group. He raised the issue of the undocumented Irish in the United States and underlined the Government's ongoing interest in seeking a resolution to their plight.

I also raised the issue when I visited Washington, D.C., last month and our Embassy in Washington, D.C., remains very active in pursuing a solution.

The Embassy is in ongoing contact with representatives of the Administration and with contacts from both sides on Capitol Hill.

The Embassy is also working closely with and assisting Deputy John Deasy in his role as the Government's Special Envoy to Congress on the Undocumented.

The Government will continue to explore all options with a view to finding a workable solution to this longstanding issue, while fully respecting the right of the United States to set its own immigration policies.

I can assure the Deputy that we will continue to do all that we can to help the undocumented Irish, and their families here in Ireland.

### **Election Monitoring Missions**

172. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the efforts his Department can make with regard to attempting to ensure that fair access is permitted to all political parties and political leaders in order to participate in parliamentary democratic elections in Bangladesh; and his views on the political situation in Bangladesh. [13230/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Deputy may recall that arrangements for the 2014 elections in Bangladesh were disputed and were ultimately boycotted by the main opposition party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which therefore does not currently hold any seats in parliament. Voter turnout was also very low.

The 2016 local elections, which took place with opposition participation, were tainted by violence and electoral irregularities.

A general election is due to be held in Bangladesh by 2019 at the latest and I am concerned at reports that have emerged in relation to the breakdown in a free and fair democratic process there. While Ireland does not have a resident diplomatic representation in Bangladesh.

Ireland's Ambassador to India is accredited to Bangladesh and is monitoring the situation closely. In addition, officials at my Department engage regularly with the European External Action Service working through its EU delegation in Dhaka.

Members of the European Parliament Delegation for Relations with the Countries of South Asia had the opportunity to visit Bangladesh in February last. They expressed their concerns at the deterioration of the human rights situation in the country over the past few years, and took note of reports on hindrance to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, enforced

disappearances, extra-judicial killings and violence against women.

The Delegation invited the Bangladeshi authorities to step up efforts as regards these concerns and to facilitate the valuable work of civil society in addressing these issues. The members of the Delegation drew particular attention to their hope that the political environment would become less confrontational and hostile in coming months and urged the Bangladeshi authorities to facilitate the necessary conditions for inclusive, free and fair general elections in 2019.

I urge the Government of Bangladesh to take on board these concerns and to act upon them in order to help develop much-needed public confidence in future electoral processes in the country. I firmly believe that respect for, and the promotion of, human rights and democracy, including free, fair and inclusive elections in the period ahead, in accordance with international standards for democratic elections, will contribute to creating a more secure and prosperous Bangladesh.

I can assure the Deputy that my Department will continue to monitor the situation closely and maintain contact with actors on the ground in Bangladesh in the weeks and months ahead.

### Passport Applications Data

173. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the target and actual turnaround time for passport applications across all passport services in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13231/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Turn-around times for passport applications in Ireland are outlined in the following tables:

Type of Passport Application	Current Average Turnaround Times
Online Passport Application	7 working days
An Post Passport Express Renewal Applications	16 working days
An Post Passport Express First Time Application, Lost/Stolen/Damaged Replacements	25 working days
Northern Ireland Passport Express Renewal Applications Northern Ireland Passport Express First Time Application,	15 working days
Northern Ireland Passport Express Lost/Stolen/Damaged Replacements	25 working days

Type of Passport Application	Current Target Turnaround Times
Online Passport Application	10 working days
An Post Passport Express Renewal Applications	15 working days
An Post Passport Express First Time Application, Lost/Stolen/Damaged Replacements	20 working days
Northern Ireland Passport Express Renewal Applications	15 working days
Northern Ireland Passport Express First Time Application, Northern Ireland Passport Express Lost/Stolen/Damaged Replacements	20 working days

Information on turnaround times for passport applications is updated weekly on the Passport Service website, [www.dfa.ie/passport](http://www.dfa.ie/passport). The highest proportion of applications are submitted through the Passport Express postal channel. The average turnaround time for renewal applications submitted through An Post Passport Express currently stands at 16 working days. Applications in other categories, such as first time applicants or those involving lost or stolen passports, take longer as additional checks are undertaken.

The award winning online passport application service, which was launched in March last year, allows adult citizens to renew their passports online from anywhere in the world without any paperwork or witnesses. The target turnaround time for online passport application service is 10 working days plus postage time. The majority of online applications are currently being processed within 7 working days, well ahead of target. As more applicants avail of the service, the efficiency gains will help improve turnaround times more broadly.

The Passport Service operates a counter service in both the Dublin (Mount Street) and Cork offices where applicants who need their passport application processed in timeframes shorter than those offered by the Passport Express and online facility can be accommodated in certain circumstances. Appointments for this counter service can be booked online at [www.passport-appointments.ie](http://www.passport-appointments.ie).

### Passport Applications Data

174. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of passport applications received to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13232/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** From 1 January – 14 March, the Passport Service received over 198,000 applications in total, an increase of 7% on the same period last year.

The Passport Service is working hard to minimise the impact of high application volumes on turnaround times and continues to closely monitor the level of passport demand to ensure that all resources, including staffing, are effectively deployed.

### Passport Applications Data

175. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of passport applications received from Britain and Northern Ireland in each of the years 2012 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13233/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Tracking of passport applications is in general carried out against channel of application rather than by other metrics, including country of origin. Bearing this in mind, the following general breakdown of applications will give the available detail on numbers of passport applications received from Northern Ireland and Great Britain for 2012 to 2017 and in 2018 to date:

Year	Northern Ireland	Great Britain
2012	41,124	45,646

Year	Northern Ireland	Great Britain
2013	44,122	42,441
2014	48,475	43,449
2015	53,715	46,229
2016	67,582	63,453
2017*	82,274	80,752
2018**	21,022	21,873

\*Adjusted end of year figure takes in to account returns (applications that have been resubmitted to the Passport Service) and represents settled figures for end of year.

\*\*1 Jan. – 14 Mar. 2018 only

### Departmental Staff Data

176. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of full-time equivalent staff permanently employed by his Department and assigned to the passport service in each of the years 2012 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13234/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The following table details the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff permanently employed by my Department and assigned to the Passport Service on 1 January for each of the years requested:

Year	No. of Staff (FTE)
2012	306.8
2013	297.8
2014	286.9
2015	272.6
2016	269.7
2017	301.7
2018	322.5

In addition to this, 20 permanent staff have joined the Passport Service since the beginning of this year. Furthermore, the Passport Service has received sanction for 220 Temporary Clerical Officers (TCOs) this year to be appointed to the Passport Offices in Dublin and Cork in order to respond to seasonal demands and anticipated application increases.

### Good Friday Agreement

177. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the concerns outlined recently in a report by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Human Rights and Equality Commission here in respect of human rights protections as provided for under the Good Friday Agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13236/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The

Joint Committee of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission is an important institution under the Good Friday Agreement with a mandate to consider human rights issues on the island of Ireland.

I met with the Joint Committee on 23 January last to discuss Human Rights under the Good Friday Agreement and Brexit. This was a very worthwhile exchange with members of the Joint Committee setting out a number of issues and concerns which are raised by the UK exit. I was pleased to discuss with the Joint Committee the Government's views and responsibilities as a co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement, and our ongoing engagement through the Article 50 negotiations, to ensure the protection of the Agreement in all its parts.

The Joint Committee published its policy statement on the UK withdrawal from the European Union on 13 March, making a number of recommendations to ensure the ongoing protection of rights on the island of Ireland. The Joint Committee is uniquely placed as an institution of the Good Friday Agreement to address the issues that Brexit raises for human rights on this island. The Joint Committee's policy statement and continuing engagement on these important issues is therefore very welcome, and indeed essential, as all those with responsibilities seek workable and agreed solutions through the Article 50 negotiations to ensure the protection of the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts.

The Joint Committee has provided its policy statement to the Government and careful consideration is being given to the recommendations, taking account of the Joint Committee's mandate and expertise, and the Government's role and responsibilities as a co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement, as well as the provisions of that Agreement.

The Joint Committee's recommendations refer to issues which also directly relate to responsibilities of the UK Government and to the role of the European Union. I understand that the Joint Committee has therefore also provided its policy statement to the UK Government, to the European Commission Article 50 Task force and to the European Parliament for consideration as appropriate.

In the context of the UK withdrawal from the EU, the Government is determined to ensure that the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts is fully protected, including the provisions relating to rights. The human rights and equality provisions of the Good Friday Agreement are central to the Peace Process, supporting the confidence and willingness of all communities to participate in and operate the agreed political institutions and protect everyone equally.

The Government appreciates the solidarity and support which has been shown by all of our EU partners in respect of Ireland's unique issues and concerns, including the protection of the Good Friday Agreement. These concerns are being progressed by the Union through the Article 50 negotiations with the UK.

On 8 December last, a Joint Report between the EU and UK negotiators was agreed, and this included important commitments in respect of protecting the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts. On 18 February, the European Commission published a draft Withdrawal Agreement including a Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The Protocol translates into legally-binding terms the firm commitments made in December. Accordingly, the Protocol proposes that the UK ensures no diminution of rights, as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement, including by respecting EU non-discrimination laws, and that these commitments are implemented through a dedicated mechanism. The Protocol also proposes that the UK facilitate the related work of the institutions and bodies of the Agreement, including the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Joint Committee of representatives of the Human Rights Commis-

sions of Northern Ireland and Ireland. The Protocol also clearly acknowledges that the people of Northern Ireland who choose to identify as Irish, and therefore as citizens of the EU, will continue to enjoy the rights, opportunities and benefits that come with EU citizenship.

More work will be required between the UK and the EU in phase two on rights and equality issues, as is provided for in the Joint Report. The Government is continuing to engage intensively on these issues.

### **Financial Services Ombudsman Data**

178. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the number of requests for additional funding, staff resources or expertise that have been made by the Office of the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman since January 2016; the purpose of the requested additional funding, staff resources or expertise; the response of his Department to each request in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13146/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Office of the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman only came into existence on 1 January 2018. Prior to this, staffing in the Financial Services Ombudsman Bureau did not require the consent of the Minister for Finance so there were no such requests in 2016 or 2017.

Section 15 (4) of the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman Act 2017 provides

“The Ombudsman, with the approval of the Minister and the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, shall determine—

(a) the terms and conditions of employment (including terms and conditions relating to remuneration and allowances) of staff appointed under this section, and

(b) the grades of the staff of his or her office and the numbers of staff at each grade.”

I can confirm that there have been no requests for my approval of additional staff since the start of the year.

Section 3(2) of the Act provides

“(2) The expenses incurred by the Ombudsman in the performance of his or her functions under this Act—

(a) in so far as they relate to the investigation of complaints regarding financial service providers shall be paid out of moneys provided by the financial services industry levy, and

(b) in so far as they relate to the investigation of complaints regarding pension providers shall, to such extent as may be sanctioned by the Minister, be paid out of moneys provided by the Oireachtas.”

Section 43 (4) provides that that “The Council shall, with the consent of the Minister, prescribe by regulation the financial services industry levy to be paid having regard to the expenditure incurred or reasonably expected to be incurred by the Office in relation to complaints received by the Office in relation to financial service providers.” The Council has not, as yet, sought my consent to regulations.

Section 16 (1) provides that

“The Ombudsman may, with the approval of the Minister and with the consent of the

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, from time to time engage such consultants or advisers as he or she considers necessary for the performance of his or her functions.” I can confirm that there have been no requests for my consent under this section as yet.

### **VAT Rate Reductions**

179. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a proposal by an organisation (details supplied) regarding the VAT threshold for publicans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13024/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** VAT is governed by the EU VAT Directive with which Irish VAT law must comply. In Ireland businesses are not obliged to register for VAT, and can consequently remain exempt from VAT, where their turnover in a 12 month period is less than €75,000 (in the case of businesses supplying goods) and €37,500 (in the case of businesses supplying services).

Ireland’s VAT registration thresholds date from EU accession and the VAT Directive only provides for the raising of those thresholds by Member States to maintain their value in real terms. That is, they may only be increased in line with inflation. The Irish VAT thresholds were increased to their current values on 1 May 2008. As inflation levels currently remain lower than the rate applying in 2008, it is not possible to increase the VAT registration thresholds.

I would point out that Ireland’s VAT registration threshold for small enterprises supplying services is the ninth highest in the EU while the goods threshold is the third highest.

While the registration thresholds are designed to reduce the administrative burden on businesses and Revenue, registration thresholds are not intended as a means of keeping small businesses permanently outside the VAT system. Therefore in setting registration threshold levels, the objective is to strike an appropriate balance between the desirability of reducing the administrative burden on small businesses and the need to avoid undermining tax compliance or causing competitive distortions relative to registered firms.

### **Banking Operations**

180. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a bank (details supplied) applies a 20% derating factor as part of its lending criteria to persons whose employment income is derived in Northern Ireland; his plans to address same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13080/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Having regard to the particular risks associated with foreign currency loans, the Mortgage Credit Directive, which is transposed into Irish law by the European Union (Consumer Mortgage Credit Agreements) Regulations 2016, provides for some particular consumer protection measures in respect of such lending. (For the purpose of the Directive and transposing Regulations a foreign currency loan is a mortgage where the credit is denominated in a currency other than that in which the consumer receives the income or holds the asset from which the credit is to be repaid, or is in a currency other than that of the EEA Member State in which the consumer is resident). The Regulations apply to any relevant credit agreement entered into from 21 March 2016 and, in respect of a foreign currency loans, it requires that mortgage lenders must at least ensure that they either (i)

provide to the consumer borrower a right (if conditions specified by the creditor are met) to convert the loan into an alternative currency or (ii) there are other arrangements in place (such as risk warnings or limits on the amount the consumer has to pay under the agreement) to limit the exchange rate risk to which the consumer is exposed under the foreign currency credit agreement.

While the transposing Regulations provide a legal framework within which creditors must operate, including such matters related to exchange rate risk, the extension of credit in a foreign currency by creditors to consumer borrowers is not precluded by the Regulations and is a commercial decision of the individual lender (including also in relation to the particular commercial terms upon which the lender proposes to offer the foreign currency loan). As Minister I would not have a role in such commercial decision making by individual lenders and neither do the Central Bank's housing loan mortgage lending measures (as put in place for macro prudential financial stability purposes) or Consumer Protection Code specify any particular requirements in relation to foreign currency mortgages and/or foreign currency earnings.

### **Help-To-Buy Scheme Assessment**

181. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Finance the reason the value of a site is taken into account in the calculation of the loan-to-value ratio for the help-to-buy scheme in cases in which a family member has gifted a site for a single house to a family member with no need to borrow against the value of the site; his views on whether this will make the scheme inaccessible to many persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13121/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** S.477C of the Taxes Consolidation Act sets out the requirements of the Help to Buy incentive. It provides that a qualifying first time buyer must take out a loan in an amount equal to at least 70% of either the purchase price of the property in the case of a purchased house or the value of the property in the case of a self-build house. The valuation of a self-build is as approved by the lender as determined in accordance with the Central Bank's macro prudential rules. These rules stipulate the valuation as being the site cost plus the cost of construction.

My Department's tax expenditure guidelines require that tax incentives must seek to avoid deadweight. It is my view that extending the incentive to those first-time buyers whose loan to value is below 70% would not be consistent with that requirement.

### **Ministerial Staff Data**

182. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the details of each non-Civil Service appointment he has made to a role in his Department; the persons appointed; the role, qualifications and salary of each; and the guidelines that apply in respect of party political fundraising. [13159/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I wish to inform the Deputy that the details of each non-civil service appointment I have made to a role in the Department of Finance; the persons appointed; the role and salary of each are shown below.

None of these appointments are involved in party political fundraising.

Name	Role	Salary
Ms Deborah Sweeney	Special Adviser	4th point Principal Officer (Standard) PPC scale
Mr Stephen Lynam *	Special Adviser	3rd point Principal Officer (Standard) PPC scale
Mr Ed Brophy	Special Adviser	5th point Principal Officer (Standard) PPC scale
Mr Paul Boyle	Civilian Driver to Min. D'Arcy	€691.00 per week
Mr Matty Ford	Civilian Driver to Min. D'Arcy	€691.00 per week

\*Mr Stephen Lynam resigned on 16 March, 2018.

### Betting Legislation

183. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the threat posed to the good cause fund generated by the national lottery in accordance with the National Lottery Act 2013 by unregulated offshore bet-on-lottery operators; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13176/18]

184. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to tackle the growing threat posed to the good cause fund by offshore bet-on-lottery operators; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13177/18]

185. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the fact that unregulated offshore bet-on-lottery operators are using a legislative loophole through a remote bookmaker licence issued by the Irish National Excise Licence Office to offer bets on the National Lottery and EuroMillions consequently posing a threat to the good cause fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13178/18]

186. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the fact that through a remote bookmaker's licence issued by the Irish National Excise Licence Office offshore bet-on-lottery companies are operating here under no regulatory authority or regime; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13179/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 183 to 186, inclusive, together.

I have been advised that the regulation of gambling is provided for under the Betting Act, 1931 and the Gaming and Lotteries Acts 1956, and is the responsibility of the Minister for Justice and Equality. Where there is legislative provision for the licensing of operators, the Revenue Commissioners issue licences in accordance with those provisions.

The Betting Act 1931, as amended, provides the legislative basis for licensing and control of Bookmakers, and in order to carry on the business of Bookmaking, an operator must hold a licence. Legislation providing for the licensing of remote bookmakers was provided for in the Betting (Amendment) Act 2015 and this requirement became effective from 1 August 2015 as provided by the Betting (Amendment) Act 2015 (Commencement) Order 2015. Under this legislation it is prohibited to offer remote betting services to customers in Ireland without a licence, regardless of where the operator is located. Revenue is responsible for taking action against unlicensed remote operators offering betting services illegally to customers in Ireland.

I have been advised that in accordance with the Betting Act 1931, Revenue maintains a regularly updated register of operators to whom Remote Bookmaker's Licences are granted. There are currently 56 Remote Bookmaker's Licences approved and 43 are held by non-resident operators.

An operator applying for a Remote Bookmaker's Licence for the first time, or renewing such a licence, is required to apply for a Certificate of Personal Fitness (CPF). In accordance with the Betting Act 1931, the Minister for Justice and Equality is responsible for issuing CPFs to officers representing remote operators. A CPF confirms that an individual, or the relevant officer of a Partnership or Body Corporate, is a fit and proper person to hold a Remote Bookmaker's Licence. Revenue may only issue a Remote Bookmaker's Licence where the applicant holds a CPF.

As Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform I am aware of this issue regarding off-shore bet-on-lottery operators and my officials have met with both the Office of the Regulator of the National Lottery (ORNL) and with the National Lottery licence holder, Premier Lotteries Ireland (PLI) in regard to this matter. My officials continue to engage with ORNL and PLI in respect of reviewing the impacts of these on-line lottery betting websites on the Irish National Lottery and in examining any potential actions that could be considered to address this issue.

The Minister for State at the Departments of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform with special responsibility for Public Procurement, Open Government and e-Government, Mr. Patrick Donovan, T.D. is also due to meet PLI in the coming weeks in relation to this and other matters.

### **State Properties**

187. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 91 of 23 November 2017 and 68 of 17 January 2018, the status of lands at a location (details supplied) for which Fingal County Council has sought a deed of waiver to transfer the land to its ownership; the timeframe for his Department to make a decision and respond to the council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13132/18]

**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.

An application for waiver of the property referred to has been made by Fingal County Council, which is being reviewed by the CSSO. A significant amount of the required documentation has been provided by Fingal County Council. Part of the process involves alerting various stakeholders that a waiver of the Minister's interest in the property is being sought, and allowing them a period of time to submit observations. The time limit for submitting these observations has not yet expired so a final consideration of the application cannot be made for a number of weeks. In the meantime the Office of Public Works has informed Fingal County Council that it has no objection to them carrying out any emergency works on the site.

188. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of requests for additional funding, staff resources or expertise that have been made by the Central Bank of Ireland since January 2016; the purpose of the requested additional funding, staff resources or expertise; the response of his Department to each request, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13141/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has no responsibility for the Central Bank of Ireland in relation to requests for additional funding, staff resources or expertise. Funding, staff resources and expertise are a matter for the Central Bank Commission and the Commission is not required to seek the permission of the Department in relation to those matters. The Central Bank is statutorily independent under both Irish and EU law and is not subject to the rules of voted expenditure in the manner suggested in the Deputy's question.

### **State Bodies Data**

189. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of requests for additional funding, staff resources or expertise that have been made by the Commission for Public Service Appointments since January 2016; the purpose of the requested additional funding, staff resources or expertise; the response of his Department to each request in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13142/18]

190. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of requests for additional funding, staff resources or expertise that have been made by the Standards in Public Office Commission since January 2016; the purpose of the requested additional funding, staff resources or expertise; the response of his Department to each request in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13143/18]

191. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of requests for additional funding, staff resources or expertise that have been made by the Office of the Ombudsman since January 2016; the purpose of the requested additional funding, staff resources or expertise; the response of his Department to each request in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13145/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 189 to 191, inclusive, together.

As the allocation for the vote of the Office of the Ombudsman includes the Ombudsman, the Standards in Public Office Commission and the Commission for Public Service Appointments, one cannot look at each in isolation and I will therefore respond to Questions Nos. 189, 190 and 191 collectively.

The Ombudsman, the Standards in Public Office Commission and the Commission for Public Service Appointments are funded through the Office of the Ombudsman Vote which comprises of 5 separate statutory bodies (the Office of the Ombudsman, the Standards in Public Office Commission, the Office of the Information Commissioner, the Commissioner for Environmental information and the Commission for Public Service Appointments). The Management Team of the Office of the Ombudsman, which is headed by a Director General, has responsibility for the administration of all the component offices and comprises of senior management from all the various offices.

Annual submissions are made to my Department as part of the Estimates process, which outline the anticipated additional resourcing requirements likely to impact on the Vote during the following year. I am advised that The Director General and the Management Team regularly review the administrative workload and adequacy of staffing resources in each of the component offices. They subsequently decide on where resources can most usefully be allocated and staff can be transferred between the various offices.

During the course of the Estimates process for 2017 and 2018, the Office of the Ombudsman sought additional staffing resources for the extension of the Ombudsman's remit to cover Direct Provision and the resources that would be required if the remit of the Ombudsman was extended to cover complaints from prisoners. It also sought funding for an Assistant Legal Advisor at Assistant Principal level and an additional Assistant Principal whose responsibilities would include work on Strategic and Business Planning, Risk and Governance.

The Office also sought additional staffing resources for the conducting of investigations under the Ethics Acts and in anticipation of the commencement of enforcement provisions under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015, both of which come under the Standards in Public Office Commission. It was further indicated that there would be additional resources required for the implementation of the provisions of the Public Sector Standards Bill 2015, but that they would be difficult to estimate.

There were no specific additional funding requirements for the CPSA included in the Estimates submissions for the Office of the Ombudsman for 2017 and 2018.

My Department consider requests for additional resources from these Offices collectively, in the context of the adequacy of the overall funding provision for the Office of the Ombudsman Vote, rather than consideration of requests individually.

### **Ministerial Staff Data**

192. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the details of each non-Civil Service appointment he has made to a role in his Department; the persons appointed; the role, qualifications and salary of each; and the guidelines that apply in respect of party-political fundraising. [13164/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I wish to inform the Deputy that there are currently two Special Advisers employed in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Ms Deborah Sweeney was appointed as Special Adviser to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform with effect from 6 May 2016. Ms Sweeney was re-appointed as Special Adviser to the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform with effect from June 2017.

Mr. Stephen Lynam was appointed as Special Adviser to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform with effect from 6 May 2016. Mr. Lynam was re-appointed as Special Adviser to the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform with effect from June 2017.

Ms Sweeney is currently on the fourth point of the Principal Officer PPC Scale. Mr. Lynam resigned as Special Adviser on 16 March 2018 and was on the third point of the Principal Officer PPC scale.

Mr. Ed Brophy was appointed as Special Adviser to the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform from 12 February 2018. Mr. Brophy is currently on the fifth point of

the Principal Officer PPC Scale.

The appointments were made in line with “Instructions to Personnel Officers - Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil”, which include “Guidelines on staffing of Ministerial offices” issued by my Department.

Please find details below of Ministerial Drivers appointed to my Department:

Name	Role	Salary	Date appointed
Mr. Dimitri Cafolla	Civilian Driver to Minister Paschal Donohoe	€691.01 per week	09/05/2016
Mr. Derek Murphy	Civilian Driver to Minister Paschal Donohoe	€691.01 per week	29/08/2016
Mr. Frank O’Riordan	Civilian Driver to Minister of State Patrick O’Donovan	€691.01 per week	07/07/2017
Mr. Jeremiah Roche	Civilian Driver to Minister of State Patrick O’Donovan	€691.01 per week	07/07/2017

Ministerial Staff, in line with all staff working in my Department, are bound by the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour, and Circular 09/2009 Civil Servants and Political Activity.

### Schools Property

193. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress made to date by his Department in releasing its interest in a building (details supplied). [12998/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I can confirm that I have agreed in principle to release my interest in the school building referred to by the Deputy.

Officials in my Department have been in contact with the property owner’s representative to inform them of the steps which need to be taken in order to release my interest in the property.

The legal process required to release my interest in the property is currently underway and the Chief State Solicitor’s Office acting on behalf of my Department is liaising with the legal representative of the property owner in this regard.

### Schools Building Projects Status

194. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when approval for stage 2B will issue for a project (details supplied). [12999/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The major building project to which the Deputy refers to is at an advanced stage of architectural planning, Stage 2(b) detailed design stage, which includes the application for statutory approvals and the preparation of tender documents.

All statutory approvals have been secured.

Following the receipt and review of a Brief Change report, the Design Team is currently

revising the Stage 2(b) submission and will submit the revised documents to my Department for review.

When the revised Stage 2(b) has been reviewed my Department will revert to the school at that time with regard to the further progression of the project to tender stage.

### **Special Educational Needs Service Provision**

195. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13002/18]

**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 SENO responsibility includes planning and co-ordinating the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs, including supporting children and parents in identifying school placement options and resource 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. 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>.

### **School Funding**

196. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if capital funding will be made available to a school (details supplied) in view of increasing enrolments and inadequate accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13050/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department received an application for the provision of additional accommodation at the school referred to in respect of both classroom and ancillary accommodation.

When assessing the application it was noted that the existing school accommodation comprises of four mainstream classrooms, two Special Education Teaching (SET) rooms, a library/computer room, staff room and a general office. With a staffing complement of four main-

stream teachers and one SET teacher it was determined that, as there was currently no deficit of mainstream class accommodation, additional accommodation was not required at this point. My Department wrote to the school authority to convey the position.

I further wish to advise, should enrolment numbers justify the appointment of an additional mainstream teacher, and if it was not possible to accommodate such a teacher within the school, the school could submit an application to my Department for an additional classroom accommodation at that point.

### **School Staff Appeals Mechanism**

197. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an appeal by a school (details supplied) will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13051/18]

204. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an appeal by a school (details supplied) in County Donegal will be considered in view of its need for extra staffing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13096/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The criteria used for the allocation of teaching posts is published annually on the Department website. The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the previous 30 September.

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

The staffing schedule also includes an appeals mechanism for schools to submit a staffing appeal under certain criteria to an independent Appeals Board. Details of the appeal process and application form are available in Circular 0010/2018, “Staffing Arrangements in Primary Schools for the 2018/19 School Year”, which is published on the Department website.

The school referred to by the Deputy submitted an application for consideration by the Appeals Board at its March meeting under the Class size criteria. The Appeals Board considered the appeal and determined that it did not satisfy all the published criteria as set out in Circular 0010/2018.

The school has been notified of the outcome of the appeal. The Appeals Board operates independently of the Department and its decision is final.

### **Special Educational Needs Data**

198. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the national schools in County Clare with ASD units; the capacities, enrolments and associated staff numbers for same; his plans for projected future requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13055/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** This Government is committed to ensuring that all children with Special Educational Needs, including those with autism, can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in school settings through the primary and post primary school network.

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

In respect of children with ASD who cannot be accommodated in mainstream education, they may be enrolled in special classes or special schools where more intensive and supportive interventions are provided. Special classes are for students who have a recommendation for a special class placement in their professional reports.

The NCSE, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports as required, once a child has been enrolled in a school. 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, including the establishment of special classes in mainstream primary and post primary schools.

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 of 6:1 at primary level and 6:1.5 at post primary level, and also have Special Needs Assistant support normally amounting to 2 SNAs for a class of 6 children.

With regard to Co. Clare, there are currently 21 ASD special classes in the County of which 3 are ASD Early Intervention classes, in which a total of 15 pupils are currently enrolled. Fourteen are ASD classes attached to mainstream primary schools in which 73 pupils are currently enrolled and 4 are ASD classes attached to post primary schools. The NCSE are planning to open 3 new classes in County Clare in the forthcoming school year.

Details of all special classes for children with special educational needs, including those in County Clare, are available on [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

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.

In addition, the NCSE will consider:

- the school's accommodation and accessibility
- the number of special classes, if any, already in the school.

Should the NCSE identify the requirement for additional special class placements in an area they will contact schools in the area in relation to establishing an ASD special class.

In order to identify need in any area for the forthcoming school year, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) refer to professional reports indicating students require the support of a special class. In this regard parents/guardians of students with ASD seeking a special class placement should provide the relevant professional report to their local Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) to inform the planning process.

The report must state that:

- S/he has ASD
- S/he has significant learning needs that require the support of a special class setting and

the reasons why this is the case.

Parents/Guardians who may need advice or are experiencing difficulties in locating a school placement, including special class placement, should contact their local Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) who can assist in identifying an appropriate educational placement for their child. Contact details are available at <http://ncse.ie/seno-contact-list>.

The 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.

### Special Educational Needs Service Provision

199. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if assistance is available for a student (details supplied) in County Kildare. [13071/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Ensuring that children with special educational needs are supported and given the opportunity to reach their full potential is a key priority for this government.

My Department's policy aims to ensure that all children with Special Educational Needs 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.

All state-funded primary and post primary schools have been allocated additional resources to provide for children with special educational needs enrolled in school.

In 2018, almost €1.8 billion will be invested in Special Education, nearly one fifth of the overall Education budget, and up 43% since 2011.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), which is a separate statutory agency, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support.

SENO responsibility includes 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. In dealing with parents of children with special educational needs, SENOs will keep parents informed of what resourcing decisions are being made on their child's behalf. The SENO will also discuss any concerns that parents have about the present or future educational needs of their child. Contact details for all SENOs is available at <http://ncse.ie/seno-contact-list>.

All students with learning difficulties have access to additional teaching support in school. It is a matter for schools to monitor and utilise their allocation of additional teaching support to best support the needs of identified pupils, in accordance with the Department's guidance. The teaching time afforded to each individual pupil is decided and managed by schools, taking into

account each child's individual learning needs.

On 1 September 2017, the new Special Education Teaching allocation model was introduced, which provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on a school's educational profile. This allocation allows schools to provide additional teaching support for all pupils who require such support in their schools and for schools to deploy resources based on each pupil's individual learning needs.

The new allocation model gives greater flexibility to schools in relation to the manner in which they use their resources. Schools may deploy special education teachers in a variety of ways in order to effectively meet pupils' needs, for example, in-class support, small groups, team teaching or withdrawal.

The SNA scheme is designed to provide recognised schools with additional adult support staff to cater for the care needs of pupils with disabilities in an educational context, where the nature of these care needs have been outlined in professional reports as being so significant that a pupil will require adult assistance in order to be able to attend school and to participate in education and also to minimise disruption to class or teaching time for the pupils concerned, or for their peers, and with a view to developing their independent living skills.

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.

My Department provides funding to schools towards the cost of assistive technology for pupils with special educational needs in Primary, Post Primary and Special schools for personal computers and specialist software for educational purposes under the Assistive Technology scheme, as set out in my Department's Circular 0010/2013. This Circular states that equipment is provided under the scheme for children with more complex disabilities who require essential specialist equipment to access the school curriculum, which they do not already have, or which cannot be provided for them through the school's existing provisions.

Other supports available to schools include:

- the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) delivers a consultative, tiered service delivery model to schools, in line with international best practice for the effective and efficient delivery of educational psychological services that best meet the needs of all pupils/students in schools. This service delivery model allows NEPS psychologists to support schools to provide an effective continuum of support to meet the needs of pupils/students.

- NCSE's Support Service has brought under its control the Special Education Support Service (SESS), the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) and the Visiting Teacher Service for children who are deaf/hard of hearing and for children who are blind/visually impaired (VTSVHI). The Support Service provides advice and support to schools on the education and inclusion of students with special educational needs, providing in-school support for support teachers, continuing professional development for teachers, and support to schools on the management of challenging behaviour. It will also enhance the multi-disciplinary capacity of the education system through providing access to expert knowledge in areas such as autism, speech and language therapy and challenging behaviour.

- Special school transport arrangements.

- Enhanced capitation grants for special schools and special classes attached to mainstream primary and post primary schools.

- Modification of school buildings.

Post primary school students with special needs may have special arrangements made for them while sitting State examinations such as the Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate. Candidates with disabilities can apply through their school for reasonable accommodation during examinations. Further details of supports are available from the State Examinations Commission (SEC) Reasonable Accommodations Section.

My Department is not aware of specific concerns relating to provision for the student to whom the Deputy has referred. I am also advised that the student has not come to the specific attention of the NCSE.

Details of supports provided by the NCSE to all schools is available on a county basis on its website at [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

### **Schools Building Contractors**

200. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when approval will be given to pre-qualify contractors for a new school building (details supplied) in County Donegal. [13076/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The major 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 recently submitted the stage 2(b) report. Following examination of the stage 2(b) report, it became apparent that the submission was incomplete. A revised stage 2(b) submission has recently been requested from the school and its Design Team. Upon receipt and review of the revised 2(b) submission, my Department will revert to the school with regard to the further progression of the project at that time.

### **School Funding**

201. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application for funding by a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13078/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department received an application from the school in question for temporary classrooms to accommodate two additional teacher appointments in September 2018. The application has been considered and my Department has recently conveyed approval in principle for this accommodation to the school.

The school has also submitted an application for significant capital funding for major building works at the school. The application will be considered and a decision will be conveyed to the school authority as soon as this process has been completed.

## Schools Building Projects Status

202. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a development for a new school (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13082/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The new building for the school to which the Deputy refers together with a new primary school building on the same site has recently been devolved for delivery to the local Education and Training Board (ETB).

A Service Level Agreement for the delivery of the project is currently being finalised with the ETB. The next steps are for the ETB to procure a Design team to design the buildings, obtain the necessary statutory planning permissions and to move the project to tender and construction in due course.

## School Enrolments

203. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the intake of students for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13095/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In relation to the school referred to by the Deputy, Educate Together and my Department had a constructive meeting on Friday 16 March, 2018 concerning the case put forward by Educate Together in relation intake of students and the case the Patron body had made to increase its enrolments.

Both parties reiterated their commitment to work together to increase diversity of school provision in line with the needs of the communities in these areas.

While it is acknowledged that this needs to be managed within the constraints of the accommodation that can be made available and having regard that these are areas of stable demographics, these schools, taking the above into account, can be facilitated to develop over time.

It is envisaged that the detailed response to the case submitted by Educate Together will issue from the Department in the next week.

*Question No. 204 answered with Question No. 197.*

## Tionscadail Tógála Scoileanna

205. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Oideachais agus Scoileanna cén uair a cheadófar airgead chun síneadh a chur le scoil agus chun athchóiriú a dhéanamh uirthi freisin; cén fáth a bhfuil moill leis an gceadú sin; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [13122/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Cheadaigh mo Roinn deontas suntasach cineachta i mí Mheán an Fhómhair 2014 don scoil atá igceist le haghaidh síneadh buan agus oibreacha athchóirithe a d'éascódh le gach foirgneamh réamhdhéanta a bhaint ó shuíomh na scoile.

Tá mo Roinn ag fanacht le tuilleadh eolais maidir le scóip mhéadaithe na n-oibreacha. Déanfar an cheist a scrúdú níos mó nuair a fhaigheann mo Roinn an t-eolas agus nuair a dhéanfar measúnú air.

## Departmental Properties

206. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department is in ownership of a common area (details supplied). [13150/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I can confirm to the Deputy that the area referred to is in my ownership; the property is leased to the Bishop of Meath for school use.

## Ministerial Staff Data

207. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the details of each non-Civil Service appointment he has made to a role in his Department; the persons appointed; the role, qualifications and salary of each; and the guidelines that apply in respect of party political fundraising. [13157/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The table give details of the ministerial appointments made at my Department to assist the Ministers of State and I in carrying out our duties.

They are non-established Civil Servants and as such they are subject to the terms of the Civil Service code of conduct and this is stated in their contracts of employment. Section 5 of the code addresses the matter of Civil Servants and politics and my Department does not have separate guidelines in relation to party political fundraising. However, the appointees concerned are subject to the terms of the Ethics in Public Offices Acts.

Under the terms of the said Acts a copy of their respective contracts of employment were laid before the Oireachtas. In relation to the special advisers, details of their qualifications were also laid and these documents can be viewed by the Deputy.

Mr. Richard Bruton, T.D. - Minister for Education and Skills

NAME	GRADE
Patrick Cluskey	Special Adviser
Sarah O'Neill	Special Adviser
Sean Divilly	Civilian Driver
John Murray	Civilian Driver

Mary Mitchell O'Connor, T.D. - Minister of State

NAME	GRADE
Roy Dooney	Special Adviser
Lynda McQuaid	Special Adviser
John Slattery	Civilian Driver
Neil Brady	Civilian Driver

John Halligan, T.D. - Minister of State

NAME	GRADE
Michelle Clancy	Special Adviser
Edward Cunningham	Civilian Driver
Gerard O'Brien	Civilian Driver

### Schools Building Projects Status

208. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the date for profiling commencement of construction of a school (details supplied) from Q3 2019 will be reconsidered in view of the fact that the design team has indicated that it may be ready to commence construction by late 2018 or Q1 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13172/18]

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

A letter recently issued to the school and the design team outlining the projected timeframe for progression of this project to tender and construction stage and the steps involved. In that context, this school building project has been profiled to commence construction in Quarter 3 2019.

The current status of this project is that it is expected to shortly complete stage 2(b) of the architectural planning process. This is the final stage of the design process for any school. The design team has indicated that it expects to complete and submit the stage 2(b) report for this project by end March 2018. The review by the Department of the stage 2(b) report generally takes between 10 to 12 weeks.

Upon receipt and review of the stage 2(b) and providing no other issues arise it is projected that this project will be authorised to complete pre-qualification of contractors in Quarter 3 2018.

My Department has requested the design team to review the project programme taking into account the amended date for completion and submission of the stage 2(b) report and the steps and projected timeframes involved in moving this project to tender and construction stage.

My Department is fully committed to completing the project as soon as possible.

### Teacher Career Breaks

209. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the payments made to members of the Houses of the Oireachtas under the Oireachtas leave scheme for teachers in each of the years 1985 to 2000, by school, in tabular form. [13185/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I understand that the leave and pay arrangements applicable to teachers who were members of the Houses of the Oireachtas during the period referred to by the Deputy were

(i) the teacher members of the Oireachtas were entitled to the payment of full salary and increments as recognized teachers by the paymaster;

(ii) fully qualified replacement teachers were appointed on a temporary basis and were paid salary by the paymaster;

(iii) the total salary cost of the replacement teachers together with their superannuation contributions and employers PRSI costs were deducted from the salaries of the members of the Oireachtas. The balance of salary, if any, was payable to the individual teacher members of the Oireachtas.

The paymaster of the members of the Oireachtas issued the balance of salary payment direct to the individuals and not to the schools in which they were employed.

It was announced in the Supplementary Budget of 7 April 2009 that the Government had decided to discontinue the arrangement whereby teacher members of the Houses of the Oireachtas could keep the difference between their teachers salary and the cost of employing a replacement.

There was a Government decision in February 2011 that teachers who became members of the 31st Dail and the 24th Seanad had the option of applying for a career break from their teaching posts. The option of applying for a career break replaced the special leave arrangements that existed.

The option of applying for a career break continues to apply for teacher members of the houses of the Oireachtas.

### **Health Screening Programmes**

210. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if primary schools are encouraged to participate in health screening carried out by the HSE; the reason a school would not participate in this programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13204/18]

211. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a record is held within his Department of schools that do or do not participate in HSE health screening; if so, the details of the schools by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13205/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department does not operate the HSE health screening programme and I am not therefore in a position to comment on the matters raised by the Deputy or provide the details sought.

It appears that these matters would be more appropriate to my colleague, the Minister for Health.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

212. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the timeframe to secure a site for a school (details supplied) in view of the fact that the situation has been ongoing for some time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13240/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Officials in my Department have been working closely with officials from Cork County Council to acquire a permanent site to meet the needs of the school to which the Deputy refers. A number of potentially

suitable sites were identified and comprehensively technically assessed.

Engagement is currently underway with a landowner in respect of a site option for the school and all parties are working hard to advance the acquisition process.

Officials from my Department will shortly be in contact with the school authorities to keep them updated of progress in this regard.

### **Legal Aid Service Staff**

213. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason there are no registered solicitors on the free legal aid list for County Meath. [13004/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy may be aware, Abhaile, the national mortgage arrears resolution service, was launched in October 2016 and it includes a new scheme of independent financial and legal advice and assistance to insolvent homeowners who are at risk of losing their homes due to mortgage arrears. The scheme is co-ordinated by the Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, and is available across the country through the Money Advice and Budgeting Service, MABS, the Insolvency Service of Ireland, the Citizens Information Board and the Legal Aid Board.

It should be noted that the solicitor panels set up by the Legal Aid Board for Abhaile are by court area rather than by the county in which the solicitor is based.

For persons who have been granted legal aid for proceedings for a review of a rejected personal insolvency arrangement under section 115A of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012 (as amended), the Legal Aid Board will supply the person with a list of solicitors who are willing to act in the Circuit Court venue where the proceedings are being taken.

The table below indicates the numbers of solicitors who are available to provide services for the scheme in Trim Circuit Court - the designated court in County Meath for listing home repossession cases.

Duty Solicitor Panel: 8\*

Solicitor Consultation Service Panel: 12

PIA Review Legal Aid Service Solicitors Panel: 14

\* Note: In addition, the Legal Aid Board assigns a solicitor from the duty solicitor panel to each sitting of the county registrars' court. The legally assisted person does not select the solicitor.

Persons who wish to avail of the consultation solicitor service, for the Abhaile scheme, may bring a legal advice voucher to any solicitor on the panel, irrespective of the court jurisdiction or their place of residence.

### **Garda Data**

214. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each Garda division in the Dublin region who took the mountain bike course in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13037/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will appreciate that the Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána, including by arranging for the training of its members and civilian staff and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

I am advised by the Commissioner that mountain bike training was not provided in the Dublin Metropolitan Region, DMR, during 2016 due to competing resource demands. In 2017, more than 200 members of An Garda Síochána successfully completed mountain bike training nationally, of whom 61 successfully completed the training for the DMR. Mountain bike training for 2018 is due to commence in the DMR next week.

A breakdown of the number of Gardai by Division in the DMR who successfully completed mountain bike training in 2017 for the Deputy's information follows:

Gardai by Division

Division	2017
DMR East	6
DMR North	8
DMR North Central	12
DMR South	9
DMR South Central	14
DMR West	12
Totals	61

**Garda Transport Data**

215. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of new marked large Garda public order vans that came into the fleet in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13038/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will appreciate, decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda vehicles are a matter for the Garda Commissioner in light of his identified operational demands and the availability of resources. As Minister, I have no direct role in the matter.

However, I have been informed by the Garda authorities that nine large vans have been commissioned by An Garda Síochána for the Garda fleet for use in Public Order situations since 2016 - 5 in 2016, 4 in 2017, and none to date in 2018.

In addition, 54 medium-wheel-base twin-cell vans were commissioned in 2016.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Government's Capital Plan 2016 – 2021 provides €46million for investment in the Garda Fleet to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit for purpose fleet and this is in addition to the investment of almost €30 million in the period 2013 to 2015.

In the period 2013 to end of 2017, almost €44 million has been invested in the fleet with some 2,000 vehicles coming on stream in that period.

**Direct Provision Data**

216. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of families in a direct provision centre (details supplied) in Dublin 22 by size and number of children; the number with leave to remain; the reason for the recent transfer of 50 families from another centre; when the contract for the direct provision centre ends; and his plans for its renewal. [13052/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** Details of the family profiles at the centre in question are outlined in the following table:

Size of Family	Number of families	Total number of persons
Lone Parent with 1 child	17	34
Lone Parent with 2 children	5	15
Lone Parent with 3 children	5	20
Lone Parent with 4 children	4	20
Lone Parent with 5 or more children	2	10
Married/Partner	2	4
Married/Partner with 1 child	3	9
Married/Partner with 2 children	1	4
Married/Partner with 3 children	3	15
Married/Partner with 4 children	4	24
Total	46	155

The total number of persons presently in the accommodation centre with some form of permission to remain in the State is 83.

Of this figure there are:

- 15 who comprise 3-person family (5 families);
- 16 from 4-person families (4 families);
- 15 from 5-person families (3 families)
- 13 from 5+ person Families (2 families)

I can advise the Deputy that 34 persons were transferred into the centre in question in February 2018 from another accommodation centre.

In this instance, the relevant contract in that other accommodation centre had come to an end and as a result the centre closed. Residents who were still in the protection process, total 87 persons, were allocated alternative accommodation within the entire accommodation portfolio.

The contract in this centre is valid until close to the end of 2018. Any renewal of the contract will be subject to a full, open, transparent EU wide competitive process.

### **Garda Data**

217. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount paid to contractors for information technology services by An Garda Síochána in each of the years 2009 to 2017; the contractors engaged; the amount paid; if the contractors engaged are subject to extensions of the original contract period; if he is satisfied that public procurement

rules were adhered to fully when engaging contractors for ICT services over the period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13079/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will appreciate that the management of the Garda Vote is the responsibility of the Garda Commissioner as the accounting officer for An Garda Síochána and, as Minister, I have no function in relation to the matter.

In this context, the Commissioner is fully accountable to the Public Accounts Committee and the Comptroller and Auditor General in relation the Garda Vote.

Unfortunately, in the time available, I am not in a position to provide the Deputy with the specific information sought. However, when this information has been compiled I will revert directly to the Deputy.

### **Stardust Fire**

218. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his Department will make the various expert reports commissioned to assist the tribunal of Inquiry on the fire at the Stardust, Artane, Dublin 5 in 1981 publicly available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13089/18]

219. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his Department will make the expert report of a person (details supplied) submitted to the tribunal of Inquiry on the fire at the Stardust, Artane, Dublin 5 in 1981 publicly available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13090/18]

220. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his Department will make the expert report of a person (details supplied) submitted to assist the tribunal of Inquiry on the fire at the Stardust, Artane, Dublin 5 in 1981 publicly available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13091/18]

221. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his Department will make the expert report of a person (details supplied) submitted to assist the tribunal of Inquiry on the fire at the Stardust, Artane, Dublin 5 in 1981 publicly available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13092/18]

222. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his Department will make the expert report of a person (details supplied) submitted to assist the tribunal of inquiry into the fire at the Stardust, Artane, Dublin 5 in 1981 publicly available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13093/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 218 to 222, inclusive, together.

My Department has recently provided a copy of the expert report from the firm “Cremer and Warner Ireland Ltd.” to the Stardust Victims’ Committee. The persons referred to in the “Details supplied” associated with the Deputy’s Parliamentary Questions Nos. 219 and 221 were engaged by the firm concerned at the time of the “Tribunal of Inquiry on the Fire at the Stardust, Artane, Dublin” on 14 February 1981.

My Department does not possess a copy of the expert report of the person referred to in the “Details supplied” associated with the Deputy’s Parliamentary Question No. 220. However,

my Department is engaging with the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to ascertain if the report concerned is held by that Department.

The report specified by the Deputy in Parliamentary Question No. 222 was provided by the then State Pathologist at the request of the then Dublin Coroner in the context of the aforementioned Tribunal. The question of making that report publicly available is in the process of being considered having regard to, inter alia, the sensitivities of survivors and the relatives of those killed in the tragedy and discussions are ongoing with the relevant offices. A decision on the matter will be made as soon as possible and communicated to the Stardust Victims' Committee.

### **Garda College**

223. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the correspondence he has had with OLAF regarding its investigation into the banking arrangements of An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13148/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will be aware under the Garda Síochána Act 2005 it is the Garda Commissioner who is the Accounting Officer for the Garda Vote and is in law responsible for ensuring that the appropriate controls apply to expenditure within the organisation.

The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) is an organ of the European Union and is independent in the performance of its functions. I am advised by the Commissioner that An Garda Síochána is co-operating fully with the OLAF investigation in connection with the 2017 Garda Internal Audit Interim Report in relation to financial procedures in the Garda College. As this investigation is on-going it would not be appropriate to provide any additional information at present.

### **Ministerial Staff Data**

224. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the details of each non-Civil service appointment he has made to a role in his Department; the persons appointed; the role, qualifications and salary of each; and the guidelines that apply in respect of party political fundraising. [13163/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Insofar as non-civil service appointments are concerned I can confirm that I have two special advisors - Ms Sarah Kavanagh and Mr. Tom Fabozzi. Both advisors are remunerated on the Principal Officer standard pay scale (PPC). The appointment of both advisors was conducted in line with the guidelines from the Department of Public and Expenditure and Reform on Ministerial appointments. As per the terms of their appointment special advisors are subject to the provisions of the Ethics in Public Office Act 1995 and the Standards in Public Office Act 2001.

Sarah Kavanagh is my senior Special Advisor. She holds a BA degree in History and Politics (UCD, 2000); an MA degree in Politics (UCD, 2001), an MA in Political Communication (DCU, 2007); a Post Graduate Diploma in Legal Studies (Honorable Society of King's Inns, 2010); and a Barrister at Law Degree (Honorable Society of King's Inns, 2012). Ms Kavanagh worked in the Houses of the Oireachtas as a Parliamentary Assistant and Senior Policy Officer for nine years and as a Special Advisor in three Government Departments over the last four years.

Mr. Tom Fabozzi is my Communications Advisor. He worked in a senior communications role for Fine Gael for five years and as a Special Advisor in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for 14 months and is a former journalist and producer. Mr. Fabozzi holds a BA degree in European Studies (U.L., 1991) and an MA degree in Political Communications (DCU, 2007).

Having regard to the significant legislative programme that I am responsible for, I am currently in the process of appointing Robert A. Bourke BL to the position of Legal Advisor on similar terms and conditions to those cited above. Mr. Bourke has over ten years' experience as a practising barrister and worked for nine months as a Legal Researcher for the Company Law Review Group. He holds a BA degree in Business, Politics and French (TCD, 2000); a Post Graduate Diploma in Legal Studies (Honorable Society of King's Inns, 2004); and a Barrister at Law Degree (Honorable Society of King's Inns, 2006).

### **Garda Youth Diversion Projects**

225. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason there will only be one service provider per Garda Division (details supplied). [13174/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** As the Deputy will be aware my Department is obliged to carry out a Call for Proposals process during 2018 in relation to the provision of Garda Youth Diversion Project (GYDP) services, to fully comply with requirements related to the co-funding of projects by the European Social Fund Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020.

I can assure the Deputy that the new approach to GYDP provision which is being developed in preparation for the Call for Proposals will not reduce the level of service that already exists, or the importance of community involvement in its delivery. On the contrary, the intention is to build on, update and improve a very valuable service so that it is available to every child or young person in the country who requires it. This improvement to the service will have benefits for significant numbers of young people in the State who cannot currently access GYDP services. While certain aspects of the new service model have been determined, work is ongoing to complete the full details to be included in the Call for Proposals, which is expected to issue later this year. I am convinced that community ownership and participation of the projects is an essential dimension that must be preserved and strengthened in the working out of this process.

To ensure State-wide coverage of GYDP services for young people, (which does not exist at present), the intention is that, in general, service provision will be aligned with Garda Divisions or other appropriate local areas with a distinct community identity, as may be agreed during the consultation process. The consideration of such local arrangements will apply particularly in relation to areas with a large number of potential participants on GYDPs.

I can assure the Deputy that my Department is committed to ensuring continuity of service for participants on GYDPs and to maintaining a community driven approach to their operation, as well as minimising any disruption for workers and service providers. In this regard, I am advised that the Call for Proposals process will facilitate existing service providers forming consortiums which could apply to provide services under the new GYDP model.

Careful consideration is being given to all issues raised by stakeholders involved in GYDPs as part of a wide-ranging consultation process, which is currently ongoing. This process includes arrangements for an extensive series of meetings with community based organisations and project workers which will facilitate closer communication and exchange of information in

relation to these matters. The consultation process will help to inform further development of the Call for Proposals in advance of it being issued.

As indicated above, the Call for Proposals will require applicants to provide for continuity of GYDP services to current participants. It is of course a matter for organisations which apply to provide future GYDP services under the Call for Proposals to ensure that they comply with relevant legal responsibilities, including in relation to the European Communities (Protection of Employees on Transfer of Undertakings) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 131/2003).

### **Visa Applications**

226. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an application for a visa by a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13175/18]

**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 refused on the 1 November 2017, and the applicant was advised accordingly. The applicant was also advised of their right to appeal the decision but an appeal was not submitted.

While it is open to any visa required national to apply for a visa for any purpose, each visa application is considered on its individual merits. In assessing any application, the Visa Officer will have regard to all of the information available to them including any previous applications made. The onus rests at all times with the applicant to satisfy the Visa Officer that any visa sought should be granted. Guidelines on the application process including details of the required supporting documentation can be found on the INIS website ([www.inis.gov.ie](http://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.

In addition, applicants may themselves e-mail queries directly to [visamail@justice.ie](mailto:visamail@justice.ie).

### **Court Judgments**

227. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 29 November 2017, if he will instruct the Office of the Chief State Solicitor to make an appropriate payment in view of the conclusion of a High Court case (details supplied). [13224/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As I stated in response to the Deputy's previous question, I am aware of the case to which he refers. As I also stated then, the award in this case was made by the Supreme Court.

While I should emphasise that I was not a party to these proceedings and am not a party to any discussions aimed at resolving the issues, I have had further enquires made with the Chief State Solicitor's Office and have been informed that no final decision has been made to date on how this matter will be resolved. Both the Garda Síochána and the Chief State Solicitor's Office are still considering how to advance the issue.

**Health and Safety Authority**

228. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of requests for additional funding, staff resources or expertise that have been made by the Health and Safety Authority since January 2016; the purpose of the requested additional funding, staff resources or expertise; the response of her Department to each request in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13136/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Details in relation to additional funding and staffing requests from the Health and Safety Authority are set out in the tables.

It should be noted that given the role and remit of the Health and Safety Authority it is staffed by a mixture of technical expertise grades at inspector level and administrative grades. The technical inspector grades cover the Occupational Safety and Health remit of the Authority (which includes sectors such as construction, agriculture, mines and quarries, transport and storage and occupational health and welfare) as well as the Authority's Chemicals Programme, Market Surveillance functions and INAB (Irish National Accreditation Board) Programmes.

My Department monitors the funding and staffing requirements of the HSA on an ongoing basis and works closely with the Health and Safety Authority in this regard with a view to ensuring that the HSA is properly resourced to the greatest extent possible.

**Table 1: HSA Additional Funding January 2016 to date**

Year	Purpose of Request	DBEI Response
2016	Additional ICT funding sought as well as additional funding for targeted media campaigns in relation to worker safety and health in 2016.	Additional non-pay funding of €340,000 provided to HSA for 2016.
2017	Increase in core funding for pay, non-pay and pensions sought by the HSA in respect of the 2017 Estimates Submission as well as specific additional funding for safety promotion programmes.	Additional pay, non-pay and pensions funding provided to the HSA for 2017 i.e. pay allocation increased by €300,000 (with €150,000 to cover pay restoration under Lansdowne Road Agreement), non-pay allocation increased by €227,000 and pensions allocation increased by €41,000. In addition a non-pay allocation of €400,000 as provided for safety promotion programmes.
2018	Increase in non-pay funding for 2018 to fund safety promotional and supporting activities in ongoing high-risk sectors sought in the context of the 2018 Estimates	Additional pay, non-pay and pensions funding provided to the HSA for 2018 i.e. pay allocation increased by €763,000 (€363,000 to cover costs under Lansdowne Road Agreement and €400,000 to cover additional Brexit related posts), non-pay allocation increased by €300,000 and pensions allocation increased by €100,000.

**Table 2: HSA Staff Resources January 2016 to date**

Number	Date of Request	Purpose of Request	Department Response
	2016		
1.	May	Replacement for Clerical Officer	Sanction Granted

Number	Date of Request	Purpose of Request	Department Response
2.	June	Replacement for Assistant Principal Officer	Sanction Granted
3.	August	Replacement Higher Executive Officer	Sanction Granted
4.	August	Replacement for Grade I Inspector	Sanction Granted
5.	August	Replacement for Grade II Inspector	Sanction Granted
6.	September	Replacement for Executive Officer	Sanction Granted
7.	October	Application to make Grade I Inspector substantive	Sanction Granted
8.	October	Replacement for Grade III Inspector	Sanction Granted
9.	December	New Clerical Officer post	Sanction Granted
10.	December	Replacement for Grade III Inspector	Sanction Granted
11.	December	Replacement for Grade III Inspector	Sanction Granted
12.	December	Replacement for Grade III Inspector	Sanction Granted
	2017		
13.	January	New Clerical Officer post	Sanction Granted
14.	February	Executive Officer post	Sanction Granted
15.	March	New Assistant Principal Officer post	Sanction Granted
16.	March	New Grade III Inspector post	Sanction Granted
17.	April	Replacement for Grade III Inspector	Sanction Granted
18.	May	Temporary replacement for Programme Manager	Sanction Granted
19.	June	Replacement for Grade II Inspector	Sanction Granted
20.	August	New Accreditation Officer Grade II Inspector post	Sanction Granted
21.	October	Application to make a HEO substantive	Sanction Granted
22.	November	Replacement for Grade III Inspector	Sanction Granted
23.	November	Temporary replacement for Assistant Chief Executive	Refused
24.	November	Replacement for Assistant Chief Executive Officer	Sanction Granted
25.	November	Replacement for Executive Officer	Sanction Granted
26.	December	Replacement for Chief Executive Officer	Sanction Granted
	2018		
27.	January	New Higher Executive Officer post	Application under consideration
28.	January	New Grade III Inspector post	Sanction Granted
29.	January	New Grade III Inspector post	Sanction Granted
30.	January	New Grade III Inspector post	Sanction Granted
31.	January	New Grade III Inspector post	Sanction Granted
32.	January	New Grade III Inspector post	Sanction Granted
33.	January	New Grade III Inspector post	Sanction Granted
34.	January	New Grade III Inspector post	Sanction Granted
35.	February	New Grade I Inspector post	Application under consideration

Number	Date of Request	Purpose of Request	Department Response
36.	February	New Assistant Principal Officer post	Application under consideration
37.	February	Temporary replacement for three Grade III Inspectors currently on extended leave	Application under consideration

### Competition and Consumer Protection Commission

229. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of requests for additional funding, staff resources or expertise that have been made by the Competition and Consumer Protection Authority since January 2016; the purpose of the requested additional funding, staff resources or expertise; the response of her Department to each request in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13137/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Regarding its financial resources, the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission's (CCPC) allocation is divided between "General Administration" and "Financial Information and Education Functions" expenditure. The first element covers the general administration and expenses of the CCPC in relation to the exercise of its statutory functions, except for its financial information and education functions, and these expenses are funded through an Exchequer grant each year. The second element is funded by a Levy imposed on regulated financial service providers. As the Levy is not collected until after mid-year, the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation pre-funds the expenditure by the CCPC on these functions, on the proviso that the Department is reimbursed by way of Appropriations-in-Aid before year end. It is therefore Exchequer neutral.

The CCPC's combined allocations since 2015, its first full year since its establishment in October 2014, are set out in the following table:

Year	Allocation (Exchequer and Levy) Pay and non-pay '000s	Outturn '000s
2015/2016	12,230/12,141	9,124/9,181
2017/2018	12,138/12,226	9,757/N/A

In July 2015, the CCPC was given approval by the Department under the Strategic Resource Management Framework to fill 25 vacant posts subject to the CCPC remaining within its allocated pay budget.

In August 2016, the CCPC requested an extra €2.438m proposing to cover, amongst other matters, once-off expenses arising from its planned move to new offices, once-off expenditure on new ICT systems, additional research and communications projects (€2.040m) and the costs associated with a simultaneous request for additional personnel (€398,000). As part of that request for additional funding, the CCPC requested 6 additional personnel viz. 3 Executive Officers in its Communications and Market Insights Division, one Assistant Principal in its Consumer Enforcement Division, one Higher Executive Officer in its Organisational Development Unit and one Executive Officer in its Regulation and Advocacy Unit. As the CCPC's outturn for 2015 was less than the 2015 allocation and its expenditure in 2016 was estimated to come under the monies allocated to it for that year, its request of August 2016 for extra resources was not granted.

In July 2017, the CCPC requested an extra €235,000 in its non-pay Exchequer allocation to

21 March 2018

cover new projects arising in the areas of cyber security, research in relation to the Waste sector, Personal Contract Plans, Brexit and expenditure on the implementation of the Grocery Goods Regulations. This request was approved. Also in 2017, the CCPC requested one additional staff member (a Higher Executive Officer in its Legal Services Division) for which sanction was approved by my Department.

To date in 2018, the CCPC has requested 3 additional staff members (one Digital investigation specialist at Higher Executive Officer level, one temporary Assistant Principal post in its Legal Service Division and one Higher Executive Officer in its Legal Services Division). It has received sanction for the first two posts and my Department is currently considering the last request.

It should be noted that these figures do not include requests since 2016 for backfilling of vacancies due to resignations, promotions, transfers, retirements, etc. and neither does it refer to any request for the reconfiguration of grades in the CCPC.

### **Labour Court**

230. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of requests for additional funding, staff resources or expertise that have been made by the Labour Court since January 2016; the purpose of the requested additional funding, staff resources or expertise; the response of her Department to each request in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13138/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen):** The Labour Court is an independent statutory office under the aegis of my Department. The Court was established under the Industrial Relations Act, 1946, to exercise the functions assigned to it by the Act. The functions of the Court have been altered and extended by subsequent legislation, including the Workplace Relations Act 2015 which provided that the Labour Court is now the sole appellate body in disputes under employment rights legislation.

The Programme for Government contains a commitment to support and adequately resource the Labour Court to allow it to fulfil its mandate.

As part of the reform of the workplace relations bodies in 2015, and in anticipation of an increased workload, the Labour Court was expanded to include an additional Division to bring the composition of the Court to four Divisions. Each Division of the Court comprises a Chair or Deputy Chair and two ordinary members.

Apart from the appointment of an additional division of the Court in 2015, the Court has not, in general, in the period since 1 January 2016 made requests for additional funding, staff resources or expertise. An exception to this relates to the temporary appointment of an Ordinary Member to the Court for a three-month period in August 2017 to cover for an existing member of the Court who was at that time unable to perform the required functions.

In addition, in terms of expertise, due to the longer than anticipated period involved in the recruitment and appointment of a Registrar to the Court, the Court tendered for specialist legal expertise to cover the period leading up to the appointment of a new Registrar in March 2018.

### **Vacant Properties**

231. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Inno-

vation the suite of measures and supports she has available and plans to introduce to encourage existing businesses and new business start-ups take up live occupancy of vacant commercial properties that are having an impact on the viability of existing enterprises along the urban streetscapes and other shopping and commercial zones. [13025/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Government is committed to providing supports that will assist the key stakeholders in towns and villages to make their centres vibrant and vital. My Department continues to offer a suite of measures to support businesses to grow and new business start-ups, primarily through our enterprise agencies and the Local Enterprise Offices.

As noted in the Framework for Town Centre Renewal, many Local Authorities offer grants to landlords and prospective new tenants to offset against commercial rates in order to incentivise occupancy and improve the retail mix, streetscape and general ambience. Local Authorities fall under the aegis of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

My Department does not have a “suite of measures or supports” to encourage existing businesses and new business start-ups to take up live occupancy of vacant commercial properties nor are there any plans to introduce such measures per se.

Under the auspices of the Retail Consultation Forum, which I chair, the ‘Framework for Town Centre Renewal’ was launched in April 2017. This Framework identifies the key attributes of a successful town centre and provides a blue print for action by key stakeholders to work collaboratively in addressing the challenges of creating vibrant and viable town centres through a three-stage process including: stakeholder engagement, carrying out a town centre ‘health check’, and preparing a Town Centre Plan. In relation to the challenge of high levels of town centre property vacancy, the Framework advocates a balanced approach that doesn’t undermine existing stakeholders.

Under the Action Plan for Jobs 2018, the Department of Rural and Community Development will continue to develop a range of programmes to support rural economic development, including the Town and Village Renewal Scheme. The Framework for Town Centre Renewal is a useful tool for towns and villages applying for funding under this scheme. Elsewhere, incentives to support urban regeneration are the responsibility of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

### Ministerial Staff Data

232. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the details of each non-Civil Service appointment she has made to a role in her Department; the persons appointed; the role, qualifications and salary of each; and the guidelines that apply in respect of party political fundraising. [13152/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** As Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, I have employed the services of two Special Advisers, details of whom are available through the Department of Public Expenditure website, but are set out below for the Deputy’s information.

Name	Role	Salary
Ms Lucy Moylan	Special Adviser	PO Standard Scale (Point 1)
Mr. Pauric McPhillips	Special Adviser	PO Standard Scale (Point 2)

In relation to my two Special Advisers, both have Degrees in Communications and extensive experience relevant to their role and both are paid in accordance with the standard arrangements put in place by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. One, who began in the role last September, is paid on the first point of the Principal Officer (Standard Scale) and the other, who began in the role in May 2016 has progressed to the second point of the Principal Officer (Standard Scale).

I also have two Civilian Drivers who are paid at the Civilian Driver rate which is a single-point scale, without incremental progression.

The above appointees are subject to the terms and conditions of The Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour. Matters in relation to Political activity are set out in Circular 09/2009: Civil Servants and Political Activity. Under part 13 of this Circular, Special Advisors are exempt from the provisions restricting Civil Servants from engaging in certain political activity. The Circular does not cover fundraising, however this is a matter for political parties and does not come within the scope of the activities of Government Departments.

### **IDA Ireland Jobs Data**

233. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the percentage of IDA Ireland-supported jobs in the south east as a proportion of all IDA Ireland-supported jobs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13187/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** This Government is strongly committed to regional development and my Department and its agencies are working towards ambitious targets to ensure that employment and investment are as evenly distributed across the country as possible.

The employment situation in the South East, which covers Waterford, Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny and South Tipperary, has been steadily improving in recent years. There has, for example, been a substantial increase in job creation in the region since the commencement of the National Action Plan for Jobs initiative in 2012, with an additional 33,600 in employment in Q2 2017 compared to Q1 2012.

Looking ahead, the IDA is targeting - as part of its 2015-2019 strategy - an increase of investment in the South East region of 30% to 40% by 2019. To achieve this, the Agency will continue to draw the attention of potential investors to the region's particular strengths. These include the South East's accessibility, its ports and its existing cluster of medical technology firms. The Agency will work closely with its existing clients in the region to help strengthen and potentially grow their respective workforces.

This existing base of IDA Ireland clients in the South East is comprised of 75 companies who collectively employ 14,785 people in the region. This represents approximately 7% of the total number of people employed by IDA client companies across Ireland.

### **Action Plan for Jobs**

234. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the regions that have not met their regional Action Plan for Jobs target; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13189/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The

Programme for Partnership Government commitment is to support the creation of 200,000 jobs by 2020, including 135,000 jobs outside of Dublin.

Regional job creation targets have been set through the Regional Action Plan for Jobs, the primary objective of which is to have a further 10 to 15 per cent at work in each region by 2020 and to ensure the unemployment rate of each region is within one percentage point of the State average. As such, there still remains two years for all regions to reach these targets.

The published targets for jobs to be created, in addition to data from the CSO showing job creation and unemployment rates in each of the 8 NUTSIII regions, are laid out in the following table:

Region	Published Regional APJ targets by 2020	Net new jobs created Q1 2015 –Q2 2017	Unemployment Rate at Q4 2017
North East/North West	28,000	12,000	4.9%
Midland	14,000	9,500	7.7%
West	25,000	15,500	5.9%
Dublin	66,000	48,200	6.1%
Mid-East	25,000	19,300	5.2%
Mid-West	23,000	16,600	6.6%
South-East	25,000	16,200	7.3%
South-West	40,000	29,400	6.2%
State	246,000	166,800	6.1%

Over the year to Q2 2017, CSO data shows an increase of 53,500 people in employment across the State since Q2 2016, with 84% of this increase in numbers employed outside Dublin. All regions have seen increases in numbers employed in the year to Q2 2017; all regions also saw a decrease in numbers unemployed.

While overall results are strong, it is clear that not all regions are improving at the same rate, and there is no room for complacency. The unemployment rate in two of the regions (Midlands: 7.7% and South East: 7.3%) is, at Q4 2017, at least 1 percentage point above the State average of 6.1%. A continued focus on these regions is required to ensure they are being supported to achieve their economic potential.

It should be noted that the introduction of a new methodology for calculating labour market statistics by the CSO through the Q3 2017 Labour Force Survey (formerly Quarterly National Household Survey) has resulted in a “break” in the regional series, such that previous Quarters are not comparable over time with the most recent Q3/Q4 results. Q2 2017 and previous Quarters are therefore used to describe longer term trends at regional level.

As set out in the national Action Plan for Jobs 2018, my Department will be working with the Regional Implementation Committees for the Regional Action Plans for Jobs over the coming weeks and months to refresh and refocus those Plans, maintaining the emphasis on delivery of regional jobs targets to 2020.

### Food Safety Authority of Ireland

235. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the number of requests for ad-

ditional funding, staff resources or expertise that have been made by Food Safety Authority of Ireland since January 2016; the purpose of the requested additional funding, staff resources or expertise; the response of his Department to each request in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13144/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** From 1 January 2016 to date, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) made requests to the Department of Health for additional staff and funding on a number of occasions and approvals were granted (as per the table).

In addition to the staffing approvals listed in the attached table, during the period January 2016 to date, the FSAI submitted requests to the Department for the following staff:

- Data & Analysis Manager (2016) - New;
- Executive, Communications (2016) - Replacement;
- Executive, HR (2016) - New;
- Receptionist (2017) - Replacement; and
- Technical Executive (temporary contract) (2017) - New.

The FSAI has indicated that it will reconsider the prioritisation of these and other staff requirements it may have in the context of its new strategy which is being developed in 2018.

In addition to the funding approvals set out in the attached table, in September 2016, the FSAI indicated that it would require additional funding of €1 million in 2017 and in September 2017, it indicated that it would require an additional €500,000 in 2018 and €1 million in 2019.

These requests were the subject of discussion between the Department and FSAI but they were not approved at the time. The Department is currently liaising with FSAI regarding its 2018 funding requirements.

2018

Title and Grade	No. of posts	Date of Approval	Replacement/New
Grade between HEO and AP – Senior Technical Executive, IT	1	20.03.2018	Replacement
AP Equivalent (Risk Manager)	1	15.03.2018	New

2017

Title and Grade	No. of posts	Date of Approval	Replacement/New
Director of Corporate Affairs	1	09.03.2017	New
Finance & Planning Manager	1	20.04.2017	Replacement
Enforcement Policy Manager	1	20.04.2017	Replacement
Training Compliance Manager	1	20.04.2017	Replacement
Technical Executive, PHN	1	20.04.2017	Replacement
Technical Executive Chemical Safety	1	20.04.2017	Replacement
Administrative Assistants	6	20.04.2017	Replacement
Finance & Planning Manager	1	10.05.2017	Replacement
Enforcement Policy Manager	1	10.05.2017	Replacement

Questions - Written Answers

Title and Grade	No. of posts	Date of Approval	Replacement/New
Technical Executive, PHN	1	10.05.2017	Replacement
Technical Executive, PHN	1	27.06.2017	Replacement
HEO Equivalent	1	25.08.2017	Replacement
HEO Equivalent	1	15.09.2017	Replacement
CO Equivalent	1	20.11.2017	Replacement
Number of posts for 2017	19		

2016

Title and Grade	No. of posts	Date of Approval	Replacement/New
Administrative Assistant	1	26.01.2016	Replacement
Administrative Assistant	1	10.03.2016	Replacement
Administrative Assistant	1	14.03.2016	Replacement
HEO Equivalent	1	04.05.2016	Replacement
Technical Executive	1	13.05.2016	Replacement
Technical Executive	1	03.08.2016	Replacement
Senior Technical Executive	1	11.08.2016	Replacement
Senior Technical Executive	1	26.08.2016	Replacement
Senior Technical Executive – IT Grade	1	10.11.2016	Replacement
Enforcement Policy Executives	2	16.12.2016	Replacement
Number of posts sanctioned for 2016	11		

Approvals for Additional Funding

Year	Amount	Reason for funding	-
2016	€2,500,000	Once-off Capital funding required in 2017 for FSAI's relocation to new offices	Approved
2016	€355,000	To meet additional VAT costs post FSAI's relocation	Approved but deferred until required in 2018

### Services for People with Disabilities

236. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health if works in a facility (details supplied) for persons with disabilities will be completed in a timely manner in view of the fact that the disability services team has reverted to a foundation with a recommendation that the remaining works should proceed to completion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13235/18]

**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 Administration**

237. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health when a decision will issue regarding an application by a person (details supplied) for a home care package; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13001/18]

**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**

238. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health when additional home care hours will be made available for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13013/18]

**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.

### **Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

239. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health the status of the reimbursement of the FreeStyle Libre Flash glucose monitoring systems for diabetics; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13014/18]

**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.

### **Health Services Funding**

240. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address issues raised (details supplied) in an audit of neurology services here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13018/18]

241. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health when additional investment will be provided for services (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13019/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 240 and 241 together.

The Model of Care for Neurology was launched by the Director General of the HSE in late 2016. This was developed by the HSE's National Clinical Programme for Neurology in col-

laboration with consultants, nurses, health and social care professionals and patient support groups. It aims to address the need for strategic development of neurology services in the provision of better care for these Irish patients. This year, funding has been allocated by the HSE to commence development of peri- and post-operative services to support patients receiving Deep Brain Stimulation.

In relation to the particular queries raised, as these are service matters, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Health and Social Care Professionals Regulation**

242. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health the reason CORU will not recognise qualifications certified by an organisation (details supplied); the reason it will not include the organisation's members in its regulation process; if his attention has been drawn to the potential impacts on members seeking employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13035/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have met with Athletic Rehabilitation Therapists Ireland as have my officials on a number of previous occasions regarding this matter. Athletic rehabilitation therapists are a separate profession to that of Physiotherapist which is the profession designated for regulation by CORU under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005. As a separate profession they do not use and are not seeking to use or practice under the title physiotherapist /physical therapist and there is no risk of confusion in the public mind with regard to the services of those practising under the title athletic rehabilitation therapist.

I have assured the ARTI on a number of occasions that once work concludes on the regulation of the professions currently designated under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act, 2005, CORU will be requested to undertake a risk assessment of a number of other professions seeking regulation by CORU, including Athletic Rehabilitation Therapists, and to make recommendations to me in this regard.

### **Hospital Admissions**

243. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will be facilitated at a community hospital. [13040/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Medicinal Products Supply**

244. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health when the process for developing a better procurement system for drugs announced in November 2017 will commence. [13041/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Oireachtas has put in place a robust legal framework in the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, which gives full statutory powers to the HSE to assess and make decisions on the reimbursement of medicines, taking account of a range of objective factors and expert opinion as appropriate.

The Act specifies the criteria to be applied in the making of reimbursement decisions, which

include the clinical and cost effectiveness of the product, the opportunity cost and the impact on resources that are available to the HSE.

In reaching its decision, the HSE will examine all the relevant evidence and will take into account such expert opinions and recommendations that are appropriate, including from the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE). This ensures that reimbursement decisions are made on objective scientific and economic grounds.

In 2016, a new Framework Agreement was made with the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association on the supply and pricing of medicines. The terms of the Agreement are aligned with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013.

As the Deputy will be aware, the pipeline for new medicines is growing significantly and this poses affordability challenges for the health service in Ireland as it does in many other countries.

I want to maximise the potential for patients in Ireland to have timely access to these new innovative drugs, and it was in that context that I sought a new dialogue with industry on how we can secure access to new innovative drugs at affordable and sustainable prices.

My Department will be progressing this agenda in the coming months.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists Data**

245. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if an operation will be arranged for a person (details supplied); the waiting times for such operations; and his plans to reduce the waiting times. [13049/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Last October's Budget announced a total 2018 allocation of €55m for the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) for 2018 which more than doubles its 2017 total allocation which was €20m. This significant increase in funding reflects the fact that reducing waiting times for patients is one of this Government's key priorities.

The Department of Health, the HSE and the NTPF are finalising an Inpatient/Daycase Action Plan 2018 which will set out ambitious targets for both the HSE and NTPF to reduce the overall number of patients waiting for treatment.

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 queries raised, as these are service matters, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

246. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal was first referred to a pain management specialist; when they will receive an appointment to attend such a specialist; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13054/18]

**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 inpatient, 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.

### **Mental Health Services Staff**

247. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of nurses waiting on panels for a CAMHS position. [13064/18]

248. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of community CAMHS nursing positions advertised in 2017, and to date in 2018; the number of applications received for same; and the number of positions filled. [13065/18]

249. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of community CAMHS nursing positions filled; and the number of community CAMHS nursing positions required to reach the level recommended in A Vision for Change by CHO in tabular form. [13066/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 247, to 249, inclusive, together.

As these are service matters, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

250. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health when an outpatient appointment will be made for a person (details supplied); and if the case will be examined. [13068/18]

**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 inpatient, 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 Appointments Status**

251. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will receive an appointment for a medical procedure. [13072/18]

**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 inpatient, 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 Appointments Administration**

252. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13083/18]

**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.

### **Motorised Transport Grant**

253. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in County Clare who received the motorised transport grant and the mobility allowance in 2013; when the motorised transport grant will be replaced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13084/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** 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. The Health (Transport Support) Bill is on the list of priority legislation for publication in the Spring/Summer session 2018. 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.

It is hoped to bring a General Scheme and Heads of Bill to Government shortly, seeking Government approval to the drafting of the Bill for the new Transport Support Payment.

With regard to the Motorised Transport Grant, this scheme operated as a means-tested grant to assist persons with severe disabilities with the purchase or adaptation of a car, where that car was essential to retain employment. The maximum Motorised Transport Grant, which was payable once in any three-year period, was €5,020. Following closure of the scheme in February 2013, no further Motorised Transport Grants have been payable.

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.

With regard to the Deputy's question seeking information on numbers of recipients in County Clare in respect of both the Motorised Transport Grant and the Mobility Allowance in 2013,

I have referred this out to the Health Service Executive for a direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Facilities**

254. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Health if funding has been allocated for a helipad at Cork University Hospital; and when the project will be completed and operational. [13087/18]

**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 this matter.

### **Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

255. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will reinstate the funding for the Versatis patches in view of cases similar to that of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13131/18]

**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 a safe and sustainable manner. Treatment must be appropriate and proportionate and clinical decision-making, such as prescribing, should be based on both patient needs and sound medical evidence.

Lidocaine 5% medicated plasters are licensed for the localised relief of post-shingles pain in adults. This is the only licensed use for the patch in Ireland. It has been reimbursed in the community drugs schemes since 2010.

When the plasters were first introduced, the budget impact was low, because of the specific indication for which they are licensed. It was therefore a cause of clinical concern that, from 2012 on, usage increased significantly, to the point where, as a nation, we were using more plasters than the entire UK National Health Service, with ten times our population.

When a treatment is intended for a small group of patients, and evidence suggests that it is being used for many times that number, it is important and appropriate for clinicians to review its use. In 2016, the HSE Medicines Management Programme, MMP, reviewed the use of the plasters. The review estimated that only 5-10% of prescribing had been for the licensed indication.

Following the clinical review, and in the interest of ensuring appropriate patient care, the HSE introduced a new reimbursement approval system for the patches from 1 September 2017. This process supports their appropriate use, ensuring that post-shingles patients continue to receive this treatment.

Under the new arrangements, all patients receiving lidocaine plasters for the licensed indication, shingles, were automatically approved on the HSE system. All of these patients continue to receive the treatment under the community schemes.

Non-shingles patients were given a three-month grace period, in which their GP could move them to other treatments or apply for continued reimbursement. However, from 1 December 2017, non-shingles patients were no longer automatically reimbursed under the community drugs schemes.

In order for non-shingles patients to receive the patch through the community schemes, their GP must apply online for continued reimbursement approval. If an application is refused, the GP may appeal, making a clinical case for the patient. The HSE advises that the turnaround time for applications is three working days and for appeals it is five days.

As of 16 March 2018, there have been 5,504 online applications from GPs requesting the reimbursement of Versatis. Of these applications, over 19%, or 1,059 patients, have been approved.

In addition, 526 online appeals have been made, and over 69% of these patients have been approved. The MMP has sought further information on 38 appeals before a recommendation on reimbursement can be made.

Since 1 September 2017, some 1,421 patients have been approved for the reimbursement of lidocaine plasters, based on the clinical case made by the GP.

It is clear that this new process supports appropriate use and prescribing and both post-shingles patients and other appropriate cases can continue to be treated with lidocaine plasters.

The introduction of the new approval system was flagged in August 2017, when details of the proposed changes were circulated by the HSE to prescribers and pharmacies. This advice has been re-issued in the last week, and information for patients and practitioners is on the HSE Medicines Management Programme website. <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/cspd/ncps/medicines-management/lidocaine-plaster/>.

This decision is a matter for the HSE. However, I fully support the objectives of the HSE Medicines Management Programme.

### Ministerial Correspondence

256. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the status of an issue raised in correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13133/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Deputy is aware, I do not consider that the situation referred to was intended in the relevant legislation. To this end, officials in my Department are currently examining potential options to address the issue raised by the Deputy, including the possibility of legislative amendment.

### Ministerial Staff Data

257. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the details of each non-Civil Service appointment he has made to a role in his Department; the persons appointed; the role, qualifications and salary of each; and the guidelines that apply in respect of party political fundraising. [13161/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have appointed the following non-civil service staff to roles in my Department:

Role	Salary
Special Adviser	€89,906
Press Adviser	€84,973

Role	Salary
Parliamentary Assistant	Salary paid by Houses of the Oireachtas
Secretarial Assistant	Salary paid by Houses of the Oireachtas
Civilian Driver x 2	€34,304.70

These staff hold temporary non-established positions and as such they are exempt from the provisions of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour in relation to political activity and the provisions of Circular 9/2009: Civil Servants and Political Activity.

### Health Screening Programmes

258. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if a school (details supplied) is one of the participating schools in the HSE health screening programme; if not, the reason therefor; the efforts that have been made to provide screening for the students; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13200/18]

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

### Health Screening Programmes

259. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the efforts being made by the HSE to encourage primary schools to participate in the health screening programme; if the HSE has a record of primary schools that do not participate; if so, the detail of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13201/18]

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

### Health Services Staff

260. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Health if there is a vacancy for a home help organiser in the south Lee area in County Cork; if so, the length of time the vacancy has existed; the way in which these responsibilities have been handled in the interim; and the plans that exist to fill this vacancy. [13208/18]

**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 Help Service Data

261. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Health the number of new applications for home help that were approved but not allocated due to financial constraints in the south and north Lee areas in County Cork in each of the past six months, in tabular form. [13209/18]

**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 Help Service Data**

262. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons approved for home help that are awaiting allocation of home help in the south and north Lee areas of County Cork; and the way in which this compares to the same date in 2017. [13210/18]

**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 Help Service Data**

263. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Health the average number of hours per week each home help worker works in the south and north Lee areas of County Cork. [13211/18]

**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 Help Service Data**

264. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Health the average number of hours per week each person in receipt of home help receives in the south and north Lee areas of County Cork. [13212/18]

**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 Help Service Data**

265. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Health the number of new applications for home help that have been made but are awaiting approval in the south and north Lee areas in County Cork in each of the past six months in tabular form. [13213/18]

**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 Provision**

266. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Health if health-related residential accom-

modation will be provided for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13225/18]

**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.

### **General Practitioner Services**

267. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if routine blood tests are covered by the medical card following media reports indicating many general practitioners are charging medical card patients for blood tests; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13226/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the terms of the current GMS contract, GPs are required to provide eligible patients with “all proper and necessary treatment of a kind usually undertaken by a general practitioner and not requiring special skill or experience of a degree or kind which general practitioners cannot reasonably be expected to possess.” There is no provision under the GMS 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 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 their HSE Local Health Office, who will investigate the complaint.

If the local office determines that the charge was inappropriate, it will inform the HSE Primary Care Reimbursement Service who will arrange to refund the cost of the blood test to patient and recoup this amount from the GP. The local office will inform the GP of the decision to deduct the payment.

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

268. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health if the necessary additional resources will be provided for improvement in the delivery of services for children in counties Cavan and Monaghan (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13229/18]

**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.

### **Hare Coursing**

269. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans for initiatives to encourage coursing clubs to transition from live coursing to drag coursing (details supplied). [13029/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Irish Coursing Club (ICC) has informed me that the coursing-bred greyhound is separate and distinct from track-bred greyhounds and will generally not chase a lure.

On the important issue of animal welfare, under the provisions of the Greyhound Industry Act, 1958 the regulation of coursing is chiefly a matter for the Irish Coursing Club. This is subject to the general control and direction of Bord na gCon, which is the statutory body with responsibility for the improvement and development of the greyhound industry, greyhound racing and coursing. The ICC has confirmed that it has systems in place to underpin the welfare of animals participating in coursing events. In particular hounds are muzzled to minimise injury.

Regarding controls carried out, the ICC requires that a veterinary surgeon and a control steward are present at all coursing meetings. In addition veterinary officials from my Department and Rangers from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (part of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht) also monitor a number of meetings during the coursing season.

The Deputy can be assured that my Department will continue to carefully monitor the situation in order to ensure that live coursing is run in a well controlled manner. I welcome the strong emphasis being placed on welfare issues at coursing meetings.

### **Severe Weather Events**

270. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to introduce a snow damage relief measure in response to the localised severe snow experienced in County Wexford with a view to providing financial assistance to crop growers for direct costs arising from the loss of crops and or structures such as polytunnels, glasshouses and sheds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13017/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Throughout the period of adverse weather conditions caused by storm Emma, my Department was directly involved in a co-ordinated response as a member of the National Emergency Co-ordination Group (NECG), convened by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, the lead Government Department on Severe Weather Incidents.

While the South and East of the country bore the brunt of the storm and its after effects, many other areas experienced disruptions to daily life and the business of farming to a greater or lesser degree. Throughout this period and immediately afterwards Department staff, together with Teagasc worked at local level to ensure that the farming community had access to the best advice on how to cope with the numerous issues thrown up by the storm.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the significant assistance the farming community provided within the wider local community at this busy time as they looked in on neighbours, cleared roads and helped to restore access to more remote rural areas.

In the aftermath of the storm as the sector slowly returned to normal it became clear that the main problem centred on damage to horticulture and other on-farm structures. Such structures will principally be insured and it is important that insurance companies respond rapidly and flexibly to the needs of their farmer customers. It is important to emphasise that public support cannot be provided for insurable risks.

In order to respond where possible to the issue of structural damage I believe that it is appropriate to recognise supports already available through current on-farm investment support schemes operated by my Department and I have asked my officials to examine these in the context of Storm Emma as a matter of urgency.

### **Aquaculture Licence Appeals**

271. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal by a company (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13056/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Appeals against Ministerial decisions in respect of Aquaculture Licence applications are considered by the Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board (ALAB) which is an independent body established by Statute for that purpose.

A number of Aquaculture Licence applications for sites in Lough Swilly were determined by me on 30 November 2017, in accordance with the applicable legislation.

It is understood that appeals against these decisions may have been submitted to ALAB.

In view of the independent status of ALAB it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the matter at this stage.

### **Basic Payment Scheme Eligibility**

272. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a further review of the entitlements of a person (details supplied) will be carried out under the basic payment scheme allocated to same in 2015/2016; if an oral hearing will be held if necessary to ensure as thorough a review as possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13117/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** On foot of a meeting with the person named and in response to PQ 23222/17, a review of the entitlement details for the person named from the year 2000 to 2017 took place in May 2017. A comprehensive response was issued at that time effectively closing the query.

In the event that the person named is dissatisfied with the response previously given, he may exercise his right to contact the Agriculture Appeals Office regarding the allocation of entitlements. The Appeals Office has the power to conduct oral hearings where necessary.

### **Departmental Communications**

273. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a

confidential phone line will be established within his Department for persons with literacy or learning difficulties or that have problems with understanding or interpreting his Department's cross compliance handbook; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13118/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department aims to ensure that the needs of all its customers, including people with disabilities, are met and that the rights of equal treatment are upheld in the delivery of services.

In accordance with Section 26(2) of the Disability Act 2005, I have appointed two Access Officers who are responsible for providing, or arranging for, assistance and guidance to persons with disabilities accessing services provided by my Department and generally to act as a point of contact for people wishing to access such services.

In addition to the Access Officers, Department officials are available in all regions to provide assistance to applicants who have questions or concerns on any scheme operated by the Department. My officials have a detailed knowledge of the relevant schemes and services and are in a position to respond to customer queries.

An audio version of the Department's Explanatory Handbook for Cross Compliance requirements is available on the Department's website under the Farmer Schemes and Payments/Cross Compliance area. The Department's website also has the "BrowseAloud" facility to read web pages aloud for people with literacy and visual impairments.

I wish to assure the Deputy that any queries from persons with literacy or learning difficulties relating to access to any schemes and services are handled in a confidential and professional manner.

Based on the volume of requests for assistance in recent years, I consider the measures in place in my Department are appropriate and adequate to deal with queries of this nature.

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

274. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he is satisfied that the appointment of two access officers is sufficient in providing assistance to persons with disabilities that contact his Department; if the two access officers have received sufficient training in assisting persons with literacy or learning difficulties that may have problems with understanding or interpreting his Department's rules and regulations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13119/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I wish to inform the Deputy that in accordance with Section(2) of the Disability Act 2005, I have appointed two Access Officers in my Department, who are available to deal with any requests to provide assistance and guidance to persons with disabilities in accessing services provided by my Department.

I am satisfied that two Access officers are adequate to deal with the volume of requests from persons with disabilities who contact my Department for assistance. Over the past three years, the total number of requests of this nature is in single figures. The Access officers are experienced members of staff with a wide knowledge of the Department. They engage with the National Disability Authority (NDA) on an ongoing basis and participate in seminars and workshops appropriate to their role and have completed the NDA on line E-learning Disability Equality Training course.

## **Knowledge Transfer Programme**

275. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of applicants under the knowledge transfer scheme; the payments to date; the time-frame for certain payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13124/18]

**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.

Out of approximately 20,200 applicants almost 19,100 farmers were approved and 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.

Facilitators who complete all of the requirements of the programme receive a payment of €500 per participant for each year of the three year programme and farmer participants who complete all of the requirements of the programme receive a payment of €750 per annum.

To date, in excess of €10 million has been paid to over 14,200 participants across the six sectors. In addition, in excess of €6.7 million has been paid to date to approved Knowledge Transfer facilitators across six sectors.

Payments are ongoing with payments in respect of participants and facilitators who did not fully complete their scheme commitments in Year 1 due to issue shortly.

## **Ministerial Staff Data**

276. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the details of each non-Civil Service appointment he has made to a role in his Department; the persons appointed; the role, qualifications and salary of each; and the guidelines that apply in respect of party political fundraising. [13151/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Under the Appointment of Special Adviser (Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine) Orders, 2016 and 2018 the following special advisers have been appointed since I became Minister: Ms. Áine Kilroy (re-appointment), Mr. Jonathan Hoare (re-appointment) and Mr. Ultan Waldron. Two advisers, Mr. Hoare and Mr. Waldron are currently serving, in line with Section 11 of the Public Service Management Act, 1997.

Mr. Hoare is the Political Adviser, while Mr. Waldron is the Policy Adviser. Additional information relating to the appointment of advisers is provided to the Oireachtas upon their appointment. The current salary scale for Ministerial Advisers is: Special Adviser (Principal Officer) €80,852 - €99,408 p/a.

Since my appointment as Minister four Civilian Drivers have been appointed, with two drivers assigned to Minister of State Doyle and two to myself.

The current salary rate for Civilian Drivers is €657.43 p/w.

## **Commission for Communications Regulation Staff**

277. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of requests for additional funding, staff resources or expertise that have been made by the Commission for Communications Regulation since January 2016; the purpose of the requested additional funding, staff resources or expertise; the response of his Department to each request in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13134/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** My Department is in discussion with Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to a request by ComReg referring to ongoing and additional resourcing needs, including in relation to telecommunications market developments and EU regulatory revisions, the National Broadband Plan State Intervention and the ongoing work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce. During the course of this ongoing engagement my Department is focused on ensuring that the Regulator is appropriately resourced to meet current and future challenges in delivering on its statutory and regulatory remit.

### **Commission for Energy Regulation Staff**

278. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of requests for additional funding, staff resources or expertise that have been made by the Commission for Energy Regulation since January 2016; the purpose of the requested additional funding, staff resources or expertise; the response of his Department to each request in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13135/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The name of the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) was changed to the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) in September 2017 to fully reflect its remit to regulate water, energy and energy safety.

The current staffing levels and grading structure at the Commission for Regulation of Utilities were agreed in early 2016 following an extensive engagement between the CRU, my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. There have been no requests to my Department for any additional resources since then.

### **Environmental Protection Agency Staff**

279. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of requests for additional funding, staff resources or expertise that have been made by the EPA since January 2016; the purpose of the requested additional funding, staff resources or expertise; the response of his Department to each request in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13139/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The information requested is being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Broadband Service Provision**

280. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and

Environment the date for the roll-out of high speed broadband for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13088/18]

**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. Today, almost 7 out of 10 of the 2.3 million premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband. This will increase to nearly 8 out of 10 premises by the end of this year and by 2020, 9 out of 10 premises will have access to a high speed broadband connection. This is being achieved via a combination of commercial investment and a State led intervention.

The premises referred to by the Deputy are in an AMBER area on my Department's High Speed Broadband Map, which is available at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://www.broadband.gov.ie).

They are therefore included in the State Intervention Area under the NBP.

My Department is in a formal procurement process to select a company who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area. That procurement process is now in its final stages.

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 Officers may also be able to provide information on local wifi access, hot desks and other local authority initiatives that may improve access to high speed broadband in the interim period before roll out of the State led intervention.

### **Waste Disposal Charges**

281. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on the charging for the collection of recyclable waste; the risk of reducing the amount of recycling as a result; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13123/18]

283. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will report on the move by large waste management companies to charge for green bin collections; his views on whether this will discourage recycling; the steps he is taking to address same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13182/18]

284. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the Commission for Regulation of Utilities will address escalating charges by waste management companies and produce its report on the pay by weight payment changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13183/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis**

**Naughten):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 281, 283 and 284 together.

The charges applied by waste management companies are matters for those companies and their customers, subject to compliance with all applicable environmental and other relevant legislation, including contract and consumer legislation.

In terms of environmental requirements, the charges applied should encourage householders to divert waste from the residual or general waste bin. For example, it would be expected that charges for the general waste bin would be higher than charges, if any, applied to the recycle bin.

The Government has funded a range of measures to support better recycling and reduce contamination of waste, including:

- a national, standardised list of items that can go into the recycle bin has been established, which is available at <http://recyclinglistireland.ie/>;

- this standardised list has been supported by a public education campaign run by the regional waste management authorities, comprising radio advertisements, social media, billboards/posters, etc., to promote the new list; and,

- a 'master recycling' programme, also run by the regional waste management authorities, in partnership with environmental NGOs, to roll out 650 workshops across the country training recycling ambassadors to bring the recycling message and understanding to a wide variety of communities;

Almost all paper and plastic packaging is governed by EU internal market and packaging legislation. In that context, as Minister, I have called on the European Union to urgently consider collectively banning single-use plastic items on foot of the EU Plastic Strategy to further protect the environment and to help alleviate the impact of the decision by China to restrict its intake of recyclable waste.

In addition, I have also provided Government funding to support and encourage better separation of waste through a number of initiatives such as:

- the Stop Food Waste programme [www.stopfoodwaste.ie](http://www.stopfoodwaste.ie), which is implemented under the Environmental Protection Agency's National Waste Prevention Programme and is aimed at both householders and businesses, providing comprehensive information about the food that is wasted and how to prevent this, and,

- the development of a website [www.brownbins.ie](http://www.brownbins.ie) to provide the public with the information required to use the organic bin appropriately, including advice on the optimal methods for effective collection and storage of food waste.

In terms of pricing, I established a Household Waste Collection Price Monitoring Group (PMG) last year to monitor the rates charged by household waste collectors during the phasing out of flat rate fees. The PMG has met each month since September 2017 and has considered six months of pricing data trends. The PMG has indicated that, in the vast majority of cases to date, prices have remained stable. The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) is also currently conducting a separate study on the operation of the household waste collection market which it will complete in 2018.

The results from the PMG are being monitored, and in conjunction with the study being undertaken by the CCPC, will provide an evidence base for future decisions in relation to the need for further regulation of the waste market.

### Ministerial Staff Data

282. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the details of each non-Civil Service appointment he has made to a role in his Department; the persons appointed; the role, qualifications and salary of each; and the guidelines that apply in respect of party political fundraising. [13154/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** Since my appointment as Minister I have appointed two Special Advisers, Ms Suzie Coogan and Mr. Ross Elwood. Ms Coogan was appointed as press and media advisor and was previously employed as a journalist, government advisor and communications director for an international NGO. Ms Coogan's annual salary is currently at the rate of €95,441.

Mr Elwood was appointed as special advisor with responsibility for policy and was previously employed in the Oireachtas and the European Parliament. His current salary is at the rate of €88,471 per annum.

In addition, I appointed two Civilian Drivers, Mr. Liam Feehily and Mr Michael Concar both of whom are on a salary level of €36,057 per annum.

All of the above appointments were made in accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's 'Instruction to Personnel Officers - Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil'.

The terms of the Ethics in Public Office Act 1995 and the Standards in Public Office Act 2001 apply to all Ministerial staff appointments, including Special Advisers, and in accordance with these Acts a copy of the appointees' contracts of employment together with details of qualifications are laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas. In addition, the Acts provide for each individual appointee, with the exception of the grade of Civilian Driver, to make written statements of registerable interests which could materially influence the appointee in, or in relation to, the performance of official functions.

The Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour also apply to Ministerial appointees but the Deputy may wish to note that the restrictions on civil servants engaging in political activity under the Code do not apply to Ministerial staff holding temporary unestablished positions in the civil service and whose tenure is coterminous with that of the relevant Minister. I am satisfied that all of the persons appointed by me are appropriately qualified to carry out their official functions.

*Questions Nos. 283 and 284 answered with Question No. 281.*

### Air Pollution

285. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will report on his recent decision to ban coal burning here from September 2018; the impacts this will have on ordinary households, in particular on households enduring fuel poverty; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13184/18]

**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. This period of 12 months lead-in time will allow both the industry and householders to 'wash through' existing stock in preparation for the full ban on the marketing, sale, distribution and burning of bituminous coal coming into effect throughout the State from Autumn 2019.

Where householders continue to rely on solid fuel, there is now a range of innovative low smoke solid fuel products, including low smoke coal products, available on the market. Low smoke solid fuel is cleaner and more energy efficient. It can deliver improved air quality as well as human health benefits.

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.

### **Energy Efficiency**

286. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if there is a register or other collection of data used by his Department to identify excess, waste or surplus heat in industry or other sectors; if this data is mapped by his Department or a body under its aegis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13206/18]

287. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the action he is taking to promote district heating here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13214/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 286 and 287 together.

In 2015, AECOM completed a study commissioned by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) to fulfil Ireland's requirements under Article 14 of the Energy Efficiency Directive (2012/27/EU) and SEAI's responsibility under 23(1) of the European Union (Energy Efficiency) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 426 of 2014). As part of this study a map of Ireland's heat demand was developed.

In addition to presenting a spatial representation of Ireland's heat demand data, the map includes industrial waste heat availability for EU Emissions Trading System sites, the location of industrial sites, key energy supply technologies including power stations and water network lengths, gas network lengths and road lengths used for the calculation of linear heat density. The map is available on the SEAI website at the following address: <http://maps.seai.ie/heatdemand/>.

A large portion of heat demand in Ireland is generally low density in nature and not suitable for district heating. However, potential exists for certain scale projects and further analysis could potentially identify more localised opportunities.

One of the commitments in the Energy White Paper (Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future) is to "develop a policy framework to encourage the development of district heating". A working group, chaired by my Department, has been established in order to develop this framework.

The Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH), which was approved by Government in December 2017, is designed to support the adoption of renewable heating systems by non-domestic heat users at sites not covered by the emissions trading system. This will include district heating systems in addition to commercial, industrial, agricultural and other non-domestic heat users.

### **Sports Capital Programme Data**

288. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to publish the full list of successful appeals under the sports capital programme in addition to the list of unsuccessful appeals; and the reason given in each case. [13003/18]

298. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of applications his Department received for sports capital funding; the details of those that were granted and refused the funding, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13130/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 288 and 298 together.

The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme (SCP) closed for applications on 24 February 2017. By the closing date, a record number of 2,320 applications seeking €155 million in grants were received. In November and December of 2017, Minister Ross and I announced €60m in allocations to 1,800 projects under the 2017 round of the SCP. Following the announcement of these allocations, all applicants deemed invalid or partially invalid were invited to appeal the Department's decision if it was felt that an error had been made in the assessment process. 149 appeals were submitted and of these 35 appeals were upheld. Full details of all allocations including those made on foot of the appeals process, as well as a list of all appeals received, are published on my Department's website at <http://www.dttas.ie/sport/english/sports-capital-programme>.

### **Sports Capital Programme Applications**

289. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the 2018 sports capital grant will open for applications; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [13012/18]

303. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the next sports and community grants will be available to organisations and communities that wish to develop facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13237/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 289 and 303 together.

The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme (SCP) closed for applications on 24 February 2017. In November and December last, Minister Ross and I announced €60m in allocations to a record 1,800 projects under the 2017 round of the SCP. Following these announcements, all applicants deemed invalid or partially invalid were invited to appeal the Department's decision if it was felt that an error had been made in the assessment process. 149 appeals were submitted prior to the deadlines. 35 of these appeals were upheld by the reviewers looking at these appeals and all appellants have now been informed of the result of the appeals process.

In relation to future rounds of the SCP, my Department is now undertaking a general review of the 2017 round with a view to making recommendations on how to improve the process for future calls. This work is also examining what is feasible in terms of the scale and timing of the next round. I expect this review to be complete shortly and an announcement regarding the next round of the SCP will be made at that stage.

### **Motor Insurance Costs**

290. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the possibility of capping motor insurance premiums at 150% of the vehicle value being insured for fully licenced drivers under 25 years of age will be examined. [13059/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Cost of Insurance Working Group chaired by the then Minister of State at the Department of Finance, Eoghan Murphy, T.D., published a Report on the cost of motor insurance in January 2017 <http://www.finance.gov.ie/what-we-do/insurance/the-cost-of-insurance-working-group/>.

This report stated that age is a risk factor for collisions and that “the age of the driver is indicative of the probability generally of loss or damage, with younger drivers having a higher risk ... Higher premiums are traditionally charged for younger drivers compared with middle aged ones”.

The EU framework for insurance expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require prior approval of the pricing of insurance products. Insurance companies are private companies and the provision of insurance cover and the price at which it is offered is a commercial matter for those companies and is based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept and adequate provisioning to meet those risks. These are considered by insurance companies on a case by case basis.

Mandatory motor third party liability insurance required under the Road Traffic Act 1961 covers not just property damage but also personal injury caused by the driver who is at fault. So, confining or capping motor insurance premiums to a percentage of a particular vehicle's value – in some cases for a vehicle whose value is negligible - would not be practicable even if it were possible.

Insurance Ireland operate a free Insurance Information Service for those who have queries

or difficulties in relation to obtaining insurance. If a person is unable to obtain a quotation for motor insurance or feels that the premium proposed or the terms are so excessive that it amounts to a refusal to give them motor insurance, they should contact Insurance Ireland, 5 Harbourmaster Place, IFSC, Dublin 1 Postcode DO1 E7E8 quoting the Declined Cases Agreement email: [declined@insuranceireland.eu](mailto:declined@insuranceireland.eu) Tel. 01.6761820. See <http://www.insuranceireland.eu/consumer-information/general-non-life-insurance/declined-cases-agreement>.

Under the Declined Cases Agreement, which all motor insurers must adhere to under the Central Bank's 'General Good Requirements for Insurance and Reinsurance Undertakings', <https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/Regulation/insurance-reinsurance/solvency-ii/requirements-and-guidance/general-good-requirements-2012.pdf?sfvrsn=4> the Declined Cases Committee of Insurance Ireland, which includes consumer representatives, deal with any cases of difficulty in obtaining motor insurance.

### **Rural Transport Services**

291. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the rural taxi scheme will be reviewed to make it more accessible to applicants; and his plans to consult with rural community organisations to ensure the scheme is fit for purpose going forward. [13060/18]

**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*. While the Deputy refers to a rural taxi scheme, it is understood that the question relates to the licensing of local area hackneys.

Under the *Taxi Regulation Act 2003 (Local Area Hackney) Regulations 2013*, the NTA is also responsible for the granting and renewing of local area hackney licences.

In this regard, I have referred your question to the NTA for their direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

### **Free Travel Scheme Eligibility**

292. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for the introduction of a travel pass for third level students which would allow unlimited use on all modes of public transport for a certain time period. [13061/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) in conjunction with public transport providers 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.

### **Sports Events**

293. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the outcome of a meeting he had with councillors regarding additional funding for an international sporting event in County Donegal in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13070/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Irish Open is a very important part of the Irish sporting calendar and has received Government support through Fáilte Ireland and Sport Ireland.

Fáilte Ireland, the national tourism development authority, is the statutory body with responsibility for the encouragement, promotion and support of tourism.

Sport Ireland is the statutory body with responsibility for the promotion, development and coordination of sport in Ireland including responsibility for the allocation of funding.

I understand that a total of €1m, involving contributions by both Fáilte Ireland and Sport Ireland on behalf of the Government, is being provided by to support the hosting of the event in 2018.

It may be noted that Ballyliffin Golf Club, which shall be hosting this prestigious event, was successful in its application for funding under the 2017 Sports Capital Programme and has received grant approval for the sum of €59,000 in respect of refurbishment of dressing rooms and academy links.

Following the exceptionally heavy rainfall which occurred in August 2017, Minister of State Brendan Griffin visited a number of sports clubs and organisations in Donegal, including Ballyliffin Golf Club, to see the impacts of the flooding and indicated our willingness to assist the relevant clubs as an exceptional measure. In this regard, my Department made contact with relevant sports clubs impacted by the flooding but whose damage was deemed to be outside the terms of the previously announced Irish Red Cross Scheme. In the case of Ballyliffin Golf Club however, I understand that an insurance claim was submitted for the flood damage in question so no allocation has been provided by my Department in that respect.

I met with Councillors from the area last month and discussed a request which was received from Donegal County Council for an estimated contribution of €3 million for road infrastructure costs related to facilitating the Irish Open Golf Tournament. In response my Department notified Donegal County Council that unfortunately, given the competing demands for funding and the continued need to try to restore funding for maintenance/rehabilitation programmes along with funding a limited number of improvement projects under the Capital Plan, the Department would not be in a position to provide funding over and above Donegal's annual road grant allocation to assist with the works proposed on the access roads to the Irish Open Golf Championship in 2018.

I informed them, that in this context, my Department's approach in such circumstances is allow the relevant local authority to make whatever adjustments are needed to its restoration programmes arising from works associated with Irish Open Golf Championship.

### **Air Traffic Control Services**

294. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the regular flight plan routes into Dublin Airport; if there are approach routes which travel over Lusk; if so, the altitude at which aircraft should fly if approaching over Lusk; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13074/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The issues raised are operational matters for the Irish Aviation Authority. I have referred the Deputy's question to them for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

## Taxi Regulations

295. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of failures recorded by individual applicants for taxi and public service vehicle licences in respect of local knowledge by county; if a particular reference such as applications (details supplied) are used by the examiners; if repeated failures of up to ten times has occurred in a particular county; the reason this should be the case in view of the availability of GPS technology; his views on whether the examination fee needs to be examined in view of the fact that it would appear to be a factor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13081/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry, including the licensing and testing of drivers within this sector, is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the *Taxi Regulation Act 2013*.

I have referred your questions to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

## Driver Test Data

296. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of persons waiting for tests at the Road Safety Authority test centre in Sarsfield Road, Cork; and the average waiting time. [13086/18]

**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.

## National Transport Authority Remit

297. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason the NTA did not consult with companies (details supplied) on charges; if the matter will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13120/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the provision of the North Wall Coach Park is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA), which has statutory responsibility for the development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA)

The purpose of providing a new coach park at North Wall was, in part, to address the issue of on-street parking of coaches in the city centre, particularly with regard to the Luas Cross City works and route. Due to numerous competing demands, the availability of kerbside space for coach parking is extremely limited in Dublin City Centre during business hours. Accordingly, the NTA, in consultation with (and including a signed Memorandum of Understanding) with the Coach Tourism Transport Council (CTTC), developed an off-street coach parking facility close to the city centre where coaches could layover during business hours, thereby freeing up on-street coach parking spaces for drop-off and collection purposes.

In light of their responsibility in this matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the National Transport Authority for a direct response. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Question No. 298 answered with Question No. 288.

### Sports Capital Programme Eligibility

299. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the public service obligations applicable to private sports clubs which receive funding under the sports capital grants, for example, the need for an element of public access at private golf clubs in receipt of sports capital funding which charge high fees for persons to join; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13149/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) as operated by my Department provides grants to assist in the development or refurbishment of sports facilities and the provision of sports equipment. The full terms and conditions of the SCP are available on my Department's website including details of who can apply.

SCP applicants must sign a declaration guaranteeing that they will not deny anybody access to any facility for which they have received a grant on the grounds of gender, civil status, family status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, religious belief, or membership of the Traveller Community without just, reasonable and proper cause. Clubs applying for grant assistance must also be open for new members to join at the time of the assessment process.

In relation to future rounds of the SCP, my Department is undertaking a review of the 2017 round with a view to making recommendations on how to improve the process for future calls. This review will consider any changes required to the eligibility criteria and is also examining what is feasible in terms of the scale and timing of the next round. I expect this review to be complete shortly and an announcement regarding the next round will be made at that stage.

A value for money review of the programme is also being carried out within the Department that will examine, among other things, the impact that the programme is having on participation in sport.

### Ministerial Staff Data

300. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the details of each non-Civil Service appointment he has made to a role in his Department; the persons appointed; the role, qualifications and salary of each; and the guidelines that apply in respect of party political fundraising. [13167/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The information requested by the Deputy is provided in the following table:

Name	Role	Salary Range
Aisling Dunne (Special Adviser)	To advise me in relation to political and Departmental issues.	€84,973 to €104,507 per annum
Carol Hunt (Special Adviser)	To advise me in relation to political and Departmental issues.	€84,973 to €104,507 per annum

Name	Role	Salary Range
Katie Mann (Personal Assistant)	To work on constituency matters.	€47,486 to €60,611 per annum
Caroline Greene (Personal Secretary)	To work on constituency matters.	€509.56 to €992.36 per week
Ultan Sherlock (Civilian Driver)	Civilian Driver	€691.01 per week

All of these staff were appointed and are paid in line with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform guidelines on the staffing of Ministers' Offices. The number of Special Advisers appointed by me is also in line with section 11 of the Public Service Management Act 1997.

The Ethics in Public Office Act 1995 and the Standards in Public Office Act 2001 apply to these appointments.

### Road Signage

301. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason the traffic signs manual published by his Department does not specify that Knock and Knock airport be included on all signposts pointing northwards on the M17/N17 from the new Rathmorrisey junction on the M6/M17/M18 northwards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13171/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Traffic Signs Manual provides detailed guidance on the provision and use of road markings and signs, including their layout and symbols, the circumstances in which they must be used and the rules for positioning them. It provides examples of the wording to be used on signs but does not and could not specify each and every sign in the country.

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 signage) is a matter for the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) 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.

### Swimming Pool Programme Administration

302. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the measures his Department is taking to resolve the fault in the swimming pool in a centre (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13228/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** My Department provided funding of €3.8m towards the original construction cost of the swimming pool in question. A further grant of €136,800 was provided in 2011 under the Energy Efficiency Upgrade and Enhanced Disabled Access initiative.

My Department has not provided funding for any repair work and does not operate a scheme for such expenditure. The management and maintenance of Local Authority swimming pools, including any required maintenance work, are matters for the relevant local authority in the first instance.

*Question No. 303 answered with Question No. 289.*

### Ombudsman for Children Data

304. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of requests for additional funding, staff resources or expertise that have been made by the Office of the Ombudsman for Children since January 2016; the purpose of the requested additional, funding staff resources or expertise; the response of her Department to each request in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13147/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Firstly, I would like to say that I am fully supportive of the work of the Ombudsman for Children, Dr. Niall Muldoon and the staff of his Office. The Office is not only a mechanism of redress but has a significant role to play as an independent national monitor in the area of children's rights.

In July 2016, the Ombudsman for Children submitted a business case to this Department proposing a significant expansion of his staffing resources. At my first meeting with Dr. Muldoon I indicated my support for his proposal and that it would be done on a suitably phased basis.

The allocation for the Ombudsman for Children's Office was increased from €2.154m in 2016 to €2.360m in 2017. I am pleased that in 2018 I secured an allocation of €2.733m for the Office. My Department's External HR Unit is working with the Ombudsman for Children's Office to obtain the necessary approvals to proceed with the required recruitment, and other temporary requested measures, as outlined in the following tables:

Year	Approval sought from Department for the following posts	Date received in Department	All posts sanctioned	Date of Sanction
2016	3 posts			
	- 1 Office Manager (HEO replacement post)	14.9.2016	3 posts	15.9.2016
	- 1 x Digital Media Officer (EO)	14.9.2016		14.9.2016
	- Temp replacement for maternity cover	13.9.2016		14.9.2016
2017	6 posts	21.9.2017	6 posts	28.9.2017
	- Head of Education and Participation (AP)			
	- Investigator (AP)	13.11.2017	2 temporary posts	14.11.2017
	- 2 x Education and Participation Officers (2xEO)			
	- 2 x Early Resolution Officers (2 x EO)			
	2 temporary posts to cover maternity leave:			
	- Communications Manager (AP)			
	- Investigator (AP)			
2018	3 temporary posts to cover maternity	5.3.2018	3 temporary posts	9.3.2018
	- Participation, Rights and Education Officer (EO)			
	- Human Rights & Policy Officer (AO)			
	- Corporate Services Officer (EO)			

Year	Funding Allocation	Expenditure
2016	€2.154m	€1.8m (underspend of €0.354m)
2017	€2.36m	€2.150m (underspend of €0.2m)
2018	€2.733m	

### Child and Family Agency Funding

305. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if Tusla will provide funding to a service (details supplied) to assist it to meet its running costs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13053/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, administers the provision of funding and the awarding of grants to child and family services nationwide. In line with its Commissioning Strategy, Tusla is committed to using all available resources for children and families in the most efficient, equitable, proportionate and sustainable way.

Tusla has advised that the organisation to which the Deputy refers received joint funding from the Health Service Executive (HSE) and Tusla in 2014 and 2015.

Tusla has developed its framework for the management of and accountability arrangements for grants in accordance with public sector guidelines. Tusla has advised that it did not receive certain required documents in 2016 including; an Annual Report, Scope of Services, audited accounts, or any official report of client numbers from the organisation. Due to the lack of engagement on these items, Tusla did not issue funding to the centre referred to by the Deputy in 2016.

Tusla has also advised that it did not receive a grant application from the centre for 2017 or 2018. In the past year, Tusla has engaged with members of the Board of the centre, referred to by the Deputy, on several occasions to outline the requirements for a successful funding application, and to express its concern in relation to the ongoing issues regarding governance matters.

Over the past two years, Tusla has provided funding to another organisation in the area which provides a high quality counselling service for young people.

Tusla will continue to work with its community partners throughout the country and will consider service needs and funding resources for such groups where appropriate, in accordance with public financial management principles, procedures, and additional reporting requirements.

### Ministerial Staff Data

306. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the details of each non-Civil Service appointment she has made to a role in her Department; the persons appointed; the role, qualifications and salary of each; and the guidelines that apply in respect of party political fundraising. [13153/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** As Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, I have appointed two Special Advisers and two Civilian Drivers in my Department. The appointments have been made in accordance with Instructions for Ministerial Appointments as published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

These instructions set specific conditions to be met in respect of such appointments including the salaries to be applied. In accordance with these instructions, both my Special Advisers have been placed on the Principal Officer Standard Scale - PPC and are both currently on the 4th point of this scale - €95,441 and my Civilian Drivers are both on an annual salary of €34,305.

The terms of the Ethics in Public Office Act 1995 and the Standards in Public Office Act 2001 apply to all Ministerial staff appointments, including Special Advisers, and in accordance with these Acts a copy of the appointees' contracts of employment together with details of qualifications are laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas. In addition, the Acts provide for each individual appointee, with the exception of the grade of Civilian Driver, to make written statements of registerable interests which could materially influence the appointee in, or in relation to, the performance of official functions.

The Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour also apply to Ministerial appointees but the Deputy may wish to note that the restrictions on civil servants engaging in political activity under the Code do not apply to Ministerial staff holding temporary unestablished positions in the civil service and whose tenure is coterminous with that of the relevant Minister.

I am satisfied that all of the persons appointed by me are appropriately qualified to carry out their official functions.

### **Library Services Provision**

307. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the role his Department will have in the interim review of the contract to supply library books for a service (details supplied); if concerns regarding non-adherence to the contract will be considered; if there has been an amendment to the contract; if the knowledge or otherwise of the book market here, support for Irish publishers and the possible cultural loss will be reviewed; the date and process for the interim review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13016/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The provision and management of public library services is primarily a matter for each local authority in its capacity as a library authority under the Local Government Act 2001. This includes the purchase of public library book-stock which, in 2016, was subject to a national tender run by the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) on behalf of the 31 local authorities.

The LGMA had sole responsibility for managing the tender competition and the post-tender contracting process. Four suppliers have been awarded contracts on foot of the tender process and these are managed by the LGMA on behalf of local authorities.

The contracts require the suppliers to liaise with the LGMA on a regular basis to address any issues arising that may impact on the performance of the agreement, and to agree milestones, compliance schedules and operational protocols that may be required by the LGMA from time to time. However, the contracts do not provide for an interim review and it is a matter solely for the LGMA to determine if a formal review or an amendment of contracts is required.

### **Ministerial Staff Data**

308. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the details of each non-Civil Service appointment he has made to a role in his Department; the persons appointed; the role, qualifications and salary of each; and the guidelines that apply in respect of party political fundraising. [13165/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department was established on 19 July 2017. I can confirm that the only appointments I have made were two Advisers, details as follows:

1. Press Adviser:

Mr Daniel Rowan was appointed as Press Adviser on 14 August 2017. His main responsibilities include the following:

- Provision and oversight of press information and liaison on my behalf (working with the Department's Press Officer and Press Office staff),

- Liaison, on my behalf, with the Government Press Office (working with the Department's Press Officer and Press Office staff), and with Department Officials on media aspects of policy;

- Adviser on external communications and publicity on my behalf;

- Focal point, along with Mr Ó Ceallacháin (my Policy Adviser), for political clearance and transmission of speaking and briefing material for all "Order of Business" purposes and circulation of such material to me and to the Minister of State;

- Liaison with team of Media Advisers across Government;

- Clearance of all Ministerial speeches and news releases

Mr Rowan has previously worked in communications roles in the charity sector, politics, and public sector.

Mr Rowan's salary is at the level of the Principal Officer Standard pay scale, sanctioned at €81,767.

2. Special Advisor

Mr Seamus O' Ceallachain was appointed as Special Advisor to me on 11 September 2017. Mr Ó Ceallachain's main responsibilities include the following:

- Assisting in the management of my programme of work;

- Liaison, on my behalf, with relevant Units in relation to the Department/Government priorities and timelines for dealing with the stated policies and priorities;

- Attendance at weekly pre-Government meeting of Ministerial Special Advisers;

- Liaison with team of advisers across Government;

- Attendance at relevant Senior Official and Cabinet Committee meetings;

- Focal point, along with Mr Rowan (my Press Adviser), for political clearance and transmission of speaking and briefing material for all "Order of Business" purposes and circulation of such material to me and to the Minister of State;

- Liaison with Secretary General's Office in regard to the provision of observations on Government Memoranda.

Mr. O'Ceallacháin is seconded from his role as school Principal in Pobalscoil na Tríonóide, Youghal, Co. Cork.

Mr. Ó Ceallacháin's salary is at the level of the Principal Officer Standard pay scale, sanc-

tioned at €94,521

I have no plans to appoint any further Special Advisers.

I can confirm that the Fine Gael Party does not have its own specific guidelines on fundraising. It adheres to the SIPO guidelines.

### Youth Unemployment Data

309. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the percentage of youth unemployment in the south east; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13188/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The first publication of the Labour Force Survey which replaces the Quarterly National Household Survey (QHNS) was released on 16, January 2018 and is the official measure of unemployment. The most recent data shows that youth unemployment has fallen from a peak of 31% in 2012 to 12.2% in Q4 2017. Overall youth unemployment has fallen from well above the EU average in 2012 to well below the EU average of 16.4% in Q4 2017.

Within the South-East region, youth unemployment has fallen from a peak of 41% in 2012 to 13.9% in Q.4, 2017. The number of young people in employment in the South East increased by over 6,000 over the same period – from 18,600 on average in the year 2012 to 24,700 on average in 2017.

These trends indicate that together with improvements in the labour market and economic recovery, our approach to youth employment, which focuses in the first instance on enhancing processes and policies for assisting young unemployed people to find and secure sustainable jobs, has been relatively successful.

The Government's primary strategy to tackle unemployment since 2012 is twofold:

- Firstly, through policies set out in the Action Plan for Jobs, to create an environment in which business can succeed and create jobs. This policy now includes a specific regional Action Plan for the South East Region. The Plan has been embraced within the region and the efforts by stakeholders and businesses in the region are paying off: Average employment in the South East was 224,000 in 2017 – 14,000 more than in 2015 (baseline year), and representing significant progress towards the 25,000 target for 2020 as set out in the Plan.

- Secondly, through Pathways to Work, my Department ensures that as many new jobs and vacancies as possible are filled by people taken from the Live Register. Under this policy, employment services and activation supports are heavily concentrated on the areas of highest unemployment.

Under the Youth Guarantee process case officers engage with unemployed young people, on a monthly basis, to prepare and implement personal progression plans for employment. Where young people do not find work quickly, additional supports are offered through places on employment and training schemes, which are closely aligned to the needs of the labour market.

For those who do not find employment, through the process just described, additional offers are provided for. Most such offers (over 70%) are in existing further education or training programmes. Others are in existing community-based employment programmes/workplace based interventions such as CE, Gateway and Tús and First Steps; or in subsidies to employers,

through JobsPlus Youth. Long-term unemployed jobseekers under-25 are also referred to Job-Path, a contracted, payment-by-results employment services that provides additional resources and supports to those long-term unemployed.

As part of this range of opportunities, later this year I will be introducing a new work experience programme targeted specifically at young jobseekers who are long-term unemployed or who face significant barriers to gaining employment. The new Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS) will provide young jobseekers with the opportunity to learn basic work and social skills in a supportive environment while on a work placement. Operational details are currently being finalised and I hope to launch the scheme in Quarter 2, 2018.

As indicated by the Labour force survey results, the policies being pursued under the Action Plan for Jobs and under Pathways to Work have been effective in reducing youth and overall unemployment, both nationally and in the south-eastern region and I am confident that they will continue to do so.

### **Social Welfare Appeals Status**

310. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a social welfare appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13011/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer has completed a review of his original decision which allowed the appeal of the person concerned regarding a decision of the Department of 16 September 2016 in relation to their Jobseeker's Allowance. The effect of that original decision was that the revised means would not be assessed retrospectively for the period 30 March 2016 to 13 September 2016. In light of additional evidence, the Appeals Officer has now reconfirmed that element of his decision and also decided that the Department's decision shall not apply on a prospective basis.

An additional decision of the Department dated 30 January 2017 in relation to the means of the person concerned has not yet been appealed. The person concerned has now been notified of the Appeals Officer's latest decision, including their option of appealing the decision of 30 January 2017.

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 on social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Tús Programme**

311. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when the national review of the operation and delivery of the Tús initiative will conclude; if Tús services in County Donegal will be preserved (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13015/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Tús is a community work placement initiative aimed at providing short-term, quality work opportunities for those who are unemployed for more than 12 months. The scheme is delivered

through Implementing Bodies (IBs), comprising 47 Local Development Companies and Údarás na Gaeltachta. Tús commenced operation in 2011 as a response to the high level of unemployment and the large numbers on the Live Register. As the economic recovery takes hold and the overall level of unemployment continues to fall, the Department recognises the need to adapt the Tús scheme to the changing circumstances, opportunities and needs of jobseekers.

There has been a 48% fall in the numbers on the Live Register who are more than 1 year unemployed in the five years since the end December 2012. Given the welcome improvements in the labour market in recent years with reducing numbers of long term unemployed on the Live Register, which is the target cohort for Tús, it is now considered necessary to reduce the number of Tús placements provided to reflect the reduced numbers of long-term unemployed and the reduced numbers on the scheme.

My Department has engaged with the Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) – the representative body for IBs to ensure that any impact will be managed in a positive manner. At present, Officials of my Department are engaging on an individual basis with each IB, including Donegal Local Development Company and Inishowen Development Partnership Company, to agree new Tús allocations and a revised funding structure. The Department is very conscious of the valuable contribution the Tús scheme is making in the provision of services to individuals and communities across Ireland. It is hoped that any adjustment in numbers is achieved in an orderly manner to minimise any disruption to all stakeholders.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

### **Legislative Measures**

312. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to amend the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017 to reduce the look back reference period to 13 months or less; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13046/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** During the Second Stage debate on the Bill, many Deputies expressed the view in relation to the banded hours provision, that the 18 month look back reference period is too long. I indicated that I would consider these matters in the context of possible Committee Stage amendments.

There are a few issues that need to be considered. There will be an administrative burden on employers in implementing the banded hours provision so therefore it is desirable that an ‘easy’ divisor is used. The 18 month period was chosen as it would take account of seasonal fluctuations as well as the normal peaks and troughs of business. It also reflects that the academic year does not match the calendar year.

It is important that the look-back period and the length of time an employee is statutorily entitled to stay in a band of hours remain the same. Any reduction in the look back period would reduce the period of security provided to employees. It is also important that we use an easy divisor; therefore, 13 months as a reference period might not be desirable from that point of view. I am however, open to discussing a reference period closer to a year and in this respect I note that the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in their report on the Banded Hour Contracts Bill 2016 recommended a reference period of 12 months.

### **Legislative Measures**

313. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to amend the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017 to narrow the bands of hours into which persons can be placed (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13047/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** During the Second Stage debate on the Bill, some Deputies expressed the view that the bands are too wide in the Banded Hours provision. I indicated that I would consider this matter in the context of possible Committee Stage amendments once the bands allow a reasonable degree of flexibility.

In relation to the width of the bands, it was clear from the public consultation and from the ICTU/Ibec dialogue process that the bands selected should be sufficiently broad so as to allow a reasonable degree of flexibility in managing the banded hours arrangements. This can benefit both employers and employees. A greater number of bands but with more narrow ranges of hours could be more difficult to operate.

The purpose of the banded hours provision is to ensure that an employee's contract reflects the actual hours worked consistently by the employee over an extended period. This will help to address problems of uncertainty of hours/predictability of income, which can cause difficulties for people seeking mortgages/credit etc.

I recognise that some companies that have bargained collectively on banded hours arrangements may already have a higher number of bands with a narrower range of hours in each band, which works for those particular companies in those particular sectors of employment. I certainly do not want to interfere with these arrangements because they work very well for those employers. However, we have to recognise that the proposed legislation will apply to all employments in all sectors and not just sectors where to date banded hours are a normal part of their working environment. It is very important, therefore, that the bands achieve the outcome desired and still provide employers with a reasonable level of flexibility.

### **Legislative Measures**

314. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to amend the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017 to ensure that casual workers are included in the prohibition on zero-hour contracts; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13048/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Organisation of Working Time Act was enacted in 1997. Section 18 refers to 'work of a casual nature' but does not define it. This has not led to a regulatory problem of employers incorrectly categorising employees as 'casual' in the 20 years since enactment.

I do not believe that all casual or flexible working arrangements are wrong and should be stopped in their entirety. It is worth recalling that the UL study acknowledged that the flexibility offered by genuine casual work can be mutually beneficial for employees and employers in some cases. In certain sectors, such arrangements can help employers to satisfy peak demands and fill staffing gaps on a short-term basis. Furthermore, it is not good practice to include definitions in legislation when the plain, ordinary meaning of a word is capable of being understood by all of the bodies responsible for adjudicating on it. I am satisfied that the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court are capable of examining all of the circumstances of a particular case and then making an appropriate judgement as to whether or not a particular

arrangement is genuinely casual.

### **Jobseeker's Allowance Applications**

315. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress to date in the determination of an application for jobseeker's allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13077/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The person concerned made an application for jobseekers allowance with effect from 21/2/18. The person concerned subsequently submitted a doctor's note covering the period 22/2/18 to 22/3/18. During this period the person concerned will not qualify for a jobseekers allowance payment as he does not satisfy the qualifying criteria. The person concerned should contact the local Intreo Centre to clarify his circumstances and progress an application for jobseekers allowance with effect from 23/3/18.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility**

316. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will defer action to discontinue the adult dependant allowance payable to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13085/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The person concerned is currently in receipt of a personal rate jobseeker's allowance, an adult dependent allowance and a child dependent allowance. Entitlement to the adult dependent allowance is currently under review by an officer of the Department following notification of a change in circumstances. If there is a revised decision the person concerned will be notified in writing.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Domiciliary Care Allowance Eligibility**

317. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of plans for the proposed increase from 16 to 18 years of age for a domiciliary care allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13097/18]

318. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if services for children over 16 years of age will be extended to take into account private therapies paid for by the disability allowance payment if the age for domiciliary care allowance is increased to 18 years of age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13098/18]

319. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the additional social welfare payments paid to disability allowance recipients will be extended to domiciliary care allowance recipients, such as the fuel allowance and free travel, when a child reaches 16 years of age, if the age for domiciliary care allowance is increased to 18 years of age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13099/18]

320. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a carer's allowance or domiciliary care allowance will be included as a qualifying payment for the fuel allowance if the age for domiciliary care allowance is increased to 18 years of age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13100/18]

321. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the age for domiciliary care allowance is increased to 18 years of age, the health services that will be affected by the extension; if access will remain to currently provided psychology services and occupational therapy; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13101/18]

322. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if there will be an impact on the disability access route to the education scheme if the age for domiciliary care allowance is increased to 18 years of age in view of the fact that an application could be made before the student turns 18 years of age without a disability allowance decision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13102/18]

323. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if domiciliary care allowance, DCA, will carry the same weight as disability allowance if the age for DCA is increased to 18 years of age in view of the fact that DCA is based on the level of care and not the actual disability; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13103/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Question Nos. 317 to 323, inclusive, together.

The Make Work Pay (MWP) report, published in 2017, made a number of recommendations on how people with disabilities who want to work and can work could fulfil their employment ambitions. A number of its key recommendations related to the need to support young adults through education, training and social inclusion according to their capacity and to reconfigure the qualifying age for disability allowance (DA) and domiciliary care allowance (DCA).

When the MWP report was launched, the then Minister for Social Protection, now Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar T.D., said that there is a legitimate expectation among parents and families that a child who currently receives DCA will qualify for DA at age 16 and has ruled out making any change in this area unless it is supported by the disability sector. He instructed the Department to consult with parents and disability advocates on the recommendation particularly given the sensitive nature of the proposal. Therefore, earlier this month, I, together with the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, launched a national consultation process with people with disabilities, their families and advocates to seek their views on these recommendations. At the launch I reassured people with disabilities that the Government wants to get their views before considering any changes to the two schemes. Therefore, no decision has been made as to how the recommendations might be implemented.

In coming to a decision in this regard, the Government will also consider the impact of the recommendation in terms of the services and supports for people with disabilities, as raised by the Deputy in his questions.

The consultation process will continue until mid-April. It provides stakeholders with an important opportunity to make their views known on this significant issue. I look forward to the outcome of the consultation process in due course.

### **Disability Services Provision**

324. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection

the reason Intreo is being tasked with disability services in view of the fact that other entities are better placed to meet the actual need of those living with a disability; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13104/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Intreo service is not being given the task of delivering disability services such as those delivered by the health service and the education sector. In line with the Comprehensive Employment Strategy and building on developments in recent years, it is expected that the Department has a greater role in the delivery of employment services and supports to persons with a disability.

In recent years, the social protection system in Ireland has undergone significant reforms, moving away from passive income supports to an ‘active inclusion’ approach that seeks to maximise the potential of working age adults, with the appropriate supports and services. The Intreo service, which is the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection’s integrated income support, employment and support service, is central to this process.

In line with commitments under the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for people with disabilities and Pathways to Work 2016-2020, the Department has progressively expanded the mainstream Intreo service to cater for people with disabilities. Across the Intreo service network of 62 offices, people with disabilities may, on a voluntary basis, seek an appointment with an employment supports case officer to discuss their employment ambitions and develop an appropriate personal progression plan. The Intreo service has also undertaken a programme of upskilling staff to better support persons with disabilities who want to pursue further education, training or work opportunities. While the Intreo service, as the mainstream employment service, acts as the primary gateway or access point to employment supports, it may also refer those with more complex support needs to other relevant bodies, such as the Employability service for training or employment supports.

It is my intention to continue to build the capacity of the Intreo service so that it has the ability to address the public employment support needs of people with disabilities.

Last year, the Make Work Pay for people with disabilities report made a number of recommendations on how people with disabilities who want to work and can work could fulfil their employment ambitions. One of the key recommendations relates to the principle of early engagement. Early engagement means that the State will support people with disabilities at the earliest stage possible to help them achieve their employment goals. To this end, people with disabilities would get advice from the Intreo service when they apply for a disability income support payment. The service would be provided on the following basis:

- Engagement would be voluntary.
- Engagement would encourage new recipients of disability income support payments to use the Intreo Service and supports.
- Engagement would focus on an individual’s needs.
- Engagement would be effectively resourced.
- Engagement would be joined up with other service providers to make sure that the process is as seamless as possible.
- Engagement would address barriers to work faced by people with disabilities

No decision has yet been made as to when this approach would start. Earlier this month,

a national consultation process commenced to seek the views of people with disabilities, their families and advocates on the implementation of this recommendation. The Government wants to get the views of stakeholders before considering whether any changes, if any, might be introduced. The national consultation process will continue until mid-April and will be followed by further consideration with a number of stakeholder bodies. It provides stakeholders with an important opportunity to make their views known on this significant issue. I look forward to the outcome of the consultation process in due course.

### **Ministerial Staff Data**

325. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the details of each non-Civil Service appointment she has made to a role in her Department; the persons appointed; the role, qualifications and salary of each; and the guidelines that apply in respect of party political fundraising. [13158/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** All staff in my Department are Civil Servants and are appointed in compliance with the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004.

While the great majority of these civil servants appointments are on foot of a competitive process in accordance with the “Code of Practice for Appointment to Positions in the Civil Service and Public Service”, a small number of Ministerial civil service appointments are also made, in compliance with the Guidelines on Staffing of Ministerial Offices issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

### **Social and Affordable Housing**

326. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will address a series of matters relating to the enhanced leasing scheme (details supplied). [12008/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** A range of housing options are necessary to ensure a supply of accommodation to meet different types of social housing need. Harnessing the off-balance sheet potential of private investment in social housing is an important contributor to meeting this objective and the social housing targets set out in Rebuilding Ireland over the period to 2021 reflect the ambition in that regard. 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 (AHBs) under leasing arrangements from a range of different sources and funded under the Department’s Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP). High quality secure properties which represent value for money and are available on a long-term basis are being targeted by local authorities around the country to accommodate people on local authority waiting lists.

The Government has increased significantly the delivery expected from local authorities through their social housing build programme, but it remains the case that more homes can be provided through leasing than could reasonably be expected to be delivered under construction and acquisition programmes alone. In addition, the cost of delivering social housing units under the traditional construction and acquisition model is not adequately captured by the up-front capital expenditure as each unit will carry a stream of ongoing costs over the long-term including management, maintenance and remediation. Furthermore, during the term of the lease, the responsibility for structural matters remains with the property owner and not the local

authority. At the end of the lease term, the dwelling can require major renovation or upgrading resulting in a substantial capital cost, which under leasing is borne by the owner rather than the local authority.

On foot of a wide variety of interest from developers, investors, financiers and others in being involved in the provision of social housing, a structured, formal process was put in place to facilitate engagement with such parties. The Clearing House Group (CHG) was established to examine and consider proposals and to meet with the companies, groups and institutions involved. This was set out in the Clearing House Protocol published in March 2015. The CHG comprised representatives from:

- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government;
- Department of Finance;
- Department of Public Expenditure and Reform;
- Dublin City Council;
- The Housing Agency;
- The National Economic and Social Council (NESC).

The Chairperson was assigned by the National Asset Management Agency on a temporary basis at the request of my Department. The CHG was a sub-group of the Finance Work Stream, one of the governance structures of the Social Housing Strategy 2020.

The examination of proposals was a complex task and despite a high level of engagement with potential providers, none of the proposals met the criteria that would enable them to be considered off-balance sheet. The following summary table details each of the 25 proposers who made submissions to the CHG. Included also are the dates on which the proposers met with the Clearing House Group:

Proposer	Date of Meeting with CHG
Barclays	29/06/2015
Trinity IM	27/03/2015
Menolly Homes	N/A
Home Grown Home	28/08/2015
Richard Mc Cafferty/ Rampart Capital	N/A
Investec	21/04/2015
McGarrell Reilly Group	N/A
Centrus	30/04/2015
Lex Risk Solutions/ RK Harrison	04/06/2015
AIB	04/06/2015
BOI	04/06/2015
Dublin Artisan Dwelling Fund	17/04/2015
Tuath Housing Association	27/03/2015
Tuath Housing Association – “Rent and Save” proposal	23/09/2015
Apex Housing Association	29/06/2015
IRES REIT	29/06/2015
Bartra Capital Limited	13/07/2015 28/08/2015

Proposer	Date of Meeting with CHG
Clyde Capital Partners/Tom Barry	04/06/2015
New Ground	28/08/2015
Cluid – Local Authority Void Units	13/07/2015
Cluid – Cost Rental Pilot	13/07/2015
NABCO	13/07/2015
Asset Backed Investment	28/08/2015
O’Cualann Co Housing Alliance	28/08/2015
Irish League of Credit Unions	Proposal received 24/11/2015

Taking account of the work and analysis of the CHG, it was considered more constructive to use

the existing social housing funding mechanisms, with appropriate adjustments in the form of a new enhanced long-term lease arrangement, to provide a framework to harness private investment in an off balance sheet manner.

In the period since the CHG concluded its work, my Department, together with the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA), the Housing Agency and local authorities, have been working to develop a new set of long-term leasing arrangements. This work culminated in the launch last month of the new Enhanced Long-term Social Housing Leasing scheme.

The scheme will be governed by my Department and operated by local authorities. It will be funded through my Department’s SHCEP. The Housing Agency will manage and administer the scheme on behalf of my Department and will act as a national co-ordinator. It is intended to target property developers and investors who are in a position to deliver housing on a reasonable scale as well as fulfilling management and maintenance responsibilities and this is reflected in the changes to the existing lease terms. It will complement the existing long-term leasing arrangements, which will continue to be available for leasing existing properties; new properties delivered at a smaller scale; or properties made available for leasing where a housing provider is not in a position to provide management services as required under this new arrangement.

The provider will be paid up to 95% market rate as opposed to 80% (85% for apartments) currently, which reflects the reduced responsibility of the local authority in relation to maintenance of the property under this type of contract as compared to standard long term leasing. The market rent must be evidenced by a valuation prepared by a qualified valuer and each valuation must refer to 3 comparable properties in the locality as evidence of the market rent for the property.

Local authorities will determine the suitability of the proposed properties, having regard to the standard of the properties, the requirement for social housing in the area and the criteria set out in each authority’s Development Plans, including in particular sustainable communities considerations.

The new scheme may be used by local authorities in arrangements for Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000. However, the enhanced lease is specifically targeted at providing housing units in addition to any targets set for Part V arrangements; i.e. any units that are leased under this scheme must be additional to normal Part V obligations on any specific site. If the new lease is used for a Part V arrangement, the appropriate net monetary value discount will apply and the provider would, therefore, not receive the maximum 95% of market rent.

A call for proposals is currently open and the Housing Agency is accepting submissions from interested parties until 12 April 2018. All proposals are subject to a range of criteria as set

out in the “Calls for Proposals for Enhanced Long Term Social Housing Leasing Scheme” and the proposals will be assessed and marked in accordance with the terms set out therein. The Call for Proposals is available on the Housing Agency website at the following link: <https://www.housingagency.ie/News/Current-News/Enhanced-Long-Term-Social-Housing-Leasing-Scheme.aspx>.

### Residential Tenancies Board

327. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of requests for additional funding, staff resources or expertise that have been made by the Residential Tenancies Board since January 2016; the purpose of the requested additional funding, staff resources or expertise; the response of his Department to each request in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13140/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The RTB currently has 55 staff which include a number of secondees from other civil/public service bodies.

Demand for the RTB’s services has increased significantly due to the increasing size of the rental sector and also because of the changing regulatory structure. Furthermore, a number of additional functions have been added to the remit of the RTB since 2016, including:

- implementation of new Rent Predictability Measures, such as the introduction of Rent Pressure Zones and associated on-going analysis,
- increased engagement with the Approved Housing Body (AHB) Sector,
- integration of Rent Tribunal functions into the RTB,
- introduction of Free Mediation Services,
- development of a voluntary Landlord Accreditation Scheme,
- establishment of a one-stop shop,
- establishment of one-person Tribunals,
- increased Education/Awareness and research role, and
- consideration and analysis in respect of a Deposit Protection Scheme.

In relation to its requests for additional staffing resources, the following table sets out staffing requests made by the RTB since 2016:

Year	Additional Resources Sought	Additional Resources Sanctioned
2016	Sanction requested for 1 additional post.	1 additional post
2017	Sanction requested for 10.5 additional posts.	10.5 additional posts
2018 to 16 March	Sanction requested for 1 additional posts.	1 additional post

The RTB has 8 vacancies at present and recruitment is ongoing in order to fill these vacan-

cies as quickly as possible.

The RTB's funding is derived primarily from the fee income, accruing from tenancy registrations as set down by Ministerial Order. This allowed the RTB to move to a self-financing position in 2010. However, due to a growing demand for RTB services and the need to deliver new functions under amendments made to the Residential Tenancies Act 2004, and coupled with reductions in registration income resulting from longer-term tenancies, it has become necessary to provide for direct Exchequer funding to the RTB.

Section 176 of the Residential Tenancies Act provides that the fees received by the Residential Tenancies Board under the Act shall be paid into, or disposed of for the benefit of, the Exchequer in such manner as I, as Minister, may direct. By various Ministerial Directions since 2005, a percentage of fees received by the RTB under the Act has been allocated for transfer to local authorities for the purpose of the performance of their functions under the Housing Acts in relation to private rented accommodation, including rental standards inspections. Since 1 July 2016, the RTB retains the entirety of the fees received under the Act to defray its costs.

In 2016, my Department provided some €668,000 in Exchequer funding to the RTB. €170,000 of this amount was a requirement that arose outside of the 2016 Estimates process during the year, for an advertising campaign carried out by the RTB in quarter 1 2016, highlighting changes on foot of the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2015.

In 2017, Exchequer funding of €2,329,000 was paid by my Department to the RTB. Included in this amount was €265,000 additional funding outside of the Estimates process in 2017, that arose during the year in respect of :-

1. the provision of Fire Safety leaflets to all landlords to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities and obligations in respect of fire safety requirements - €107,200;
2. €112,000 in respect of an Auto-address Eircoding project which was required to support the roll out of the Rent Pressure Zone measure; and
3. Legal Costs - €46,000.

### **Building Regulations Amendments**

328. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to make changes to the BER system to incorporate district heating; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13207/18]

339. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the way in which the potential for district heating is incorporated into building regulations in terms of allowing such a system to help developers meet compliance with sustainable energy criteria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13202/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 328 and 339 together.

The Second Schedule to the Building Regulations 1997 to 2017 (which are made under the Building Control Act 1990, as amended) set out the minimum legal requirements applicable to the construction of all new buildings, extensions to existing buildings, as well as material alterations and certain material changes of use to existing buildings. These requirements are set out in 12 parts, classified as Parts A to M. The accompanying Technical Guidance Documents

(TGDs) provide guidance on how owners, builders, developers and designers can achieve compliance in practice.

Part L of the regulations deals with Conservation of Fuel and Energy. It provides that the energy performance of the building is such as to limit the calculated primary energy consumption and related carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions insofar as is reasonably practicable, when both are calculated using the Dwelling Energy Assessment Procedure (DEAP) for Dwellings and the Non Domestic Energy Assessment Procedure (NEAP) for buildings other than dwellings, published by Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).

TGD L and associated assessment procedures (DEAP & NEAP) recognise and facilitate district heating as a means for showing compliance with the requirements of Part L. Currently, DEAP accounts for small scale district heating systems that would typically provide heating for 1500 to 2000 dwellings. As part of the implementation of Nearly Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB), the assessment procedures, DEAP and NEAP, are both being reviewed to account for renewable energy and combined heat and power from large scale district heating systems.

It should be noted that the BER system uses both DEAP and NEAP for calculating the energy performance of buildings and currently takes account of the energy provided by district heating systems.

### **Home Loan Scheme**

329. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a number of persons who have used the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme online calculator are being contacted by local authorities and being advised that they may only borrow a sum that is significantly short of the amount initially calculated in view of the fact that they inputted up-to-date and truthful financial figures; if the online calculator is taking into account an- or is affected by the requirement for mortgage protection insurance; if the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme can offer amounts comparable with bank offerings for first-time buyers; the number of applications made for the scheme by the offers made, drawdowns and applications declined by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13026/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Following a review of the two existing local authority home loan schemes, the House Purchase Loan and the Home Choice Loan, a new loan offering, known as the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan, was introduced on 1 February 2018.

The Home Loan calculator on [www.rebuildingirelandhomeloan.ie](http://www.rebuildingirelandhomeloan.ie) gives an indication of how much you can borrow over the maximum term allowable and what the estimated repayments would be. A shorter loan term will reduce the amount you can borrow. All indicative repayment amounts are exclusive of Mortgage Protection Insurance (MPI) which is a requirement of borrowing. The calculator gives indicative results for illustrative and guidance purposes only and is not an offer of a loan.

As with the previous local authority home loan offerings, the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan is a local authority product and loan applications are made directly to the local authority in whose area the property proposed for purchase is situated. My Department does not collect information on the number of enquiries to local authorities regarding the loan, the number of complete loan applications received by local authorities, or the reasons as to why a loan application may be declined.

The final decision on loan approval is a matter for each local authority and its Credit Committee on a case-by-case basis. Decisions on all housing loan applications must be made in accordance with the statutory credit policy that underpins the scheme, in order to ensure consistency of treatment for all applicants. Loan applicants who are dissatisfied with a loan application decision of a local authority Credit Committee may appeal that decision to the local authority. Details of the appeals process can be obtained from the relevant local authority.

As is currently the case, my Department will continue to publish information on the overall number and value of (1) local authority loan approvals and (2) local authority loan drawdowns on its website at the following link - <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/house-prices-loans-and-profile-borrowers/local-authority-loan-activity>. This information is currently updated to Q3 2017.

### **Fire Safety Regulations**

330. **Deputy Noel Greally** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the standards for fire detection in rented accommodation as set out by the NSAI and referred to in section 10, “Fire Safety”, in SI 17/2017 will be made available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13062/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** On 1 July 2017, updated regulatory standards, the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2017, came into effect. These Regulations focus on tenant safety and include new measures covering heating appliances, carbon monoxide, ventilation and window safety. All landlords have a legal obligation to ensure that their rented properties comply with the Regulations.

The Guide to Minimum Standards in Rented Accommodation is available on my Department’s website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/private-rented-housing/inspections/minimum-standards-rented-accommodation>.

Regulation 10 of the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2017 provides that fire detection and alarm systems and emergency lighting systems shall be maintained in accordance with current standards as produced by the National Standards Authority of Ireland for Fire Detection and Fire Alarm Systems in Buildings and for Emergency Lighting.

Queries in relation to standards issued by the National Standards Authority of Ireland are a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

### **Building Regulations Compliance**

331. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a redress scheme for families with homes affected by Mica defective concrete blocks in County Donegal and by pyrite in County Mayo will be introduced. [13063/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** 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:

- (i) 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;

(ii) 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;

(iii) To outline a range of technical options for remediation and the means by which those technical options could be applied; and

(iv) 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 once the standardised protocol is in place.

Last year 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. I made a similar visit to Mayo on 26 January 2018.

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.

### **Electoral Register**

332. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the practice by local authorities of issuing the 2018 to 2019 electoral register in alphabetical order by surname rather than numerical order by address and that the revised manner in the compilation of the register makes it unusable to public representatives; if local authorities are instructed by his Department to carry out same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13067/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan):** In law, the preparation of the Register of Electors is a matter for each local registration authority. It is their duty to ensure, as far as possible and with the cooperation of the public, the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the Register. The focus of my

Department's work in relation to the Register is to support and assist registration authorities in ensuring that an appropriate legislative framework is in place.

The statutory provisions relating to the form and content of the Register are contained in Rule 2 of the Second Schedule to the Electoral Act 1992. It is provided there that if the registration area is a city, the names should be arranged in street order unless the registration authority consider that doing so would be inappropriate, having regard to the general character of any part of the area. If the registration area is an administrative county, the requirement is to arrange the names alphabetically in townland order unless the authority consider that arrangement in street or any other order is possible and convenient, having regard to the general character of any part of the area.

I understand that the Dublin registration authorities have published the 2018/2019 Register in street order, where appropriate, but by name alphabetically rather than by house number in each such street in order to facilitate election staff at polling time. However, in order to be of assistance to the appropriate councillors and Oireachtas members in their areas, the registration authorities have also sent to them a soft copy of the Register, which enables them to sort the register information for each street into house number rather than alphabetic order.

### **Ministerial Staff Data**

333. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details of each non-Civil Service appointment he has made to a role in his Department; the persons appointed; the role, qualifications and salary of each; and the guidelines that apply in respect of party political fundraising. [13162/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The only non civil service appointments made in my Department since my own appointment have been those of Special Advisers and of Ministerial Drivers. All these appointments have been made in accordance with the relevant guidelines and instructions from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on Ministerial appointments for the 32nd Dáil.

The two Special Advisers appointed in my Department are Mr Jack O'Donnell and Ms Jennifer Carroll-MacNeill. In relation to the role of Special Advisers, this is as set out in Section 11 of the Public Service Management Act 1997. Mr. O'Donnell was previously employed as Deputy Government Press Officer. Ms. Carroll-MacNeill has previously worked as a Special Adviser in the Departments of Children and Youth Affairs and Justice and Equality.

The terms of the Ethics in Public Office Act 1995 and the Standards in Public Office Act 2001 apply to all Ministerial staff appointments, including Special Advisers, and both of my Advisers have been advised of their obligations under the Standards in Public Office legislation. While the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour applies to Ministerial appointees in general terms, the restrictions in relation to political activity under the Code do not apply to staff holding temporary un-established positions whose tenure is coterminous with that of the relevant Minister.

The information requested as regards overall numbers and salary is set out in the following tables:

### **Minister Eoghan Murphy – Political Appointments**

*Questions - Written Answers*

Name	Job title	Grade	Pay Scale
Jack O Donnell	Special Adviser	Principal Officer (Standard) PPC Scale	€84,973 - €104,507
Jennifer Carroll Mac Neill	Special Adviser	Principal Officer (Standard) PPC Scale	€84,973 - €104,507
James O Connor	Civilian Driver	Civilian Driver Rate	€691.00 weekly
Vincent Cahill	Civilian Driver	Civilian Driver Rat	€657.43 weekly*

\*not on the Single Pension Scheme.

**Minister of State Damien English – Political Appointments**

Name	Job title	Grade	Pay Scale
Walter Waldron	Civilian Driver	Civilian Driver Rate	€691.00 weekly
Joseph Fox	Civilian Driver	Civilian Driver Rate	€691.00 weekly

**Minister of State John Paul Phelan – Political Appointments**

Name	Job title	Grade	Pay Scale
Patrick Nolan	Civilian Driver	Civilian Driver Rate	€691.00 weekly
Michael Grace	Civilian Driver	Civilian Driver Rate	€691.00 weekly

**Home Loan Scheme**

334. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason carer's allowance paid by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection is not considered income under the new home loan scheme introduced by his Department in view of the fact that private lenders will consider this as income for mortgage assessment purposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13170/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan is not, as a general rule, available to those in receipt of unemployment or other social welfare benefits. However, where there is a primary income of a waged or salaried nature, long-term state benefit payments may be considered. State benefit payments allowable are:

- State Pension (Contributory);
- State pension (Non-Contributory);
- Widow's / Widower's Pension;
- Blind Pension;
- Invalidity Pension;
- Disability Allowance.

The long-term nature of the payment must be confirmed by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. These applicants are dealt with on a case-by-case basis and can be referred to the relevant local authority's Credit Committee for a final decision.

Further information is available on the dedicated website, [www.rebuildingirelandhomeloan.ie](http://www.rebuildingirelandhomeloan.ie).

### **Social and Affordable Housing**

335. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the income bands applicable to County Westmeath for social housing will be changed from band 3 to band 2 due to the crisis and escalating cost of living in the county; if the fact that counties such as Meath and Kildare are in band 1 due to their proximity to Dublin and in further view of the fact that County Westmeath borders these counties but yet remains in band 3 will be considered; if a motion passed by Westmeath County Council to request that this band be changed has been considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13173/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011 prescribe maximum net income limits for eligibility for social housing support for each local authority, in different bands according to the area, with income being defined and assessed according to a standard Household Means Policy, published by my Department.

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 income eligibility for social housing supports has commenced. I expect the results of this review to be available for publication later this year.

### **Home Loan Scheme**

336. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if persons who previously owned a house and have gone through a legal separation are eligible to apply for a loan under the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13186/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Following a review of the two existing local authority home loan schemes, the House Purchase Loan and the Home Choice Loan, a new loan offering, the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan, was made available on 1 February 2018. The new loan will enable credit worthy first-time buyers to access sustainable mortgage lending to purchase new or second-hand properties in a suitable price range. The low rate of fixed interest associated with the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan provides first-time buyers with access to mortgage finance that they may not otherwise have been able to afford at a higher interest rate.

As with the previous local authority loan offerings, the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan is

available to first-time buyers only. This is to ensure the effective targeting of limited resources. Applicants who are separated or divorced may be treated as first-time buyers if they meet certain conditions including:

- they are separated or divorced under a court order or by a separation agreement;
- the property being purchased is the first property since leaving the family home;
- they have left the family home and retain no interest in it; or
- the other party has remained in the family home.

The option currently available for non-first-time buyers is to seek home loan facilities from one of the commercial lending institutions.

Detailed information on the new mortgage is available on the dedicated [www.rebuildingirelandhomeloan.ie](http://www.rebuildingirelandhomeloan.ie) website, from the helpdesk at 051 349720, or directly from local authorities.

### **Planning Data**

337. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of enforcement notices issued by Roscommon County Council under section 154 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, specifically relating to unauthorised developments, in each of the years 2015 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13191/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** While planning statistics are compiled by each planning authority on an annual basis for collation and publication on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/statistics/planning-statistics-1>, these statistics do not include planning enforcement related information.

The Deputy may wish to contact the relevant local authority directly in relation to the information sought.

### **Tenant Purchase Scheme Review**

338. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 202 of 24 January 2018, the status of the report on the tenant purchase scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13192/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** In line with the commitment given in Rebuilding Ireland, 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 took place in 2017 and saw submissions received from individuals, elected representatives and organisations.

The review is now complete and a full report has been prepared setting out findings and recommendations. In finalising the report some further inter-Departmental consultation was necessary and due consideration had to be given to possible implementation arrangements. These matters are now almost completed and I expect to be in a position to publish the outcome

of the review shortly.

*Question No. 339 answered with Question No. 328.*

### **Legislative Programme**

340. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the maritime area and foreshore (amendment) Bill (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13203/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** Considerable work has been undertaken to advance the drafting of the Maritime Area and Foreshore (Amendment) Bill, including through engagement with the Marine Coordination Group and a number of workshops and bilateral meetings with relevant policy Departments and the Office of the Attorney General throughout 2017 and early 2018. Final legal advice from the Office of the Attorney General should be available shortly, on foot of which the further work to complete the drafting of the Bill will be progressed as quickly as possible.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

341. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her Department contributed to an organisation (details supplied) in 2017 or 2018. [12269/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department has not contributed to the named organisation in 2017 or 2018.

### **Hare Coursing**

342. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her attention has been drawn to the identity of persons involved in capturing hares for coursing clubs; and if financial transactions take place between the trappers and the clubs. [13027/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department issued licences to the Irish Coursing Club (ICC) on behalf of its affiliated clubs to capture and tag hares for the 2017/18 coursing season. The licences include a large number of conditions relating to the operation of these coursing events and include a condition that all persons involved in capturing hares must have written certification, duly signed by the Coursing Club Secretary or the Secretary of the ICC, certifying that the person is a member of a Coursing Club affiliated to the ICC. This certification must be produced for inspection to a member of An Garda Síochána or an authorised officer of my Department.

I have no information as to any financial dealings involved in the capturing of hares.

### **Hare Coursing**

343. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she is satisfied that all registered coursing clubs are accurately recording the purchases of all hares in accordance with their legal requirements and are compliant with the Revenue Commissioners.

[13028/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** In August last year, my Department issued licences under the Wildlife Acts to the Irish Coursing Club, covering some 87 affiliated coursing clubs, to capture and tag hares for use at regulated hare coursing meetings for the 2017/18 season, which extended from the end of September 2017 to the end of February 2018. Those licences contained a total of 22 conditions which have been developed and refined over the years. Subsequently, in October last year, my Department augmented the licencing conditions to provide for more strict regulation of coursing trials.

Compliance with the requirements of the Revenue Commissioners is a matter for each coursing club and not a matter in which I have a statutory function.

### Foras na Gaeilge

344. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the financial costs of the move by Foras na Gaeilge to Amiens Street and ÁIS to Dunshaughlin; the cost of fit-outs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13057/18]

345. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the reason the rent payable by Foras na Gaeilge at 63 to 66 Amiens Street, Dublin 1 is €593,000 in view of the fact the average annual rent for the building according to the Property Services Regulatory Authority is €530,800; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13058/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 344 and 345 together.

The financial costs incurred directly by Foras na Gaeilge in relation to the relocation of its headquarters to Amiens Street and the relocation of ÁIS to Dunshaughlin amounted to €412,365.

The breakdown of costs is set out in the following table:

Work Carried Out	Cost
Furniture	€173,220
Broadcasting equipment for Raidió na Life	€133,215
Acoustic windows and doors	€34,150
Removal costs to Dunshaughlin	€44,288
Phone system	€15,215
Removal costs to Amiens Street	€12,277

The annual rent of €530,800 shown by Foras na Gaeilge on the Property Services Regulatory Authority's website represents the baseline rent for a thirty year contract and will be used for rent review purposes on a five yearly basis.

I understand from Foras na Gaeilge that, as set out in the terms of the contract, annual rent of €593,000 is payable for the first fifteen years in light of substantial capital costs incurred by the landlord to renovate and refit the building to meet the specific accommodation needs of Foras na Gaeilge. The annual rent is expected to reduce to €530,800 for the second half of the lease term subject to any changes arising from rent reviews.

The thirty year lease term negotiated with the landlord provides Foras na Gaeilge with stability and flexibility in terms of future planning in that the contract includes a lease break after 15 years so that other options can be explored at that time.

### **Departmental Projects**

346. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the meetings her officials have had in the past two months regarding funding for the Cork event centre. [13073/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department continues to engage with both Cork City Council and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the complex legal, state aid and match funding issues and in relation to the Cork Event Centre, through correspondence and discussion. The Department has met with the City Council on this project in the past and while there has been no formal meeting in the period referred to in the question the Department will continue to meet with the City Council when required.

In the context of the additional funding being sought for the project, my Department as sanctioning authority for the project needs to ensure that the project is robust, complies with the Public Spending Code and will deliver value for money for the Exchequer.

### **Ministerial Staff Data**

347. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the details of each non-Civil Service appointment she has made to a role in her Department; the persons appointed; the role, qualifications and salary of each; and the guidelines that apply in respect of party political fundraising. [13155/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** Since my appointment as Minister on 30 November 2017, and as provided for by the Public Service Management Act 1997, I have appointed two Special Advisers. Mr. John Keogh has been appointed as my Media Adviser from 8 January 2018 and Mr. Cian Connaughton as my Policy Adviser from 15 March 2018. In addition, I have appointed two Civilian Drivers. Both civilian drivers are paid on the Civilian Driver single-point scale, €691 per week.

Mr. Keogh has extensive experience as a senior editor with over twenty years' experience in both traditional and digital media. He was Director of News at Newstalk for 13 years, Managing Editor of the Network news (which supplies news to every radio station in the country) for 8 years and was a senior producer at Sky News. Over his career he has also worked for TV3 news and many local radio stations both here in Ireland and in the UK. He is paid €91,943 per annum.

Mr. Connaughton has eighteen years' experience in corporate communications and public affairs. He previously worked as Senior Client Director in MKC Communications and also has previous experience as Communications Advisor in the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (on secondment during the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union). From 2000 to 2006 he was Policy and Communications Manager in the Dublin Chamber of Commerce. He has a Masters of Arts (European Studies) and a Bachelor of Arts in Politics, Sociology and French from UCD. He is paid €88,471 per annum.

Both of my Advisers have been advised of their obligations under the Standards in Public Office legislation. All of the above appointments are made in accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's Instructions to Personnel Officers – Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil, which is available on the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's website.

### **Scoileanna Gaeltachta**

348. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sé i gceist ag a Roinn maoiniú breise a chur ar fáil ó Mheán Fómhair 2018 chun breis cúntóirí teanga a cheapadh sna scoileanna Gaeltachta agus chun breis uaireanta saibhrithe teanga a cheadú, á chur san áireamh an obair atá ar bun sna scoileanna Gaeltachta ó thaobh an Pholasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta a chur i bhfeidhm. [13168/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Ar mhaithe lena chinntiú go bhfuil Scéim na gCúntóirí Teanga ag feidhmiú ar an gcaoi is fearr is féidir mar thaca don phróiseas pleanála teanga agus don Pholasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta araon, tá mo Roinn ag tabhairt faoi athbhreithniú ar an scéim faoi lathair.

Chuipe sin, d'eisigh an Roinn Iarratas Tairisceana ar etenders.ie ar an 5 Feabhra 2018 chun dream a roghnú le tabhairt faoin athbhreithniú. Tá measúnú á dhéanaamh faoi láthair ar na tairiscintí a fuarthas i dtreo tús a chur leis an obair gan mhoill. Ós rud é go bhfuil éileamh thar na bearta ó scoileanna Gaeltachta le bheith rannpháirteach sa scéim, beifear ag súil leis, de thoradh an athbhreithnithe, go mbeifear in ann aghaidh a thabhairt ar ar an éileamh sin nuair atá torthaí an athbhreithnithe faoi lámh ag an Roinn.

Tá sé mar aidhm tús a chur le feidhmiú thorthaí an athbhreithnithe sa scoilbhliain 2018/19.

### **Scéim na bhFoghlaimoirí Gaeilge**

349. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sé i gceist ag a Roinn aon ardú a dhéanamh ar an deontas a íoctar leis na Mná Tí/Fir Tí a choinníonn scoláirí faoi Scéim na bhFoghlaimoirí Gaeilge. [13169/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Faoi mar is eol don Teachta, íocann mo Roinnse deontas faoi Scéim na bhFoghlaimoirí Gaeilge le teaghlaigh cháilithe a choinníonn foghlaimoirí Gaeilge ar iostas le linn dóibh a bheith ag freastal ar choláistí Gaeilge aitheanta fud fad na Gaeltachta.

Ós rud é gur ardaíodh an deontas laethúil atá iníochta faoin scéim go dtí €10 in 2017 - an chéad ardú le sé bliana - níl sé i gceist an deontas a ardú arís i mbliana.

### **Seirbhísí Farantóireachta**

350. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pearse Doherty** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta Gaeltachta cérbh iad na hoifigigh óna Roinn, níl ach grád foirne agus teideal á lorg ag an Teachta seo, a bhí freagrach as measúnú a dhéanamh ar na tairiscintí a fuarthas le haghaidh an chonartha chun seirbhís farantóireachta Thoraí a sheachadadh. [13193/18]

351. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pearse Doherty** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta

an raibh moltaí Chomharchumann Thoraí, ó thaobh feistiú thar oíche, i measc na gcritéar ar baineadh úsáid astu chun measúnú a dhéanamh ar na tairiscintí le haghaidh sheirbhís farantóireachta Thoraí. [13194/18]

352. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pearse Doherty** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cé a bhí i gceannas ar na critéir mheasúnaithe do sheirbhís farantóireachta Thoraí a leagan amach; ar bronnadh pointí le haghaidh úsáid na Gaeilge; an gcuirfidh sí eolas agus sonraí ar fáil maidir leis na critéir seo. [13195/18]

353. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pearse Doherty** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén fáth a gcuirfear seirbhís bus ar fáil idir An Bun Beag agus Machaire Rabhartaigh mar chuid de sheirbhís farantóireachta Thoraí; an bhfuil inní ar an Roinn nach mbeidh an soitheach ábalta teacht i dtír ag Cé Mhachaire Rabhartaigh. [13196/18]

354. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pearse Doherty** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cad chuige ar bronnadh Conradh le haghaidh sheirbhís farantóireachta Thoraí cé go raibh deisiúcháin de dhíth ar an mbád a roghnaigh an Roinn don turas farraige seo; ar bronnadh Conradh mar sin riamh roimhe seo, i. sular cuireadh caoi ar an soitheach. [13197/18]

355. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pearse Doherty** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil ceadúnas ag bád (sonraí tugtha) chun lastas a láimhseáil. [13198/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 350 to 355, inclusive, together.

Maidir le Conradh úr farantóireachta Thoraí, is dhá thairiscint bailí a fuair mo Roinn. Mar is gnáth i gcásanna mar seo, chuir mo Roinn coiste measúnaithe le chéile comhdhéanta d'oifigigh ón Roinn. Sa chás áirithe seo, bhí na hoifigigh ag an ngrád Príomhoifigeach, Príomhoifigeach Cúnta agus Ardoifigeach Feidhmiúcháin.

Mar chuid den phróiseas tairisceana, thug mo Roinn éisteacht do phobal Thoraí agus lena mianta. Leag an rannóg cuí i mo Roinn amach na critéir mheasúnaithe agus marcanna dá réir san Iarratas ar Thairiscint agus ar ndóigh, tá an doiciméad sin agus aon leasuithe a rinneadh air foilsithe ar an suíomh, etenders. Ní raibh feistiú an tsoithigh thar oíche mar chuid de sin. Bhí úsáid na Gaeilge mar cheann de na critéir.

Thairg an tairgeoir ar bronnadh an Conradh air seirbhísí breise seachas mar a lorgaíodh san Iarratas ar Thairiscint. Ina measc sin, bhí go mbeadh seirbhís bus ar fáil ón mBun Beag go dtí Machaire Rabhartaigh ar ócáidí nach mbeadh an soitheach ábalta teacht le cé ag Machaire Rabhartaigh. Go stairiúil, ar ndóigh, tharlódh seo ó am go ham agus bheadh a leithéid de sheirbhís ina chuidiú do phaisinéirí a bheadh ag iarraidh dul go Machaire Rabhartaigh. Níltear ag súil go mbeidh seo ag teastáil go minic.

Faoi dheiridh, ceadáíodh faoin Iarratas ar Thairiscint sa chás seo agus i ngach ceann de chonarthaí na Roinne do sheirbhísí farantóireachta, go bhféadfaí athchóiriú a dhéanamh ar shoitheach a bheadh ainmnithe don tseirbhís. Iarrtar san Iarratas ar Thairiscint go mbeadh cur síos ar na hoibreacha agus amscála dá gcur i gcríoch. Is ar an Oifig Suirbhéara Muirí atá an fhreagracht maidir le heisiúint ceadúnais do shoithí agus is ag an oifig sin a bheidh an focal deiridh maidir le ceapaíocht paisinéirí agus lastais an bháid atá luaite.

### **Traveller Culture**

356. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her

views on calls by the Traveller community for a cultural centre to highlight and celebrate Traveller culture; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13227/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** As I advised in my reply to Parliamentary Questions Numbers 267 of 6 December, 102 of 23 January and 24 of 28 February, my Department is fully committed to supporting diversity and inclusion in its policies and operations and in those bodies under its aegis.

The National Planning Framework and National Development Plan - *Ireland 2040* launched on 16 February 2018 by An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar T.D., recognises the value and importance of our culture, language and heritage as an integral part of Irish life. In these areas, the headline announcement from the launch is a €1 billion investment in Culture and Heritage over the 10 year period of the plan including;

- €460 million for our National Cultural Institutions,
- €265 million for cultural and creativity investment programme, and
- €285 million for natural and built heritage.

I will shortly launch my Department's sectoral plan entitled *Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage*. This will cover the Department's investment programme in greater detail as part of the State's overall plan. In due course, details of a similar grant schemes to the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018 will be announced in parallel with an application process which will be similar to the application processes operated in the present scheme. On a more specific level, the National Library of Ireland's engagement with Traveller Culture includes a genealogy guide for Travellers to trace their family history and a Traveller heritage photographic exhibition to be exhibited at an Ethnicity Celebration event and subsequently gifted to the Irish Traveller Movement.