

Written Answers.

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

Questions Nos. 1 to 3, inclusive, answered orally.

Irish Language

4. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will report on the cuts in funding to Irish language and culture organisations which have resulted in the restriction of activities and the promotion of the Irish language and culture. [27285/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh) (Deputy Joe McHugh): At the outset, I am pleased to inform the Deputy that funding for the Irish language and the Gaeltacht has actually increased over the past year.

As the Deputy will be aware, Foras na Gaeilge is charged with promotion of the Irish language on an all-island basis, and provides support, advice and financial assistance to many groups, including the six lead organisations. These groups work to promote the language, including provision of courses and activities to help people improve or learn the language.

An Foras Teanga, as a North South Implementation Body comprising Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency, is co-funded by my Department along with the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland and its budget is subject to approval by the North South Ministerial Council. The dispersal of Foras na Gaeilge's allocated budget is an operational matter for the organisation, within the framework of the NSMC-approved business plan and budget.

An indicative provision of €14.028m is included in the 2018 Revised Estimates for An Foras Teanga to cover NSMC budgets for Foras na Gaeilge, the Ulster-Scots Agency, Clár na Leabhar Gaeilge and Colmille. I would also like to remind the Deputy that I secured an additional allocation to Foras na Gaeilge of €450,000 for Bliain na Gaeilge 2018, which is being delivered primarily by Conradh na Gaeilge.

In order to further underpin the implementation of the 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 and particularly the language planning process as set out in Acht na Gaeltachta 2012, a specific allocation of €2.65m has been provided to my Department in the current year. This represents a significant increase from the €500,000 allocated for this purpose in 2014. This will further enable my Department, acting in concert with Údarás na Gaeltachta, Foras na Gaeilge and other relevant stakeholders at community level, to implement a range of specific and practical measures aimed at both supporting the implementation of the Strategy and the language planning process.

Under my Department's Irish Language Support Schemes, financial assistance is provided to a range of organisations and activities that support the promotion of the Irish language outside the Gaeltacht. Under this programme, funding is provided for Irish language courses in third-level institutions in Ireland and overseas, for the promotion of the language in the business sector and for terminology initiatives which support the status of Irish as an official and working language of the European Union. These schemes have contributed greatly to some of the most innovative work being done in relation to the language in recent years. In 2018 the allocation for this programme was increased by €787,000.

These increases in funding by my Department to Irish language organisations has resulted over the past number of years in an increased level of activities being delivered which, in turn, has a positive impact on the promotion of the Irish language and culture.

Questions Nos. 5 and 6 answered orally.

Heritage Sites

7. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of applications made for funding under the 2018 structures at risk fund; the criteria used in selecting the successful projects; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27116/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Structures at Risk Fund (SRF) supports conservation works to historic structures, in both private and public ownership, which are deemed to be at significant risk of deterioration. The Fund encourages the conservation, regeneration and reuse of heritage properties and helps to secure protected structures which might otherwise be lost. The allocation for the 2018 scheme is €1.324m.

The 2018 Structures at Risk Fund was announced by the then Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Heather Humphreys, in November 2017 and open to the public for applications until 31 January 2018. The SRF is generally administered by local authorities, who receive applications from members of the public and select projects to put forward to my Department for funding.

A total of 228 applications were submitted to local authorities in 2018, of which 128 applications were shortlisted by the local authorities and submitted to my Department for assessment. A total of 76 projects were approved for funding. Due to the volume of applications received this year, and the high standard of applications generally, it was not possible to fund every eligible project.

Applications were assessed by an expert panel within my Department in accordance with assessment criteria as set out the Circular governing the scheme, which is available on my Department's website and all local authority websites. These criteria are:

- Significance of the Structure
- Urgency of the Works
- Quality of the Method Statement
- Efficacy of the Works

Details of all of the projects approved for funding under Structures at Risk in 2018 are published on my Department's website and all local authority websites.

In relation to a particular historic structure, the best advice for the owner or applicant is generally to contact the Architectural Conservation Officer in the local authority who is well placed to offer advice and assistance in relation to the grants and supports available, as well as providing feedback on grant applications and other specialist advice on building conservation.

Questions Nos. 8 and 9 answered orally.

National Parks and Wildlife Service Data

10. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of development applications which have been referred to the NPWS, particularly in County Donegal, that have been returned with no comment on them; and if this may be a breach of both Irish and EU law. [27110/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): In accordance with regulations under the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended, planning applications lodged with planning authorities that have the potential to impact on built, archaeological, or natural heritage must be referred to the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The Minister is one of a number of such statutory consultees sometimes known as prescribed bodies.

In any such capacity, the Minister may make submissions or observations to assist the responsible authority in carrying out its functions, including consent functions, in compliance with various legislative and administrative requirements with respect to the conservation, protection and preservation of natural and built heritage.

Since 1 November 2011, some 30,722 planning applications were referred to the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department in my role as a statutory consultee. Of this number, 3,476 were referrals within County Donegal. The National Parks and Wildlife Service had no comments to make to the planning authorities on 2,591 cases. In a number of these cases, the NPWS considered that the referrals were not relevant to nature conservation.

The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 sets out that public authorities having, or exercising functions, including consent functions, which may have implications for or effects on nature conservation, must exercise those functions, so as to secure compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive and the Regulations. All planning authorities are considered to be public authorities within the meaning of the 2011 Regulations. In that regard, public authorities are obliged to ensure, amongst other things that they do not give consent to any party, for any plan or project that may adversely affect the integrity of a European site (SAC or SPA).

A public authority that has been assigned responsibility, such as a consent function, is the relevant authority for undertaking those responsibilities and as Minister I am prohibited from doing so.

Any observations made on development applications referred to me are to assist planning authorities. Ultimately, however the decision to grant planning permission is under law a matter for the relevant planning authority irrespective of whether or not a comment had been made by my Department. Accordingly, there is no breach of national or EU law.

Departmental Funding

11. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding being provided for small scale local festivals in County Clare in 2018. [26720/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Support for festivals is provided from a number of sources, including from the Arts Council under the remit of my Department, and Fáilte Ireland, under the remit of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

My Department operates a Small Scale Local Festivals and Summer Schools Scheme, designed to support local cultural festivals and summer schools which are not in receipt of other public monies and which may not be eligible for funding from those bodies.

The total amount of current funding available to this fund for 2018 is €76,000. 71 applications were received in 2018. 52 projects were considered to be eligible under the scheme. I understand that there was one application from Clare under the Scheme this year from Corofin Tourism & Traders association for the Festival of Finn. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that I will be providing the Festival of Finn with a grant of up to €2,000 towards festival activities.

In addition, Cruinniú na nÓg is taking place on Saturday, June 23rd in every local authority right across the country. There are over 500 free events happening for Cruinniú na nÓg nationwide, with 13 of these events happening in County Clare. These events include magic shows, craft workshops, film screenings, mask making, story telling, African dance among others. My Department is providing €10,000 to Clare County Council to support these events.

Building on the success of last year's Cruinniú na Cásca events, it was decided this year to focus on children and young people and the development of Cruinniú na nÓg is now a key initiative of the Creative Youth Plan to enable the creativity of every child and young person.

Underlying the Creative Youth Plan, of which Cruinniú na nÓg is one of 18 actions, is a firm conviction that participation in creative and cultural activities from dancing to singing to coding equips our young people to flourish in their personal lives and helps give them skills that will stand to them throughout their lives.

Cruinniú na nÓg is a day dedicated to celebrating and encouraging children and young people to participate in a range of cultural and creative activities through performance, coding, theatre, art and music workshops, readings, screenings, special events and much more. It's a day for 'doing', 'making' and 'creating' and I am sure that it will be enjoyed by communities and families all around the country including in County Clare.

Local Authorities have been key to the delivery of this initiative and are a vital element of the Creative Ireland Programme. This year, my Department doubled the funding allocation from €1m to €2m for the 31 local authorities to deliver the Creative Ireland Programme at local level and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government provided €1m. Local authorities are currently finalising 5 year culture and creativity strategies and I look forward to publishing these shortly.

Questions Nos. 12 and 13 answered orally.

Cláir Ghaeilge ar RTÉ

14. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Catherine Connolly** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén ionchur a bhí nó atá aici le maidir le líon na gelár Gaeilge a chraolann RTÉ taobh amuigh de TG4 agus Raidió na Gaeltachta; an bhfuil sí sásta go bhfuil RTÉ ag comhlíonadh a

chuid dualgas reachtúil; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [27072/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): Níl aon ról reachtúil agam maidir le cúrsaí craolacháin in RTÉ agus, dá bhrí sin, ní bhíonn aon ionchur agam maidir le líon na gelár Gaeilge a chraoltar ar an stáisiún.

É sin ráite, tá mo Roinn ag déanamh na socrúithe faoi láthair chun Plean Gníomhaíochta 5 Bliana faoin Stráitéis 20-Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030 a sheoladh. Is é príomhaidhm an Phlean Gníomhaíochta seo gníomhaíochtaí sonracha a aithint agus a leagan síos, a bhfuil eagraíochtaí sonracha luaite le bheith freagrach as iad a chur i bhfeidhm agus amscálaí sonracha luaite chuige sin, chun a chinntiú go mbainfear na cuspóirí sonracha sin amach. Mar chuid den phróiseas sin, bhí plé dearfach ag oifigigh mo Roinne le RTÉ agus beidh ról lárnach ag RTÉ sa Phlean Gníomhaíochta, áit a mbeidh sraith gníomhaíochtaí sonracha luaite leis an eagraíocht.

Tá Plean Gníomhaíochta Gaeilge forbartha agus á gcur i bhfeidhm ag RTÉ chomh maith le blianta beaga anuas, le maoiniú de €70,000 in aghaidh na bliana, thar tréimhse trí bliana, curtha ar fáil ó mo Roinn. Tá an Phlean seo ag cur go mór le seirbhísí RTÉ ar-líne, go háirithe i réimsí na foghlama ar-líne, na seirbhísí do ghasúir, do dhaltaí scoile agus do mhic léinn ollscoile in Éirinn, agus thar sáile. Go ginearálta, tá an cur chuige nua seo ag méadú feiceálacht na Gaeilge ar RTÉ, rud a theastaigh go géar le roinnt mhaith blianta anuas. Mar chuid den cur chuige cruthaíodh ról do Chomhordaitheoir ar Ábhar Digiteach, le freagracht as eagarthóireacht Gaeilge, foilsitheoireacht agus na meáin shóisialta, ionas gur féidir forbairt mhórhábhachtach a dhéanamh sa réimse digiteach. Sampla den dul chun cinn atá déanta ná go raibh tráchttaireacht i nGaeilge le cloisteáil ar chluichí ceannais na hÉireann le cúpla bliain anuas.

Departmental Schemes

15. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will provide details of the music capital scheme 2017-18; the status of same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26714/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department provides funding for the purchase of equipment under the Music Capital Scheme by way of capital grants. Performing groups and individual talented musicians are entitled to apply for these grants. The capital grant scheme is managed by Music Network on behalf of my Department. This initiative is in existence since 2008 and has proved very popular over the past decade.

In May of this year, a total of €224,000 in capital grants was allocated to performing groups and individual musicians for the 2017- 2018 academic year.

The Music Capital Scheme is designed to provide support for the purchase of musical instruments, and to respond to a broad range of capital needs within the music sector in Ireland. A particular area of difficulty for musicians and ensembles is purchasing musical instruments. The cost of instrument purchase, maintenance and repair can be significant barriers to the development of many organisations and this scheme aims to address this.

The capital scheme is made of two distinct awards – Streams one and two - which provide funding towards the purchase of musical instruments both to performing groups and individual musicians at a professional performing standard.

Stream One Awards provide €160,000 towards the purchase of musical instruments to not-for-profit and community music groups across a wide range of musical genres including

Marching/Concert/Pipe Bands, Multi-genre, Irish Traditional, Popular Contemporary, Choral and Samba. A total of €35,000 of this amount was ring-fenced funding for prioritised counties in this case Counties Kerry, Laois, Leitrim, Longford, Monaghan, Roscommon and Tipperary.

Stream Two Awards provided €64,000 to 17 highly skilled musicians performing at professional level to assist with the purchase of instruments/equipment. Musical genres covered in these allocations were as diverse as Irish Traditional, Classical, Jazz/Improvised, Punk/Electro-acoustic and Early/Baroque.

Music Network partnered with Local Authority Arts Offices to provide Music Capital Scheme information sessions that offered practical advice to applicants as well as addressing specific queries relating to the scheme's guidelines.

The Music Capital Scheme is a fantastic initiative which has benefitted thousands of people since the scheme was set up in 2008. The Music Capital Scheme is a key resource for musical groups and talented musicians. Over the last 10 years it has helped musicians who, for lack of a decent instrument, may have otherwise struggled to achieve their full potential.

Full details of the scheme and a list of awardees can be accessed in the Music Network website.

Special Areas of Conservation

16. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her Department's input into the planning and construction stages of large scale road projects within special areas of conservation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26707/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The planning, design and implementation of road schemes as specified in the Roads Act, 1993, as amended, is the overall responsibility of Transport Infrastructure Ireland in conjunction with the local authorities.

The EU Habitats Directive and the EU Birds Directive are the cornerstone of EU law to conserve and protect our natural environment and in particular a wide range of habitat types, animals including birds and plants. These Directives have been transposed into Irish law primarily by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 and by the Planning Acts.

As Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht I have statutory responsibility under the 2011 Regulations to designate and advise on the protection of habitats and species identified for nature conservation, including Special Areas of Conservation also known as SACs and Special Protection Areas also known as SPAs. Together these sites make up what is known as the Natura 2000 network.

All public authorities having, or exercising functions, including consent functions, which may have implications for, or effects on, nature conservation must ensure compliance with the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive and the EU Birds Directive and the 2011 Regulations. In that regard, public authorities are obliged to ensure that they do not undertake or adopt, or give consent to any party, for any plan or project that may adversely affect the integrity of a European site. A public authority that has been assigned responsibility, such as a consent function, is the relevant authority for undertaking those responsibilities and, as Minister, I am prohibited from doing so.

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In accordance with regulations under the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended, proposed developments that have the potential to impact on the built, archaeological, or natural heritage must be referred to me as Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. I am one of a number of such statutory consultees or prescribed bodies as they are sometimes known.

Since 2011, 18 large scale road projects from various locations around the country have been referred to officials of my Department in the National Parks and Wildlife Service. In 8 of these cases further information was requested, in 2 cases conditions in relation to nature conservation were recommended and in 8 cases no comments or observations were made.

An Bord Pleanála is the decision-making authority for large scale road projects. My Department's role at the planning application stage of large scale road projects, as with all planning and development applications, is to provide advice to the decision-making authority to assist the authority in carrying out its functions. Ultimately, decisions to grant planning permission for various developments is a matter for planning authorities, including An Bord Pleanála, and I have no function in this regard.

Questions Nos. 17 to 19, inclusive, answered orally.

Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge

20. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Catherine Connolly** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta céard é stádas na gcúig phlean teanga atá curtha ós comhair na Roinne faoi láthair; cén uair a bheidh siad faofa aici; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [27071/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): Tá pleananna teanga á mbreithniú ag mo Roinn faoi láthair i leith na limistéir pleanála teanga Gaeltachta a leanas: An Cheathrú Rua; Maigh Eo Thuaidh, Árann Mhór agus Conamara Láir.

Fearacht gach plean eile a chuirtear faoi mo bhráid chun críche faofa, tá na pleananna sin á mbreithniú i gcomhréir lena bhfuil leagtha amach sna Treoirlínte Pleanála Teanga a d'eisigh an Roinn in 2014 mar áis do gach páirtí leasmhar atá bainteach le hullmhú agus le feidhmiú plean teanga faoin bpróiseas.

Agus an próiseas breithnithe sin thart, cuirfear moltaí i leith na gceantar atá luaite agam faoi mo bhráid le ceadú.

Cultural Policy

21. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the performance delivery agreement in relation to Galway 2020; the details of the agreement in respect of the €250,000 already advanced; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27068/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): In December 2014 the Government decided that Ireland should exercise its right to nominate a European Capital of Culture for 2020 and committed in principle at that time to provide €15m to the selected project. Galway's designation as European Capital of Culture 2020, along with Rijeka, Croatia, is a great honour for Ireland and a wonderful opportunity to strengthen and promote our culture nationally and internationally.

The Government's support represents the largest single contribution to the overall cost of Galway 2020 as the European City of Culture, which is €45.7m. The balance of the funding is sourced from city and county local authorities, and commitments from business and sponsorship. The EU Commission's award is €1.5m.

Galway as European Capital of Culture 2020 is being delivered by the Galway 2020 Company with a board which represents the relevant partners. My Department officials continue to work and support the Galway 2020 Company and its Board with the preparations for delivery of the programme.

My Department provided a first tranche of funding of €250,000 in December 2017 toward certified expenditure already incurred for Galway 2020. The audited accounts for 2017 for 'Galway Cultural Development and Activity Company Limited by Guarantee', the legal structure set up to undertake all the activities of Galway 2020, show total expenditure of €749,129 to end 2017 of which €229,132 was on salaries, €240,921 on overheads, including rent of €39,788 with the remaining €279,076 spent on programme costs.

The balance of the €15m grant will be paid to Galway 2020 through a performance delivery agreement which is currently being drawn up by officials of my Department in consultation with Galway2020. It is intended to finalise this agreement in the near future.

Creative Ireland Programme

22. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the activities happening for Cruinniú na nÓg in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26718/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Cruinniú na nÓg is taking place on Saturday, June 23rd in every local authority right across the country. Building on the success of last year's Cruinniú na Cásca events, it was decided this year to focus on children and young people and the development of Cruinniú na nÓg is now a key initiative of the Creative Youth Plan to enable the creativity of every child and young person.

Underlying the Creative Youth Plan, of which Cruinniú na nÓg is one of 18 actions, is a firm conviction that participation in creative and cultural activities from dancing to singing to coding equips our young people to flourish in their personal lives and helps give them skills that will stand to them throughout their lives.

Cruinniú na nÓg is a day dedicated to celebrating and encouraging children and young people to participate in a range of cultural and creative activities through performance, coding, theatre, art and music workshops, readings, screenings, special events and much more. It's a day for 'doing', 'making' and 'creating'.

It is an initiative of the Creative Ireland Programme, and is being supported and led by the local Creative Ireland Programme Culture teams across all local authorities, with huge support from local artists, arts and youth organisations and community festivals. This year's activities include everything from bicycle tyre painting and bee-hotel making to robotics and smart phone film making. There are also lots of interesting workshops for everyone from early years (0-4 years) to teenagers in visual arts, creative writing, coding, music-making, theatre, crafts and dance.

There are over 500 free events happening for Cruinniú na nÓg nationwide, with 13 of these events happening in County Clare. These events include magic shows, craft workshops, film

screenings, mask making, story telling, African dance among others.

All events have been programmed by the Creative Ireland Culture Team in each local authority and coordinated by the Creative Ireland Programme Office in my Department. A full list of events is available on www.creativeireland.ie/cruinniu and can be filtered by local authority area.

I would encourage families to attend as many of these events as possible.

National Parks and Wildlife Service

23. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to strengthen the resources of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. [27073/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of my Department manages a property portfolio in respect of National Parks and Reserves of approximately 87,000 hectares. These important biodiversity areas are located all around the country.

In terms of human resources, staffing levels across my Department are kept under regular review in line with emerging business needs and Government policy on public sector pay and staffing as advised by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Of my Department's total staff, I understand that some 330 work in the area of natural heritage through the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). In addition, my Department takes on in the region of 70 seasonal staff during the year to assist the NPWS. Conservation Rangers are deployed through a regional structure and assignments are determined in light of Departmental business needs and priorities.

Under "Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage, 2018 - 2027" capital investment of some €50m has been earmarked for the National Parks and Nature Reserves. This investment ensures long term protection of the National Parks and Reserves and my Department is delighted to have the opportunity for investment and implementation of measures to protect our habitats, landscapes and wildlife.

This funding envelope will allow us to develop a major investment programme for our National Parks, improving visitor facilities and information, improve signage, as well as developing trails, maintain existing trails and walkways and invest in new routes. We will provide better access to nature and protect the natural heritage in the parks. This investment will ensure that we can seek alternative access to parks and lessen the impact of rising visitor numbers and balance conservation with this increase in tourism. It means we will be able to showcase our beautiful habitats and improve visitor experiences simultaneously.

"Experiencing the Wild Heart of Ireland"- a Tourism Interpretative Masterplan for the National Parks is presently being finalised. It is intended that this report will guide the phased development of these enhanced visitor facilities and improved visitor experiences based on research into international best practice.

I'm aware that an important area of concern for the Deputy is that of compliance with the Wildlife Acts and addressing wildlife crime. I want to acknowledge the Deputy's assistance to my officials in bringing some egregious matters to their attention. I recall too that I undertook to look to address the resources in this area when I could and I can assure the Deputy that this remains a priority for me.

Question No. 24 answered orally.

Seirbhísí Oileán

25. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sé i gceist aici maoiniú a sholáthar d'oileáin i nDún na nGall maidir le bóithre poiblí ar na hoileáin éagsúla; an ndeimhneoidh sí an bhfuil allúntas leagtha amach i mbuiséad na Roinne i mbliana dó sin, agus an mbeidh allúntas breise ar fáil d'oileáin i mbuiséad 2019; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [26836/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): Tugann mo Roinn cuireadh bliantúil do Chomhairlí Chontae a bhfuil oileáin faoina gcúram iarratas a chur chuici ar chomh-mhaoiniú do thograí mionoibreacha ar na hoileáin úd. Áirítear cúnaimh do bhóithre poiblí i measc na dtograí i gceist. Sa bhliain 2017, chuir mo Roinn chomh-mhaoiniú de €450,750 ar fáil do Chomhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall maidir le mionoibreacha ar oileáin faoina cúram. Tá na hiarratais atá faighte ag mo Roinn i leith chlár mionoibreacha 2018 do na hoileáin á meas faoi láthair.

Níl an buiséad a bheidh ar fáil do mo Roinn do thograí caipitil ar na hoileáin in 2019 socraithe fós ach is féidir liom a dheimhniú go bhfuil mé féin agus mo Roinn tiomanta d'fhorbairt infra-struchtúr n-oileán amach ón gcósta.

National Cultural Institutions

26. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a director will be appointed to the Irish Museum of Modern Art; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27115/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The post of Director of the Irish Museum of Modern Art was advertised on Friday 8 June 2018 and the closing date for applications is Friday 22 June 2018. The appointment of a new Director will be a matter, in the first instance, for the Board of Irish Museum of Modern Art, subject to my approval after consultation with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

In the interim, an acting Director has been appointed by the Board.

Arts and Culture Capital Scheme Funding

27. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if extra funding will be sanctioned to make up the shortfall of funding needed to repair a theatre (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27064/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Under the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018, a total €10.2m was allocated to 134 arts and culture organisations across the State. Organisations undertaking capital projects usually require a number of years to draw down capital following the year of allocation, and while €0.5m of this has been paid out to date, it is expected that all grants will be paid out this year and the following 2 years.

Due to the very exceptional circumstances in the case to which the Deputy refers, my De-

partment was very supportive of assisting with the reconstruction of this building. In this regard, my Department offered to provide funding of up to €250,000 to assist with the restoration and enhancement, in principle, to Cork County Council, pending clarity on all reinstatement issues including the contribution from insurances and subject to the acceptance by the Council of the conditions attached to this funding.

Cork County Council have recently been in touch with my Department in relation to the project and discussions are ongoing in this regard.

Departmental Strategies

28. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the reason she does not have a detailed national music strategy. [27052/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Under the Arts Act, the Arts Council is the primary means through which the Government provides support for the arts sector including music and opera. The Arts Council's Strategy document entitled Making Great Art Work which is being delivered through its Three-Year Plan 2017-2019, sets out its response to the changing nature of artistic practice and engagement with the arts including music in Ireland. The Arts Council provides a range of schemes and initiatives which provide support for all genres of music, and is funded by my Department.

In addition to the Arts Council significant support, I provided a budget of €6m as part of Budget 2018 to further the implement the Creative Ireland Programme. This will ensure that the Department can build on the work accomplished in 2017, continue to drive the implementation of the Programme at local level and fund specific actions and priorities which further the wider aims of the Programme. The Creative Ireland Programme includes among its commitments a number of strategic measures aimed at supporting a wide number of arts forms including music and its many genres

My Department also supports the wider music sector through a number of initiatives for example:-

- The commitment in the Creative Ireland Programme that every child will have access to tuition in Music, Drama, Art and Coding by 2022.

- A new national day of creativity for children and young people, Cruinniú na nÓg on 23 June 2018 with €0.8m being allocated to the initiative which aims to get as many young people involved in creative activities including musical ones with an emphasis on making, doing, seeing and experiencing. Every local authority has been allocated €10,000 to fund a programme of local activities while there will be a special programme of activities across Dublin City.

- Annual funding of €1.6m is provided to Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCÉ) in 2018 for its work in the protection and promotion of Irish traditional music and culture. CCÉ provides weekly classes at community level in all traditional instruments, singing, and dance through its network of centres and branches all over the country.

- The provision of support for the purchase of equipment under the Music Capital Scheme to performing groups and individual talented musicians. Support of €224,000 was recently under Scheme for 2017/18.

- Culture Ireland, provides supports for Irish artists and musicians to travel abroad and develop their careers.

Seirbhísí Iompair

29. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an dtabharfaidh sí cur síos ar na pleananna atá aici Scéim na mBóithre Áise a chur ar bun an athuair do bhóithre nach bóithre contae iad, bóithre áise a fhad le tithe agus feirmeacha, i gceantair Ghaeltachta amháin; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [26837/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): Mar atá mínithe agam cheana roimhe seo don Teach, faoi Scéim na mBóithre Áise de chuid na Roinne, a bhfuil tagairt déanta di ina cheist ag an Teachta, chuirte airgead ar fáil do na húdaráis áitiúla ar mhaithe le obair dheisiúcháin a dhéanamh ar bhóithre beaga faoi leith sa Ghaeltacht.

Le go mbeadh bóthar cáilithe chun críche na scéime, ba ghá roinnt coinníollacha faoi leith a bheith comhlíonta, ina measc; gur bóthar é nach raibh faoi chúram an údaráis áitiúil ábhartha agus gur bóthar é a bhí ag freastal ar theach amháin ar a laghad móide gabháltas talún nach le húnéir an tí é. Bhí sé mar choinníoll faoi leith chomh maith nach raibh aon gheata transna an bhóthair a thabharfadh le tuiscint don saol fodhlach go raibh cosc orthu an bóthar a úsáid. Mar is eol don Teachta tá an scéim ar fionraí le tamall de bhlianta anois.

Tuigtear go gcuimsítear feabhas ar bhóithre den chineál atá luaite faoin Scéim Feabhsúcháin Áitiúil atá faoi stiúir na Roinne Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail.

National Monuments

30. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of new national monuments which have been designated in the past five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27023/18]

35. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of archaeological monuments that have been added to the Record of Monuments and Places in the past five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27022/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 30 and 35 together.

Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994 provides for the establishment and maintenance by my Department of a record of monuments and places (the Record of Monuments and Places) in respect of each county. While the current content of the Record of Monuments and Places remains as established in the late 1990s, work is underway on revision and updating of all records on a national basis, this being a necessary precursor to the issuing of a revised listing for each county. The monuments proposed for inclusion in a revised Record of Monuments and Places, along with existing entries, are listed in the non-statutory Sites and Monuments Record which may be viewed on my Department's website. The number of additions made to the Sites and Monuments Record in the last five years is 3,862.

The National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014 define “national monument” as meaning (in summary) any monument the preservation of which is a matter of national importance by reason of the historical, architectural, traditional, artistic, or archaeological interest attaching to it. Therefore, the Minister does not have, under the Acts, a function as such of designating monuments as national monuments other than by way of the exercise of a number of specified functions under the Acts which she may, at her discretion, exercise in respect of a monument which,

in her opinion, are national monuments. These functions are the power to make preservation orders or temporary preservation orders in respect of national monuments which are in danger, the power to become guardian of a national monument and the power to acquire national monuments. There have been two instances of acquisition in the period in question.

Creative Ireland Programme

31. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the creative schools programme; and the level of involvement of schools in County Dublin in the programme. [26775/18]

40. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the creative schools programme; the level of involvement of schools in County Offaly in the programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26716/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 31 and 40 together.

Creative Schools is a flagship initiative of the Creative Youth Plan and Pillar 1 of the Creative Ireland Programme. The initiative is led by the Arts Council in partnership with my Department and the Department of Education and Skills.

This pilot initiative aims to develop and celebrate the arts and creativity in our schools. Last week, 150 schools across the country were chosen to participate in this initiative. These schools were chosen from over 400 applicants and include primary schools, secondary schools, Youthreach centres, special schools, DEIS schools, co-educational schools, rural, urban, single-sex and Irish language medium schools. Work will begin in September 2018 and run through to the end of the school year in 2019. Details of all the chosen schools can be found the Creative Ireland website and the Arts Council website.

(<https://creative.ireland.ie/en/creative-schools-pilot-selected-schools-2018-2019>)

Details of Schools in Dublin in the following table:

Schools in Dublin.

Dublin
Balbriggan Educate Together National School, Hamlet Lane, Moylaragh, Balbriggan, Co Dublin
Ballymun Youthreach, Main Road, Ballymun, Dublin 11
Balrothery NS, St. Oliver Plunkett's NS, Balrothery, Balbriggan, Co Dublin
Belmayne Educate Together National School, North Belmayne, Dublin 13, Co Dublin
Beneavin De La Salle College, Beneavin Road, Finglas, Dublin 11
Coláiste Mhuire, Ratoath Road, Dublin 7
Central Remedial Clinic School, Penny Ansley Building, Vernon Avenue, Clontarf, Dublin 3
Dublin 7 Educate Together National School, Grangegorman Lower, Dublin 7
Dún Laoghaire Educate Together National School, The Red Door School, Monkstown Grove, Monkstown Avenue, Monkstown
Griffith Barracks Multi Denominational Primary School, Clogher Road, Dublin 12

Lucan Educate Together National School, Mount Bellew Way, Willsbrook, Lucan, Co Dublin
Lusk Community College, Raheny Lane, Rathmore Road, Lusk, Co Dublin
Margaret Aylward Community College, The Thatch Road, Whitehall
Mary Queen Of Angels 2, Boys National School, Gurteen Road, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10
Monkstown Educate Together NS, Kill Avenue, Dún Laoghaire, Co Dublin
Presentation Primary Warrenmount, Blackpitts, Dublin 8
Rathfarnham Educate Together National School, Loreto Avenue, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14
Shellybanks ETNS, RDS, Simmonscourt Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4
SS Peter & Paul JNS, Chapel Street, Balbriggan, Co Dublin
St Brigids JNS, Brookfield, Dublin 24
St Fintan's High School, Dublin Road, Sutton, Dublin 13
St John Of God GNS, Kilmore Road, Artane, Dublin 3
St Mary's Holy Faith Secondary School, Old Finglas Road, Glasnevin, Dublin 11
St Michael's House Special School, Ballymun Road, Ballygal, Dublin 9
St. Oliver Plunkett's Junior National School, St Helena's Road, Finglas South, Dublin 11
Stepaside Educate Together Secondary School, Belarmine Vale, Stepside, Co Dublin
Templeogue College, Templeville Road, Templeogue, Dublin 6W

Details of Schools in Offaly in the following table:

Schools in Offaly.

Offaly
Ard Scoil Charain Naofa, Frederick St, Clara, Co Offaly
Scoil Eoin Phóil II Naofa, Arden View, Tullamore, Co Offaly
St Mary's Secondary School, Edenderry, Co Offaly

Built Heritage Investment Scheme

32. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the supports provided to built heritage projects in County Offaly in 2017 and 2018; her plans in this regard for 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26717/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Financial support for the protection of heritage buildings and historic structures is provided by my Department through a number of schemes which are generally administered by local authorities.

The Built Heritage Investment Scheme is a scheme for the repair and conservation of protected structures (i.e. structures on the local authority Record of Protected Structures). It is designed to leverage private capital for investment in small scale conservation projects across the country and to support the employment of skilled conservation professionals. I have allocated funding of €2m nationally for this Scheme in 2018. In 2017 and 2018, the Built Heritage Investment Scheme provided a total €174,382 in grant aid for 34 projects in County Offaly.

The Structures at Risk Fund enables conservation works to heritage structures in both private and public ownership, which are deemed to be at significant risk of deterioration. I have allocated €1.324m nationally for the Structures at Risk Fund 2018. In 2017 and 2018 a total of €42,000 was allocated to two projects in County Offaly under the Structures at Risk Fund.

Details of the projects approved for funding under both schemes are published on my Department's website and local authority websites.

My Department has provided €350,000 in funding to the OPW in 2018 to assist in the conservation and presentation of historic buildings and national monuments in State ownership. The two Departments continue to work closely together on survey, excavation and research work relating to our national monuments.

The Heritage Council, which my Department funds, also provides grants for the protection and preservation of the built heritage. It is primarily a matter for the Heritage Council to decide how its funding should be allocated across the range of research, education and conservation programmes it supports. Grant schemes for 2018 are advertised by the Heritage Council on its website www.heritagecouncil.ie.

In terms of future funding, Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 – 2027 represents a major capital investment scheme of close to €1.3 billion in funding over the next 10 years. This plan will see increased investment in protecting and celebrating our built heritage across the country. More details on the commencement and completion dates for projects and programmes, as well as the timing of the expenditure in relation to them, will emerge as we go through the process of appraisal and planning as required under the Public Spending Code.

Foras na Gaeilge

33. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the itemised breakdown of the cost of works to the value of €945,000 which Foras na Gaeilge commissioned from the landlord of its new headquarters (details supplied); if these were approved by the board of Foras na Gaeilge and her Department; if the appropriate procurement procedure was followed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27070/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh) (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy is aware, Foras na Gaeilge moved to new offices at 63-66 Amiens Street at the beginning of October 2017. The property was substantially refurbished by the landlord in advance of this move and it was the landlord who commissioned all works in relation to the building.

This significant investment upgraded the building from an aged 1980s vintage office building to Grade A standard. This investment was important, not just in terms of ensuring the new accommodation was of an appropriate standard, but also to comply with other obligations, including in relation to environmental standards and universal access.

I am informed by An Foras that the landlord followed an appropriate procurement procedure on a commercial basis to ensure the best value for money in relation to the works on the building. Foras na Gaeilge also received advice from a qualified quantity surveyor in relation to the estimates in order to ensure value for money.

Furthermore, An Foras has also informed me that it made its Board and Sponsor Departments aware of every aspect of this project which it considered material, at the appropriate junctures.

The following is a breakdown of the cost of the works referred to by the Deputy:

Works	Cost
Internal walls (internal wall partitioning, creation of meeting rooms, tea stations etc)	€152,740
Internal wall finishes (paint finishes, wood finishes)	€6,855
Internal wall completions (internal doors, ironmongery)	€68,227
Floor finishes (vinyl floor finishes in tea stations and canteen, timber and vinyl skirting)	€47,888
Suspended ceilings (additional tenant specific works)	€16,936
Mechanical services (additional works re ventilation to meeting rooms and offices, new mains and cold water pipework)	€ 87,123
Electrical services (power distribution to tenant spaces, lighting to tenant spaces, specific ICT wiring)	€182,972
Catering equipment / tea stations	€50,827
Design & commercial borrowing costs over 15 years	€319,432
Total	€933,000
Cost per year for 15 years	€62,200

National Orchestras

34. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the steps she plans to implement the Boaden report's recommendation that the NSO become a national cultural institution (details supplied). [26710/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Boaden Report made a number of recommendations including the following:

- the RTE National Symphony Orchestra (NSO) should be a national cultural institution in its own right or within the National Concert Hall;

- the RTE Concert Orchestra (CO) should continue to be part of RTE, functioning as a classic "radio" or Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) orchestra, on the model of many such orchestras worldwide;

- while operating independently, the RTE NSO should continue to co-ordinate activities with the RTE CO to ensure the two work on a complementary basis; and

- both orchestras should be returned to historical levels of staffing and activities.

I have welcomed the reports recommendations, together with my colleague the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, and we will be reporting to Government shortly on the proposed next steps.

Question No. 35 answered with Question No. 30.

Commemorative Events

36. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the details of the Great Famine Online project. [26776/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Great Irish Famine Online (<http://www.irishfamine.ie/irish-famine-map>) was officially launched on the 12th May as part of this year's National Famine Commemoration which was hosted by University College Cork (UCC). It is a major collaborative project between my Department and UCC and publishes online for the first time the 1841 and 1851 famine census database, allowing people to view and analyse detailed information charting changes in the social, political and economic landscape of pre and post famine Ireland.

This website enables users to view the information for any location across the island. It encompasses more than three thousand Civil Parishes and over sixteen hundred towns. Using this census data, it is now possible to analyse the information which was recorded for each Civil Parish on the island of Ireland.

The resulting maps depict the impacts of the Famine in terms of population decline, social transformation and other key themes during this time. These maps and statistics are complemented with text and images, intended to give a complete and visually appealing picture.

The Department of Education and Skills also intend to include this application as a resource on Scoilnet, the official information portal for schools and teachers. An App version of this website is currently under development is expected to made available shortly.

Wildlife Conservation

37. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she has given consideration to the reintroduction of the grey wolf in national parks; if research or studies have been carried out in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26706/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department has no plans to re-introduce wolves to Ireland. Any potential re-introduction of a species would need to be considered within the criteria of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) translocation guidelines. These stringent guidelines are accepted as International Best Practice and are available here: <https://www.iucn.org/content/new-guidelines-conservation-translocations-published-iucn>

Waterways Ireland

38. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the blueway projects identified for development in 2018 and 2019; the level of funding available for such projects; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27097/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Waterways Ireland commenced the development of Blueways as a means to attract new visitors to use the waterways recognising changes in recreational activity with the growth in demand for activities such as walking, canoeing, cycling and stand up paddle boarding.

Further Blueway development planned for 2018 include:

- The Barrow Blueway - in part

- Shannon Blueway - Carrick to Boyle
- Royal Canal Blueway Development at Mullingar
- Blueway - Acres Lake and Lough Allen
- Blueway - Leitrim village to Kilclare Trail Development
- Blueway - Ballyconnell to Bellaheady Bridge Trail Development

The total funding budgeted by Waterways Ireland for such projects in 2018 is €228,000

The Blueway projects for 2019 is under review at present. Waterways Ireland will determine the projects as part of the Business Plan for 2019 and it will include further development at various locations along the Royal Canal, Grand Canal, Barrow navigation and the Shannon-erne.

On the Royal Canal plans are currently being put in place for the establishment of a 22km Blueway at Mullingar and it is hoped that this Blueway will be in place by July 2018. As part of the Blueway initiative Waterways Ireland has been working with local councils and recreational activity providers in establishing multi-activity Blueway hubs. A successful hub was established in Carlow Town in 2017 and this model will be replicated in Mullingar harbour in 2018.

Waterways Ireland is currently working with Offaly County Council, Kildare County Council, South Dublin Council and Dublin City Council to ensure the progression of planning permission for the development of the Grand Canal Towpath as a walking and cycling route for recreational, tourism and commuter purposes.

National Biodiversity Plan

39. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the objectives, targets and actions contained in the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26715/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021, Ireland's third national biodiversity plan, was launched in October 2017. The new Plan demonstrates Ireland's continuing commitment to meeting and acting on its obligations to protect our biodiversity for the benefit of future generations through a series of targeted strategies and actions.

The Plan reiterates Ireland's Vision for Biodiversity: that in the future "biodiversity and ecosystems in Ireland are conserved and restored, delivering benefits essential for all sectors of society and that Ireland contributes to efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems in the EU and globally".

The NBAP is a National Plan and, while my Department is the lead agency in development and coordination of the Plan, its implementation depends on engagement across a range of Government departments and agencies, as well as local authorities and other stakeholders across sectors in Ireland.

As a Party to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, Ireland has made a commitment to prepare Action Plans towards the achievement of the Convention's targets: namely to secure the conservation of biological diversity; sustainable use of its components; and the equitable

sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources. Many of the targeted actions in the Plan also contribute towards Ireland's obligations under EU environmental directives.

The Plan contains 119 actions under a framework of seven strategic objectives. These encompass mainstreaming biodiversity into decision making across all sectors; strengthening the knowledge base for the conservation, management and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services; increasing awareness and appreciation of biodiversity and ecosystem services; conserving and restoring biodiversity and ecosystem services in the wider countryside; conserving and restoring ecosystem services in the marine environment; expanding and improving management of protected areas and species; and strengthening international governance for biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The objectives in the NBAP lay out a clear framework for our national approach to biodiversity and will ensure that we build on the efforts and achievements of the past while looking ahead to what we can achieve over the next five years and beyond.

The National Biodiversity Action Plan is available for download at the website of my Department's National Parks and Wildlife Service (www.npws.ie).

Question No. 40 answered with Question No. 31.

Cultural Policy

41. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she continues to promote and support cultural events throughout the country in view of the desirable objective of promoting a positive national image at home and abroad; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27078/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Irish culture and heritage are indisputable assets when it comes to promoting Ireland's image and reputation at home and abroad among all age groups.

My Department supports a broad range of programmes and initiatives across its remit to promote Ireland's image, including in particular the Creative Ireland Programme and Culture Ireland.

The remit of Culture Ireland, a division of my Department, is to promote and advance Irish arts worldwide thus strengthening Ireland's cultural profile and global reputation. Strategic priorities include providing support for the international presentation of Irish artists and arts organisations, developing new and diverse international audiences and markets for Irish arts, and linking culture into the Government's international promotion strategy in tandem with other relevant Government Agencies.

This year, Culture Ireland is presenting Culture Ireland GB18, a year-long programme of Irish arts in Great Britain that aims to showcase Irish artistic excellence in partnership with significant UK institutions, venues and festivals, to build on the unique (and in many respects shared) cultural relationship between the two countries and expand the reach of Irish culture to new audiences.

Great Britain is a key market for Ireland in terms of tourism, trade and investment promotion and the GB18 programme enables us to use our culture and heritage as a unique door-opener for Ireland and Irish business, and an effective means of articulating our values at a time

of change in Ireland's wider relationship with Britain.

The Creative Ireland Programme is a culture-based programme led by my Department designed to promote individual, community and national wellbeing. Its core proposition is that participation in cultural activity drives personal and collective creativity, with significant implications for individual and societal wellbeing and achievement.

Pillar I - 'Enabling the Creative Potential of Children' and Pillar II - 'Enabling Creativity in Every Community' of the Programme will see considerable investment this year in highlighting numerous events of a cultural and heritage nature across the country.

For instance, a sum of €3m (€2m from my Department and €1m from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government) has been allocated to all 31 local authorities (€96,000 each approximately) to enable them support an extensive programme of activities, events and initiatives in each county. This will include the launch of long-term creative strategies for each local authority which will be launched later this year.

In addition, each local authority has been allocated funding to host Cruinniú na nÓg, a day of day of youthful creativity that will be held this weekend coming (23 June 2018) and which is specifically targeted at children and young people. Over 500 free events are happening for Cruinniú na nÓg nationwide, further details of which can be found at <https://creative.ireland.ie/cruinniu/>

It should be noted that the Arts Council, the main Irish Government agency for developing the arts, works in partnership with and provides funding for arts, artists, arts organisations, public policy makers and others to build a central place for the arts in Irish life. Festivals, and cultural events are important in this context.

We will continue to work across Government in 2018, to further enhance Ireland's cultural and artistic reputation, particularly in the context of the recently launched ten-year plan "Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018-2027" which sets out the Government's objectives for capital investment in Ireland's culture, language and heritage. This plan can be accessed at <http://www.chg.gov.ie/news-centre/news-centre-publications/>

Arts and Culture Capital Scheme Funding

42. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the review of the cap in the percentage for the art scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27113/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): In 1997 the Government approved the inclusion in budgets for all Exchequer-funded capital construction projects of up to 1% as funding for an art project, subject to an overall cap of €64,000.

Under the terms of the Scheme, funds to commission a per cent for art piece are factored into and funded from the overall budget of each capital project by the public body undertaking it. This is a matter for each project promoter or commissioning body.

My Department has responsibility for the promotion of the Per Cent for Art Scheme and set out guidelines in 2004 to assist project managers to operate the scheme and to provide a common national approach to its implementation. Guidelines on the Per Cent for Art Scheme are available on the Public Art website www.publicart.ie. and on the Department's website.

The current cap was set by Government in 1997 and given the period which has elapsed since the cap was last adjusted in 1997, my predecessor asked the Department to conduct a review of the scheme. My Department has carried out an initial scoping exercise on the operation of the scheme and will now be consulting on a more formal basis with Departments and Agencies who operate the scheme. I expect to receive proposals for changes to the scheme in the coming months.

Wildlife Protection

43. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if a cross-departmental discussion will be considered in order to respond to a growing need for powers of enforcement, particularly pertaining to the criminal activity of badger baiting in the countryside. [27074/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Staff of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of my Department are designated as Authorised Persons under the Wildlife Acts and Authorised Officers under the EC (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 and in that context they have powers of enforcement to deal with wildlife crime, including badger baiting.

On an ongoing basis NPWS staff conduct patrols and site visits to enforce the various provisions of national and EU legislation, as required. They also investigate reports of breaches of legislation, including in relation to badger baiting.

Members of An Garda Síochána are also empowered under the same legislation to investigate alleged wildlife crime offences and to prosecute if they see fit. My Department is working closely with An Garda Síochána in relation to this type of activity. Earlier this year, the NPWS organised a Wildlife Crime conference at which a number An Garda Síochána Officers attended. The NPWS and an Garda Síochána are currently developing closer and more formal liaison arrangements for sharing of information and intelligence and the carrying out of joint operations in relation to wildlife crime.

In the meantime, the Heritage Bill 2016 which has completed its passage through Seanad Éireann and Committee Stage in the Dail includes provisions to improve the powers of authorised persons in relation to enforcement activity under the Wildlife Acts. I will continue to keep this matter under review.

Waterways Ireland Data

44. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the capital funding in 2018 provided to Waterways Ireland for work on the Erne, Shannon Waterway; the projects to be undertaken; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27096/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Waterways Ireland has set aside capital funding in the amount of €284,000 for work on the Shannon Erne Waterway in 2018.

The projects to be undertaken in 2018 are:

Dredging

Certain areas will be dredged to deepen or widen the channel on the waterway to ensure a

navigable channel.

Areas to be dredged are: Aghalane, Kicorby, Ballyconnell and Bellaheady.

Service Block Refurbishment

This project will entail the upgrade of Shannon-Erne Service Blocks to meet modern standards at Aghalane, Ballyconnell, Haughton's Shore, Ballinamore, Keshcarrigan and Leitrim Village.

Masonry repairs and/or grouting

Repairs of lock structures along the navigations.

Blueway Trail Development

The existing Blueway trail in Ballinamore Co. Leitrim between Lock 7 Ballyduff and Aghoo Bridge will be connected to Lock 4 Aghoo. This will provide a commencement point at Lock 4 Aghoo including car parking and signage.

A 3.5km Blueway Trail will be developed between old Aghalane Bridge and Lock 1 Corraquill with associated signage and interpretative panels.

Shannon-Erne Blueway Lock 16 to Kilclare:

This comprises the upgrading of the existing 4.9km towpath between Lock 16 Killarcan and Lock 9 Kilclare to a walking and cycling standard thereby creating a multi-purpose Blueway. This project requires the installation of a new footbridge across the navigation at Lock 12 Lisconor. The trail will pass 8 original nineteenth century locks and create a path climbing from the Shannon level up to the summit (or highest) level of the Shannon-Erne.

Trailhead signage, interpretative panels, amenity provision and Pedestrian and Cycle counters will be part of this project in addition to bike racks which will be provided at access points to the trail.

Shannon-Erne Blueway Ballyconnell to Bellaheady Bridge Recreational Trail:

This project will develop a 5.5km walking and cycling trail from Ballyconnell, Co. Cavan to Bellaheady Bridge along the Woodford River on the Shannon-Erne Waterway and associated accommodation works with trailheads at Ballyconnell on Waterways Ireland property and at Bellaheady on Cavan County Council property.

It will also connect with the UNESCO Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark town and forest walk which is 6 km in length. Trailhead signage, interpretative panels and amenity provision and Pedestrian and Cycle counters will be provided along with bike racks at access points to the trail.

Both of the projects are partly funded by Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme in conjunction with Cavan County Council

National Orchestras

45. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding she plans to set aside under her Department's capital plan to facilitate the future relocation of one of the RTÉ orchestras to the National Concert Hall as proposed under the Boaden

report; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26713/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The National Symphony Orchestra has been based in the National Concert Hall since it opened its doors in 1981 and has provided the backbone of its classical musical programme since then.

Under Project Ireland 2040 the Government has committed €78m for the refurbishment of the National Concert Hall. This will include the refurbishment and extension of the main auditorium, the re-organisation of public facilities and the refurbishment of the former Medical Library to serve as the RTE National Symphony Orchestra Rehearsal Studio. This will ensure that the Orchestra is housed in fit-for-purpose accommodation in the future.

The Boaden Report made a number of recommendations including the following:

- the RTE National Symphony Orchestra (NSO) should be a national cultural institution in its own right or within the National Concert Hall;

- the RTE Concert Orchestra (CO) should continue to be part of RTE, functioning as a classic “radio” or Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) orchestra, on the model of many such orchestras worldwide;

- while operating independently, the RTE NSO should continue to co-ordinate activities with the RTE CO to ensure the two work on a complementary basis; and

- both orchestras should be returned to historical levels of staffing and activities.

I have welcomed the reports recommendations, together with my colleague the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, and we will be reporting to Government shortly on the proposed next steps.

Heritage Sites

46. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of heritage sites and buildings deemed to be at risk throughout the country; if particular actions are proposed to address issues arising; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27079/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My role, as Minister, with regard to the protection and management of our built heritage, is set out in the provisions of relevant legislation, as are the roles of local authorities and the responsibilities of owners.

I am the owner or guardian of almost 1,000 national monuments in State care right across the country ranging from prehistoric burial monuments, to medieval fortifications and religious sites. Our national monument portfolio also includes more modern structures such as the eighteenth-century terrace at 14-17 Moore Street. These sites benefit from the full protection of the National Monuments Acts.

Sites in my ownership or guardianship are maintained by the Office of Public Works. Conservation matters in relation to these sites are managed through regular liaison between the OPW and my Department, identifying condition issues and proposing appropriate conservation actions, carried out under consent where relevant.

Under the National Monuments Acts, local authorities are responsible for maintaining the

national monuments of which they are owners or guardians.

The recent securing by my Department of €30 million over the next 10 years for our national monument estate will enable my Department, working closely with the OPW to identify, resource and implement necessary conservation measures to ensure these wonderful sites, some dating back almost 6,000 years, will continue to be enjoyed for generations to come.

Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, provides for the protection of architectural heritage. The Act gives primary responsibility to planning authorities to identify and protect the architectural heritage by including relevant structures on the Record of Protected Structures. Inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures places a duty of care on the owners and occupiers of protected structures and also gives planning authorities powers to deal with development proposals affecting them and to seek to safeguard their future.

I draw on information provided by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, maintained by my Department, to recommend structures for inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures. The final decision, however, is a reserved function of the planning authority.

Through the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), my Department manages a property portfolio in respect of national parks and reserves of approximately 87,000 hectares. The existing National Parks are managed from a conservation perspective, and they are ‘core assets’ which play a very important role in Ireland’s tourism industry.

In addition to the statutory role of Local Authorities, Financial support is provided by my Department through a number of structured schemes for the conservation and protection of heritage buildings. €2m has been provided for the Built Heritage Investment Scheme 2018 and 370 projects have been approved for funding. €1,324,000 has been provided for the Structures at Risk Fund 2018 and 76 projects across the country have been approved for funding.

In terms of funding for future years, Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 – 2027 represents a major capital investment scheme of close to €1.3 billion in funding over the next 10 years. This plan will see increased investment in protecting and celebrating our built heritage across the country. More details on the commencement and completion dates for projects and programmes, as well as the timing of the expenditure in relation to them, will emerge as we go through the process of appraisal and planning as required under the Public Spending Code.

Seirbhísí Oideachais sna Gaeltachtaí

47. D’fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil aon phleananna aici cúntóirí teanga a chur isteach i scoileanna nach bhfuil aon chúntóirí teanga acu agus atá páirteach sa Scéim Aitheantais do Scoileanna Gaeltachta de chuid na Roinne Oideachais; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [26705/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): Mar atá luaite agam cheana féin faoin ábhar seo níl aon fhógra déanta agam fós maidir leis na scoileanna a bheidh ag fáil tacaíochta faoi Scéim na gCúntóirí Teanga don scoilbhliain 2018/19.

I láthair na huair, tá mo Roinn ag tabhairt faoi athbhreithniú ar Scéim na gCúntóirí Teanga lena chinntiú go bhfuil an scéim ag feidhmiú ar an gcaoi is fearr is féidir mar thaca don Phróiseas Pleanála Teanga agus an Pholasáí don Oideachas Gaeltachta araon. Is é Lárionad Taighde agus Foghlama Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath atá i mbun an athbhreithnithe thar

ceann na Roinne.

Mar is iondúil ag an tráth seo den bhliain, tá na socruithe idir lámha ag mo Roinn, i gcomhar leis na páirtithe leasmhara atá ag plé le riar na scéime thar ceann na Roinne, i dtreo allúntas na scoilbhliana 2018/2019 a fhógairt go luath.

Is féidir leis an Teachta glacadh leis gur i dtreo cur leis an líon scoileanna atá aitheanta faoi Scéim na gCúntóirí Teanga, agus í a threisiú tuilleadh de thoradh an athbhreithnithe, atá mo Roinn ag díriú i rith an ama.

Departmental Funding

48. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the funding being provided for small scale local festivals in County Kildare in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26722/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Support for festivals is provided from a number of sources, including from the Arts Council under the remit of my Department, and Fáilte Ireland, under the remit of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

My Department operates a Small Scale Local Festivals and Summer Schools Scheme, designed to support local cultural festivals and summer schools which are not in receipt of other public monies and which may not be eligible for funding from those bodies.

The total amount of current funding available to this fund for 2018 is €76,000. 71 applications were received in 2018. 50 projects were considered to be eligible under the scheme.

I am pleased to inform the Deputy that Kildare Midsummer Arts Festival Naas & Sallins were successful applicants under the 2018 Scale Local Festivals and Summer Schools Scheme and will be provided with a grant of up to €1,000 towards festival activities.

In addition, Cruinniú na nÓg is taking place on Saturday, June 23rd in every local authority right across the country. There are over 500 free events happening for Cruinniú na nÓg nationwide, including in County Kildare. Full details are available on www.creativeireland.ie/cruinniú;

Building on the success of last year's Cruinniú na Cásca events, it was decided this year to focus on children and young people and the development of Cruinniú na nÓg is now a key initiative of the Creative Youth Plan to enable the creativity of every child and young person.

Underlying the Creative Youth Plan, of which Cruinniú na nÓg is one of 18 actions, is a firm conviction that participation in creative and cultural activities from dancing to singing to coding equips our young people to flourish in their personal lives and helps give them skills that will stand to them throughout their lives.

Cruinniú na nÓg is a day dedicated to celebrating and encouraging children and young people to participate in a range of cultural and creative activities through performance, coding, theatre, art and music workshops, readings, screenings, special events and much more. It's a day for 'doing', 'making' and 'creating'.

Local Authorities have been key to the delivery of this initiative and are a vital element of the Creative Ireland Programme. This year, my Department doubled the funding allocation from €1m to €2m for the 31 local authorities to deliver the Creative Ireland Programme at local level and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government provided €1m. Local

authorities are currently finalising 5 year culture and creativity strategies and I look forward to publishing these shortly.

Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge

49. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta ós rud é gurbh é mí Iúil na bliana seo caite an chéad sprioc a luadh leis an bPlean Gníomhaíochta Cúig Bliana don Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge, an bhfuil náire uirthi go raibh moill bliana lena fhoilsiú agus an bhfuil aon athruithe curtha i bhfeidhm aici chun a chinntiú nach dtárlódh a leithéid de mhoilleadóireacht arís. [27055/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): Mar atá ráite agam roimhe seo mar fhreagra ar Cheisteanna Dála eile faoin ábhar seo, ós rud é go bhfuil freagracht thras-Rannach i gceist maidir le cur i bhfeidhm na Straitéise 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge, ba ghá le plé agus idirbheartaíocht chuimsitheach a dhéanamh le Ranna Stáit ábhartha agus le páirtithe leasmhara eile maidir le hullmhú an Phlean Gníomhaíochta. Rinneadh é sin ar mhaithe lena chinntiú, oiread agus is féidir, go mbeadh téagar cuí leis na bearta a bheidh leagtha amach sa chlár.

Mar atá mínithe agam go minic roimhe seo chomh maith, is é nádúr na hoibre seo go dtógann sé am chun nithe a aontú le páirtithe leasmhara éagsúla a bheidh freagrach i ndeireadh báire as pé beart a aontaítear a fheidhmiú, de réir mar a bhaineann sé leo.

In éindí le léargas a thabhairt faoina bhfuil déanta ó seoladh an Straitéis in 2010 chun cúram a dhéanamh de 9 réimse gnímh na Straitéise, leagfar amach go beacht sa Phlean Gníomhaíochta 2018-2022 cad atá beartaithe ag gach páirtí leasmhar a dhéanamh chun dlús a chur le feidhmiú na Straitéise idir seo agus 2022.

Leagfar amach sa phlean, dá réir, raon bearta agus tionscnamh a chuirfear sa tsiúil thar an tréimhse mar a bhaineann leis na réimsí gnímh chomh maith le ráthchlár mar a bhaineann sé le feidhmiú gach birt faoi leith.

Tá lúchair orm a fhógairt go bhfuil na socruithe idir lámha ag mo Roinn faoi láthair chun an plean a sheoladh ar an Aoine 29ú Meitheamh 2018.

National Monuments

50. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the reason her Department and the national monuments service, NMS, have not protected the togher in Mayne Bog, County Westmeath since its discovery in 2005 in view of new structures identified in 2017 by contracted archaeologists (details supplied). [27056/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Questions Nos. 660 and 661 on 28 March 2018 in which I set out my Department's significant input and involvement in the safeguarding of the toghers, or ancient trackways discovered at Mayne.

I also referred in that response to the significant and longterm engagement my Department's National Monuments Service has had with stakeholders, including the local authority and the landowners. In that context, the Department is meeting again with the landowners and their archaeologists this week to review the latest developments with regard to the site.

I am satisfied that the various measures that have and are being taken represent the best approach to securing an optimal outcome for the protection of the archaeology in this case.

Cultural Policy

51. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the details of the contract in place in respect of the creative director of Galway 2020; the terms of the contract; the moneys paid in respect of their departure; when a new creative director will be appointed; the details of same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27069/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Following the designation of Galway as European Capital of Culture for 2020 the company, Galway 2020, was established and commenced trading on 1st June 2017.

Hannah Kiely, the CEO of Galway 2020 is responsible for leading the Executive Team working closely with the Galway 2020 Board of Directors to deliver the ambitious programme for Galway as European Capital of Culture in 2020, as well as ensuring that a strong and lasting legacy follows to benefit the city, county and wider region.

The Board is comprised of an experienced team of individuals with a wide range of skill sets, chaired by Dr. Aideen McGinley. My Department is represented on the Board of Galway 2020 by Mr Declan McGonagle.

The hiring practices, details of employment contracts, and staff salaries paid by Galway 2020 are a matter for the Board of Galway 2020, and I have no remit in this area.

My Department officials continue to work and support the Galway 2020 Company and its Board and to meet with them regularly on the preparations for delivery of their programme for European Capital of Culture 2020. I am satisfied that the necessary steps are being taken to put in place an effective team to deliver Galway2020.

Military Aircraft Landings

52. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 53 and 200 of 14 June 2018, if the Defence Forces were engaged of the monitoring of the foreign military aircraft while they were in Irish airspace in view of the fact that the plane involved in the emergency landing at Shannon Airport on 3 June 2018 was involved in refuelling US fighter aircraft either during or immediately prior to the emergency occurring (details supplied). [27158/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Air Corps is not tasked or equipped to monitor aircraft overflying the entirety of Irish airspace. However, the Deputy will be aware that all foreign military aircraft require the permission of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to overfly Irish airspace. In line with existing protocols, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade notified my Department of the request for a US military aircraft to make an emergency landing at Shannon Airport on 3 June.

State Bodies Data

53. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number

of positions on the board in respect of the board of agencies and commercial State companies under his Department's aegis in tabular form; the quorum required for a board meeting; the number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date; the length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27217/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The only State body under the aegis of the Department of Defence is the Army Pensions Board. The Army Pensions Board is an independent statutory body established under the Army Pensions Act 1927. The Act specifies that the Board shall consist of a chairman and two ordinary members. The two ordinary members must be qualified medical practitioners of whom one must be an officer of the Army Medical Corps. The chairman and the non military ordinary member are appointed by the Minister for Defence with the concurrence of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. The Army Medical Corps ordinary member is appointed by the Minister for Defence on the recommendation of the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces. The Army Pensions Board only meets when all three members are available to attend.

There has been 1 appointment to the Army Pensions Board in the period since 6 May 2016, on the recommendation of the Chief of Staff, Commandant Zdenek Osecky was appointed as an ordinary member of the Board on the 21 June 2016. There are currently no vacancies on the Army Pensions Board.

Defence Forces Operations

54. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if Irish troops participated in Exercise Siil 2018; if so, the role they played in the exercise; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27288/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Exercise Siil, also known as exercise Hedgehog, is an annual exercise held by Estonia. The exercise is to evaluate the combat readiness of the Estonian Defence Forces and to create a training venue to exercise cooperation with other international forces.

Ireland received an invitation from Estonia to participate in Exercise Siil 2018. Following consideration of this request, Ireland decided not to participate in this exercise.

Military Aircraft Landings

55. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 53, 165 and 200 of 14 June 2018, if an aeroplane was in fact involved in military operations (details supplied) immediately prior to the emergency that required the emergency landing at Shannon Airport on 3 June 2018 contrary to the response given. [27155/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): An extremely urgent request for landing facilities was granted on 3 June 2018 for a US military aircraft, a McDonnell Douglas KC-10A Extender, on the basis that this was purely an emergency situation. The aircraft concerned was not in Irish sovereign airspace when the emergency was declared nor was it scheduled to enter Irish sovereign airspace under its original flight plan. The US Embassy subsequently confirmed to my Department in writing that the aircraft in question was unarmed, did not carry any arms, ammunition or explosives, was not engaged in intel-

ligence gathering and that the requested flight did not form part of any military operations or exercises.

Military Aircraft Landings

56. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 53 and 200 of 14 June 2018, if full details of the prior notification received will be provided. [27156/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Notification of the request and the reason for an emergency landing on 3 June 2018 by a US military aircraft, a McDonnell Douglas KC-10A Extender, was conveyed to my Department, via the Department's Duty Officer, following the declaration of an emergency by the aircrew and prior to the landing in Shannon taking place. The Duty Officer in turn was in immediate contact with An Garda Síochána and Shannon Airport. The US Embassy subsequently confirmed to my Department in writing that the aircraft in question was unarmed, did not carry any arms, ammunition or explosives, was not engaged in intelligence gathering and that the requested flight did not form part of any military operations or exercises.

Military Aircraft Landings

57. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 53 and 200 of 14 June 2018, if fighter aircraft entered Irish airspace in view of the fact that the plane involved in the emergency landing at Shannon Airport on 3 June 2018 was involved in refuelling US fighter aircraft either during or immediately prior to the emergency occurring (details supplied). [27157/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The answer to the Deputy's question is no.

State Bodies Data

58. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of positions on the board in respect of the board of agencies and commercial State companies under his Department's aegis in tabular form; the quorum required for a board meeting; the number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date; the length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27221/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): There are no State agencies nor commercial State companies under the aegis of my Department.

EU Treaties

59. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of a protocol (details supplied) in regard to common defence and the Treaty of Lisbon; if a copy of the text of the protocol will be provided; if it has been adopted; if not, the reason therefor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27286/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Paragraph 5(iv) of the European Council Conclusions of 18/19 June 2009 provided that at the time of the conclusion of the next accession Treaty, the provisions of the Decision in Annex I would be set out in a Protocol to be attached, in accordance with Member States' respective constitutional requirements, to the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Pending completion of these Treaty procedures, the Heads of State and Government declared that the Decision would be legally binding and take effect from the date of entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon which occurred on 1 December 2009. The Decision is published on the Irish Treaty Series as No. 20 of 2010. Ireland duly instigated the Treaty amendment process by submitting a proposal in accordance with Article 48 TEU, which governs the "ordinary revision procedure" for amending the Treaties. After positive consideration by the European Parliament in April 2012 and the Commission in May 2012, by a Decision of 11 May 2012 the European Council decided that a conference of the representatives of the governments of the Member States should examine the amendments proposed by Ireland in the form of a Protocol on the Concerns of the Irish People on the Treaty of Lisbon, to be annexed to the TEU and TFEU. The European Council further decided that in view of the extent of the proposed amendments, a Convention under Article 48(3) TEU need not be convened. The Protocol on the Concerns of the Irish People on the Treaty of Lisbon was submitted to a written procedure which closed on 16 May 2012 and was subsequently opened for signature.

Following its ratification by all EU Member States, the Protocol entered into force on 1 December 2014. The Protocol was published in the Irish Treaty Series as No. 25 of 2014 and laid before the Dáil on 17 December 2014. In the most recent consolidated version of the EU Treaties, the Protocol is included as Protocol No. 38. In accordance with Article 51 TEU, the Protocols form an integral part of the Treaties.

Section 1, paragraph (iv) of the European Communities (Amendment) Act 2012 amended section 1(1) of the European Communities Act 1972 so as to include a reference to the Protocol within the definition of the "treaties governing the European Union", which are to be binding on the State and part of the domestic law thereof. The section was commenced on 1 December 2014 by Statutory Instrument No. 577 of 2014 so as to coincide with the entry into force of the Protocol.

The Protocol stipulates, *inter alia*, that the Treaty of Lisbon does not affect or prejudice Ireland's traditional policy of military neutrality, that any decision to move to a common defence will require a unanimous decision of the European Council and that it would then be a matter for Member States, including Ireland, to decide, in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements, whether or not to adopt a common defence. In Ireland's case, participation in a common defence is precluded by Article 29.4.9 of Bunreacht na hÉireann.

Election Monitoring Missions

60. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when a new call for election monitors will be issued. [27316/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): International election monitoring missions play an important role in the promotion of democracy and human rights. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade maintains a roster of election observers for such missions. We aim to ensure, when requested, an appropriate level of Irish participation in international observation missions for elections and constitutional referendums. Irish observers participate primarily in missions organised by the European Union or those organized by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Plans

to establish a new roster are well advanced and the public call for applications will issue on 2 July 2018. A notice to this effect was published on the Election Observation webpage of the Department on 15 June 2018.

The call for applications will be published on the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website, as well as on the Irish Aid website.

A candidate information booklet setting out eligibility requirements and detailing the process leading to the establishment of the roster will be published for the information of applicants.

Military Aircraft Landings

61. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 53 and 200 of 14 June 2018, if the plane in question was located in Irish controlled airspace when the emergency was discovered; if so, if this is normal practice; and his views on whether this practice is acceptable. [27364/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): As I have indicated to the Deputy in related Parliamentary Question answers, an extremely urgent request for landing facilities was granted on 3 June 2018 for a US military aircraft to land at Shannon Airport on the basis that this was purely an emergency situation. The aircraft concerned was not in Irish sovereign airspace when the emergency was declared nor was it scheduled to enter Irish sovereign airspace under its original flight plan. The Air Navigation (Foreign Military Aircraft) Order gives the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade primary responsibility for the regulation of activity, both landing in the State and overflying Irish sovereign airspace, by foreign military aircraft. Management of Irish controlled airspace is a matter for the Irish Aviation Authority, a statutory state body operating under the aegis of the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Human Rights Cases

62. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if the case of a person (details supplied) who is presently detained by the Israeli authorities was raised by him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27367/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am aware of the case of the person concerned, whose administrative detention order has just been renewed for a further period reported to be four months. She has been in administrative detention without trial for a year, having already been detained, under administrative detention and a conviction whose basis was very unclear, for much of the period since April 2015. I understand that she is a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which is an outlawed group in Israel and considered a terrorist group by the EU. However, no real and credible imputation of personal involvement in violent activities has been made against her.

My view on this case, and on the practice of administrative detention generally, is very clear. While no-one can doubt the particular threats and security concerns which Israel faces, administrative detention should only be used, if at all, in the most serious of cases and in the face of serious and immediate threat. In all other cases, persons should be charged and tried in the courts, able to hear and challenge the evidence against them. No evidence of such a serious and immediate threat has been presented, in a way which would allow the person in question to

address it, in this case.

In general, there is serious concern that administrative detention is being applied on an increasingly routine basis against people who are politically active and critical of the occupation of the Palestinian territory, without any evidence being made available to indicate that these individuals constitute a security threat. Such periods of detention are often rolled over and extended indefinitely.

All of these criticisms have been conveyed to the Israeli authorities, most recently in the context of the Universal Periodic Review of Israel at the Human Rights Council in January of this year, when Ireland reiterated that detainees must have the right to be informed of the charges underlying any detention, have access to legal assistance, and receive a fair trial. Ireland has also been instrumental in having them included in EU Council Conclusions on the situation in Israel and Palestine.

It is incumbent on Israel to charge this person with credible and evidence-based offences, or to release her. I note that a leading article in one of the main Israeli newspapers this week made the same call.

Pensions Reform

63. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Finance if the promised review of the Interdepartmental Pensions Reform and Taxation Group on the cost of funded supplementary pensions will include public sector pension schemes, benefits and contributions; if the promised review is solely for the private sector; the timeline for completion and publication of the review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27147/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Under the Government's Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018-2023, a number of specific actions have been allocated to the Interdepartmental Pensions Reform and Taxation Group (IDPRTG). The IDPRTG is chaired by the Department of Finance and includes representatives from the Department as well as from the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection, Revenue and the Pensions Authority.

Action 3.13 of the Roadmap provides for a review of the cost of funded supplementary pensions to the Exchequer in the context of the development of a new auto-enrolment scheme.

The State encourages individuals to save for retirement by offering tax incentives when saving for a pension, and marginal tax relief is considered to be a material incentive to encourage such savings. The income draw-down phase is taxed and, to a degree, tax relief on pensions represents a deferral of taxation. Though public sector schemes generally operate on a pay-as-you-go basis, contributions made by public sector employees and pension benefits received by public sector employees are subject to applicable tax laws.

The IDPRTG is currently considering a number of action points that were identified in the Government's Roadmap. As part of its consideration, it will be important to canvass the views of interested parties and with this in mind my Department is planning to shortly launch a public consultation process. Taking account of the need to give time to elicit the various external views and to then consider the submissions made, my Department is currently planning to report on these matters by the end of the year."

Tax Reliefs Application

64. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Finance the date on which the anticipated cost of the VRT rebate on the purchase of electric vehicles is factored into calculations of the fiscal space. [27193/18]

65. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Finance the date on which the anticipated cost of the VRT rebate on the purchase of hybrid vehicles is factored into calculations of the fiscal space. [27194/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 64 and 65 together.

The relief from Vehicle Registration Tax (VRT) applying to electric vehicles has been included in fiscal space calculations which are currently set out to 2021. The relief is due to expire at end 2021.

The VRT reliefs applying to both conventional hybrid vehicles and plugin hybrid vehicles are due to expire at the end of 2018 and have been factored into fiscal space calculations for the lifetime of their validity.

It is the long standing practice of the Minister for Finance not to comment on measures which may or may not be included in the upcoming Budget.

Fiscal Policy

66. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Finance the date on which the anticipated cost of the 0% benefit in kind rate has been factored into calculations of the fiscal space. [27195/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The introduction of the 0% rate of benefit-in-kind on electric vehicles is a measure designed to incentivise the uptake of an emerging technology. This measure is estimated to cost €500,000 in terms of tax foregone in 2018 and has been included in the calculations of fiscal space for 2018.

I have previously announced my intention to extend this relief in the upcoming Budget and this will be factored into the fiscal space.

Ministerial Staff Data

67. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Finance the name, responsibilities and salaries of all advisers appointed by him since July 2017, in tabular form. [27197/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe) (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I wish to inform the Deputy that there are currently four Special Advisers employed in the Department of Finance/Department of Public Expenditure & Reform. Two of these advisers are on the Department of Finance payroll. Three Special Advisers report to me and one Special Adviser reports to Minister of State Michael D'Arcy.

The names and salaries of all advisers appointed by me since July, 2017 are shown in tabular form.

Minister Donohoe

Name	Salary
Ms Deborah Sweeney	4th point Principal Officer (Standard) PPC scale
Mr Ed Brophy	5th point Principal Officer (Standard) PPC scale
Ms Niamh Callaghan	1st point Principal Officer (Standard) PPC scale
Mr Stephen Lynam *	3rd point Principal Officer (Standard) PPC scale

*Mr Stephen Lynam resigned in March 2018.

Minister of State D'Arcy

Name	Salary
Mr Barry Harrington	5th point Assistant Principal (Higher) PPC scale

All 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 the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Special Advisers are appointed under Section 11 of the Public Service Regulations Act 1997 (2) A Special Adviser to a Minister or to a Minister of State, as in the case may be, shall

(a) assist the Minister or Minister of State, as the case may be, by –

(i) providing advice,

(ii) Monitoring, facilitating and securing the achievement of the Government objectives that relate to the Department, as requested by the Minister or the Minister of State, as the case may be, and

(iii) Performing such other functions as may be directed by the Minister or the Minister of State, as the case may be that are not otherwise provided for in this Act and do not involve the exercise of any specific powers conferred on the Minister or the Minister of State as the case may be or any other office holder by or under any other Act.

The appointments of Advisers are kept under review given the breath of my responsibilities across two Departments.

Tax Data

68. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated amount of corporation tax receipts that will be collected by the Revenue Commissioners in each year into the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27199/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The most recent update of my Department’s estimate for corporation tax receipts, over the coming years, is provided in the Stability Programme Update 2018.

My Department has provided an estimate for corporation tax receipts until 2021, which are as follows.

Year	2018 (€m)	2019 (€m)	2020 (€m)	2021 (€m)
Corporation Tax	8,505	8,985	9,445	9,890

The Stability Programme Update 2018 can be accessed at: <https://www.finance.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/spu-final-final.pdf>

Insurance Costs

69. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will request the CSO to report on the cost of public and employer liability insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27201/18]

70. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if his Department has data on insurance premiums in the area of public and employer liability; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27202/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 69 and 70 together.

At the outset the Deputy should note that my Department does not collect or hold data on insurance premiums. However, increasing the availability of data in relation to Employer and Public Liability Insurance is a matter which was discussed by the Cost of Insurance Working Group and its *Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance* (2018) recommends a number of actions to improve transparency in this area.

Among these, Recommendation 1 requires the Central Statistics Office to consider the feasibility of collecting price information on the cost of insurance to businesses with this exercise to commence by the end of Q2 2018. My officials have been informed by the CSO that this review commenced in May. They have been advised that this work will involve the following steps:

- Researching the methodological approach including contacting other countries that already compile such an index;
- Meeting with each of the relevant insurance companies to explain the data requirements for the creation of such an index;
- Requesting sample data (retrospective) from the companies;
- Compiling the index based on the sample data and testing the index for plausibility, accuracy and quality; and
- Writing up the conclusions of the research into the feasibility report

In addition, the CSO has stated that there will be significant methodological and practical challenges that will need to be overcome in order to produce a price index for business insurance. From a practical point of view, the new survey if deemed feasible, will have to be completed on a voluntary basis as there are no legal instruments in place to compel insurance companies to respond to data requests. It should also be noted that from a methodological point of view, the market for business insurance is far more heterogeneous compared to the relatively homogeneous market for motor insurance. This creates difficulties when trying to decide on the product or service which must be tracked consistently over time. You should also be aware that it would not be usual to publish a price index with just a couple of data points so a number of months of data would need to be compiled before publication of any price data for such premiums.

The complexity of this project was factored into the timeline of the action plan and consequently the CSO is scheduled to deliver its feasibility report by Q4 2018. If it concludes that such an index is possible to produce, then the implementation process will begin in such a way that allows the collection of the necessary data to be done in a credible and effective way.

In parallel with the CSO's feasibility study, Recommendation 4 of the *Report* provides that the Department of Finance should publish a key information report on Employer and Public Liability insurance claims by the end of this year. In this regard, my Department has written to Insurance Ireland requesting that the necessary data is supplied to the Department in good time so that the Department can produce the planned report within the agreed timeline.

Insurance Industry Regulation

71. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of insurance firms selling business in the market here that are prudentially regulated in the UK and that rely on the freedom of movement of services across the EU to sell here; if there are risks for consumers here in the event of a hard Brexit in this context; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27203/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I understand from the Central Bank of Ireland that in 2016, premium volumes written by life and non-life firms between Ireland and the UK were €9.7 billion (87 Irish authorised firms) and €2.5 billion (161 UK and Gibraltar authorised firms), respectively.

As the Deputy will understand, any negative impacts on the macro-economy of either or both the UK and Ireland is likely to impact the Irish insurance market. From the date of the UK exit (or, if agreed, the end of a transition period) UK insurers which rely on a "passport" to provide services into the Irish market and vice-versa will lose the right to provide such services. As a result impacted firms in both the UK and Ireland are extensively engaged in contingency planning which may result in the relocation of business from the UK to the EU (including Ireland) and vice-versa.

The key risk to consumers in the context of a hard Brexit is in the event that such insurers do not take mitigating actions against the possibility of that scenario, such as the establishment of a third-party branch and/or portfolio transfer to a EU27 undertaking, and that as a result of that, the ability of those insurers to continue to service cross border insurance contracts written prior to 29 March 2019 may become an issue. However, I think it is important to note that extensive work is underway to try and mitigate these risks as much as possible.

In the context of contingency planning, the Central Bank of Ireland and the Prudential Regulatory Authority (PRA) in the UK are engaged in dialogue with firms including insurers who will be impacted by Brexit. In this context, it is important to note that not all firms will be effected in the same way. The Central Bank is also monitoring the implementation of plans by UK insurers, which includes several UK firms applying to set up subsidiaries or third-country branches in Ireland, as well as other applying in other EU27 countries. It should be noted that Irish authorised firms selling into the UK are also implementing Brexit mitigation plans using similar approaches.

In addition, the European regulatory system is formulating the supervisory guidance on the many issues raised by Brexit and the Central Bank of Ireland from an insurance perspective is involved in this process through our participation in EIOPA. In particular, I understand that the Central Bank is a member of the EIOPA Brexit Platform, which provides a forum for regulators

to exchange information about firms' plans.

While many firms are moving forward with Brexit preparation plans, the final impact of Brexit on insurers will depend on the outcome of the EU27-UK negotiations, with the nature and duration of transition arrangements an important factor in determining the speed of adjustment.

My Department's preparation and contingency work is ongoing and continues to examine all possible scenarios and challenges, and is a key input into the whole of Government approach. As part of its contingency planning, the Department is engaged on an ongoing basis in examining the potential impacts of Brexit on the financial services sector including insurance and potential mitigants. As part of this work the Department liaises with other Government Departments and Agencies who have responsibilities in this area, including Enterprise Ireland and the IDA. The Department also engages closely with the Central Bank of Ireland which has the statutory responsibility for financial stability. Engagement with the Central Bank also takes place via the Financial Stability Group where Brexit is a standing item on the Group's agenda.

State Bodies Data

72. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of positions on the board in respect of the board of agencies and commercial State companies under his Department's aegis in tabular form; the quorum required for a board meeting; the number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date; the length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27220/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): There are seventeen non-commercial bodies under the aegis of my Department, seven of which are not State Boards or State Agencies and as such, are not relevant to the Deputy's question. These are the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, Office of the Revenue Commissioners, Tax Appeals Commission, Credit Review Office, the Credit Union Advisory Committee, the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation and the Irish Financial Services Appeals Tribunal.

The remaining ten bodies have provided the information in the following table.

Body	Number of positions on the board in respect of the board of agencies and commercial State companies	Quorum required for a board meeting	Number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date	Length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy
Central Bank Commission	As enshrined in the Central Bank Act 1942 (as amended), the Central Bank Commission comprises: The Governor of the Central Bank; the Deputy Governor Central Banking; the Deputy Governor Prudential Regulation; the Secretary General of the Department of Finance; and at least 6, but no more than 8, other members appointed by the Minister for Finance.	If there are 10 or 11 members of the Commission, 6 members constitute a quorum; if there are 12 members of the Commission, 7 members constitute a quorum. Currently there are 10 members.	There are 6 Commission members appointed by the Minister. Under the legislation, there is potential for 2 further Ministerial appointees.	While there is potential for 2 additional Ministerial appointees under the legislation, it is not a requirement to have 8 Ministerial appointees. The Minister for Finance approved the holding of an open call for expressions of interest from suitable candidates, in a process administered by the Public Appointments Service, which is expected to conclude shortly.
Credit Union Restructuring Board	3	3	0	0
Disabled Drivers Medical Board of Appeal	5	3	0	N/A
Financial Services & Pensions Ombudsman	7	4	0	0
Investor Compensation Company DAC	12	7	1	Since January 2018
Irish Fiscal Advisory Council	5	3	0	N/A

Body	Number of positions on the board in respect of the board of agencies and commercial State companies	Quorum required for a board meeting	Number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date	Length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy
National Asset Management Agency	9	If there is no vacancy on the Board, 5 members constitute a quorum; if there is a vacancy on the Board, 4 members constitute a quorum.	2	1 vacancy from December 2013. 2 vacancies from 2014
National Treasury Management Agency	9	5	0	0
Social Finance Foundation	Maximum of 10	5	0	0
Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland	Pursuant to the SBCI's Constitution, the Company shall have a minimum of two and a maximum of nine directors.	4	0	0

Tracker Mortgage Examination

73. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the Central Bank review into tracker mortgages; and if all institutions are being monitored in terms of their compliance with the timelines promised to the consumers. [27261/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Central Bank is independent in the performance of its duties in the supervision of regulated financial service providers and it is working to ensure that the tracker mortgage examination is completed as soon as possible. The Bank provided a comprehensive update on the Tracker Mortgage Examination in April 2018, which is available at: <https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/consumer-hub-library/tracker-issues/update-on-tracker-mortgage-examination---april-2018.pdf?sfvrsn=4>.

The April update report indicated that:

- the total number of customers identified through the Examination to end-March 2018 is c. 30,000 (of which 1,500 remain to be verified by lenders), which therefore brings the total number of impacted tracker customers to 37,100 (inclusive of the 7,100 impacted cases identified before the commencement of the industry wide examination);

- 88% of identified and verified customer accounts from the Examination have received of-

fers of redress and compensation. Offers of redress and compensation are expected to be made in respect of the remaining 12% of identified and verified customer accounts by end-June 2018;

- payments may extend beyond that date for any newly identified and verified customers from the time of the April update. However, as redress and compensation schemes are underway across all lenders, the Central Bank expects that any such additional accounts will be swiftly remediated;

- total redress and compensation of €459 million has been paid to end-March 2018, an increase of €162 million since the December 2017 update. The €459 million figure comprises €412 million paid to end-March through the Examination and €47 million paid outside of the Examination.

As part of the Tracker Mortgage Examination, intensive review and challenge of lenders by the Central Bank remains ongoing. It should be noted that verification work by lenders, and review and challenge by the Central Bank, may lead to some further increase in the number of affected customers before conclusion of the Examination.

The Central Bank has challenged, and will continue to challenge, lenders in relation to various strands of the Examination until it is satisfied that all affected customers are identified and lenders have carried out the Examination in accordance with the Framework set down by the Central Bank. The Central Bank will also continue to monitor payments by lenders to impacted customers.

Motor Insurance Costs

74. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Finance the status of progress on addressing the cost of motor insurance; the steps that have been implemented to date; the steps that are yet to be carried out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27268/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Deputy will be aware that the Cost of Insurance Working Group's Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance was published in January 2017. The Report makes 33 recommendations with 71 associated actions to be carried out in agreed timeframes, which are set out in an Action Plan in the Report.

Work has been ongoing on the implementation of the recommendations by the relevant Government Departments and Agencies and there is a commitment within the Report that the Working Group will prepare quarterly updates on its progress.

The Fifth Progress Update was published on the Department of Finance website on 11 May 2018. It shows that of the 50 separate deadlines set up to the end of Q1 2018 within the Action Plan, 40 have been met, while substantial work has also been undertaken in respect of the nine action points categorised as "ongoing".

In relation both to the outstanding actions from previous quarters and to the remaining 12 actions scheduled for completion in Q2, Q3 and Q4 of 2018, all efforts are being undertaken in order to complete them as soon as possible. At this juncture, as highlighted in the last update report, it is anticipated that the action points likely to be delayed beyond 2018 are those related to the large-scale initiatives under the remit of the Minister of Transport, Tourism and Sport. These include the completion of the Master Licence Record project and the database to identify uninsured drivers. However, it is expected that the vast majority of the Action Plan will be completed by the end of this year.

For more information on the status of each individual recommendation, including the envisaged timeframes for completion, I refer the Deputy to the quarterly update reports. Both the Report and all of the quarterly updates are available on the Department's website, within "The Cost of Insurance Working Group" sub-section of the main "Insurance" section.

Finally, it should be noted that the most recent CSO data (for May 2018) indicates that private motor insurance premiums have decreased by 19% since peaking in July 2016. While it is accepted that motor insurance premiums are still at a very high level for many people, such statistics indicate at least a greater degree of stability in the market on an overall basis. I am hopeful that this trend in pricing will be maintained and that premiums shall continue to fall from the very high levels of mid-2016.

Mortgage Arrears Information and Advice Service

75. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Finance if there is a law to protect persons in their homes if they are in arrears in making mortgage payments if they can show they have made an effort to engage with the banks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27269/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears (CCMA) forms part of the Central Bank's Consumer Protection Framework. It provides a strong consumer protection framework, requiring relevant firms to ensure that borrowers in arrears or pre-arrears in respect of a mortgage loan secured on a primary residence are treated in a timely, transparent and fair manner and that due regard is had to the fact that each case of mortgage arrears is unique and needs to be considered on its own merits.

Banks, retail credit firms and credit servicing firms servicing loans on behalf of unregulated loan owners are all required to comply with the CCMA. The CCMA recognises that it is in the interests of borrowers and regulated firms to address financial difficulties as speedily, effectively and sympathetically as circumstances allow. The CCMA sets out the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP), a four-step process that regulated entities must follow:

- Step 1: Communicate with borrower;
- Step 2: Gather financial information;
- Step 3: Assess the borrower's circumstances; and
- Step 4: Propose a resolution

Each regulated entity must consider the borrower's situation in the context of the solutions they provide, which may differ from firm to firm. The CCMA does not prescribe the solution which must be offered to address a mortgage difficulty. However, the CCMA includes requirements that arrangements be sustainable and based on a full assessment of the individual circumstances of the borrower and that possession be sought only as a last resort. Borrowers who engage with their lender, therefore, benefit from the protections afforded under the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP).

Under the CCMA, a regulated entity may only commence legal proceedings for possession where it has made every reasonable effort to agree an alternative repayment arrangement with the borrower in mortgage difficulty and other clear requirements are met, or the borrower has been classified as "not co-operating". During the legal process, borrowers have opportunities to re-engage with lenders to find a solution. In some circumstances, however, loss of ownership

may be unavoidable where there is an unsustainable mortgage.

In terms of the Courts process, the Land and Conveyancing Law Reform Act 2009 also provides that where applicable a lender may not, in respect of a housing loan, take possession of a mortgaged property without a court order or the prior consent in writing of the mortgagor. The Land and Conveyancing Law Reform Act 2013 further provides that, in any application for possession of a principal private residence, the court may having regard to certain stated matters (such as if the borrower had made any payments on the mortgage within the preceding twelve months) adjourn the proceedings with a view to allowing the borrower to consult a personal insolvency practitioner (PIP) and, where appropriate, to make a proposal for a Personal Insolvency Arrangement (PIA). In formulating a PIA, there is an onus on the PIP, insofar as is reasonably practicable, to do so on terms which will not require the borrower to dispose of an interest in or cease to occupy his/her principal private residence. Furthermore, should such a PIA be rejected by creditors, the Personal Insolvency Act 2015 now provides that a Court may where applicable review the PIA proposal and it can, if it considers that the PIA proposal offers a fair and equitable solution for both the debtor and his/her creditors, make an order to confirm the PIA.

Fiscal Policy

76. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the impact on the fiscal space and the financial contractual obligations to consultants being honoured operating under the 2008 consultants' contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27276/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The settlement results in a payment of €31 million in relation to 2018 and an annual ongoing cost of €62 million from 1 January 2019.

Therefore the impact on fiscal space in 2019 is the increase of €31 million (€62 million minus €31 million) in 2019 over 2018.

There is no effect thereafter as it will be in the expenditure base.

As I outlined in the Summer Economic Statement 2018, the concept of fiscal space is no longer an appropriate one for Ireland. Budgetary policy will be formulated on the basis of what is right for the economy at this stage in the cycle and not by rules that would increase borrowing.

House Purchase Schemes

77. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if an analysis or a survey has been undertaken to measure the uptake and success of the help to buy scheme; if the scheme will be extended and or modified in budget 2019 to take into account market increases in the valuations of dwellings for sale; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27278/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy may be aware, in 2017 my Department commissioned an independent impact assessment of the Help To Buy incentive (HTB). Following a competitive tender process, Indecon Economic Consultants were awarded the contract to undertake the assessment and the resulting report was published by my Department on the day of Budget 2018.

The report analysed issues such as uptake, design of the incentive, and any potential impact on house prices. Based on the results of a number of analytical approaches, the report found that

HTB had not, to date, had a measurable effect on house prices.

The report itself can be found at the following link:

http://www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2018/Documents/HTB_Independent_Impact_Assessment_Sept2017.pdf

My Department also committed to the carrying out of an independent Cost-Benefit Analysis of the incentive, which is currently underway and due to be completed in advance of Budget 2019.

The findings of this analysis will, alongside other factors, go towards informing my deliberations for Budget 2019. Until such analysis is complete, I am not in a position to comment further on the specific issues raised by the Deputy.

Finally, as the Deputy may be aware The Help to Buy legislation, as passed by the Oireachtas in Finance Act 2016, contains a sunset clause of 31 December 2019.

Special Savings Incentive Scheme

78. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the cost by year of running the special savings incentive accounts for each of its operations; the number of SSIA accounts created; the average cost per account; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27305/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the total value of subscriptions made to Special Savings Incentive Accounts (SSIAs) from commencement of the scheme in May 2001 until the ending of the incentive in April 2007 was €11,384m and the total tax credit was €2,473m.

I am further advised by Revenue that 1,170,208 SSIAs were commenced by individuals in the period from its introduction up to the closing date for applications of 30 April 2002. Over the six year lifetime of the scheme, the average running cost was approximately €412m per year. The average account cost was approximately €2,100, which was approximately €350 per account, per year.

The following table provides a percentage breakdown of account holders' average monthly subscription levels.

Monthly subscription level	%
€12.50 (Min) - €59.99	18
€60 - €149.99	25
€150 - €249.99	15
€250 - €254 (Max)	42

Tax Code

79. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of implementing a flat rate of taxation on dividend income of 20%, 30% and 40% respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27306/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I have assumed that the Deputy's question relates to the potential change in Exchequer tax revenues, rather than the administrative

cost of implementing a flat rate of taxation on dividend income at the rates proposed.

Income from dividends is chargeable to tax at a range of rates dependent on the recipient of the income (for example, whether the dividends are received by an individual, by a company or by an investment fund) and the nature of the source of the dividend income (for example dividends paid in the State or foreign dividends, dividends on shares held as an investment or for the purposes of a trade). Such income could therefore be liable, inter alia, to income tax at the standard or higher rates, to corporation tax at the trading or passive rates or as franked investment income, or to the deemed disposal and exit tax provisions relevant to funds.

It is therefore not possible to provide estimates of the tax cost/yield of the measures described by the Deputy. However if the Deputy would like to request information in relation to a change in the taxation of a particular subset of dividend type, or of dividend recipient, my officials will be happy to examine the question further.

Property Tax

80. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the first and full year cost of allowing the local property tax as a deductible expense against rental income. [27308/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the estimated cost of allowing Local Property Tax (LPT) as an allowable expense against rental income for tax purposes is in the region of €12 million in the first year and €20 million in a full year. This estimate is calculated on the basis of Local Property Tax returns that indicated the property was a non-principal private residence, and assumes that each taxpayer would have sufficient rental income against which to offset the amount of LPT paid.

It should be noted that Revenue are unable to separate out rental properties, so properties indicated as non-principal private residences will include holiday homes and certain types of vacant properties which are not let out.

Equally, there will also be properties rented out but not indicated as non-principal private residences, which could balance out the effect of some of the holiday homes.

Mortgage Interest Relief Data

81. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the first and full year cost of increasing mortgage interest relief at 5% intervals up to 100% for rental income. [27309/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, Finance Act 2016 provided for the phased restoration of full interest deductibility in respect of interest on loans used in the purchase, improvement or repair of rented residential property. This is being done over a 5 year period by way of annual increments of 5%, with the first increase from 75% to 80% having taken effect for interest accruing on or after 1 January 2017, and the second increase from 80% to 85% having taken effect for interest accruing on or after 1 January 2018.

Further annual 5% increments in the rate of deductible interest will apply to interest accruing in each of the years 2019 to 2021 inclusive, and full deductibility will be restored for interest accruing on or after 1 January 2021.

I am advised by Revenue that, based on personal Income Tax returns filed for the year 2015, the latest year for which complete information is available, and making certain assumptions

(such as no behavioural change), it is estimated that the cost of increasing the level at which landlords can claim interest repayments against tax for residential rental properties from 80% (the amount allowable in 2017) at 5% intervals is as set out in the following table.

Mortgage Interest Relief	Full Year Cost	First Year Cost
80-90%	€22m	€12m
80-95%	€33m	€19m
80-100%	€44m	€25m

However, as noted above, the legislation already provides for phased restoration over a 5 year period, with full deductibility restored from 2021, and as such the figures above refer primarily to a cash-flow cost from accelerated implementation.

Tax Credits

82. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the first and full year cost of the full reintroduction of a rental tax credit based on the system in place on 7 December 2010. [27310/18]

84. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated cost of introducing a new affordable housing tax credit whereby landlords would not have to pay tax on rental income for properties let over a five year period at affordable levels. [27314/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 82 and 84 together.

Regarding the cost of the full reintroduction of a rental tax credit, I am advised by Revenue that the number who availed of the rent relief tax credit and the associated cost to the Exchequer are available on the Revenue website at the following link:

<https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/statistics/tax-expenditures/costs-tax-expenditures.pdf>

The credit was available to those paying for private rented accommodation. This included rent paid for flats, apartments or houses. It did not include rent paid to local authorities. The credit was only available to persons renting on 7 December 2010. This tax credit ceased to be available after 31 December 2017.

I am further advised by Revenue that, as the rent relief tax credit is in the process of being phased out (only back claims can now be processed), and no new claimants have qualified for the relief since 2010, tax returns do not provide a reliable basis for Revenue to accurately predict either the numbers of tenants that could be eligible to claim a rent credit were it to be re-introduced post 2017 for all tenants, or the degree to which potential claimants could absorb the full amount of the credit.

Therefore, there is no reliable basis available to Revenue on which to estimate the potential cost of a rental tax credit reintroduction.

It may be of assistance to the Deputy to note that, according to Census 2016 data, the private rented sector amounts to approximately 310,000 units (for comparison, in 2010 the rent relief tax credit cost €82.8 million in respect of 189,000 claimants). However, all of the individuals recorded on the Census as renting these 310,000 units may not qualify for rent relief tax credit or be able to absorb the relief in full if it were available.

Regarding the Deputy's question on the estimated cost of introducing a new affordable housing tax credit, whereby landlords would not have to pay tax on rental income for properties let over a five year period at affordable levels, Revenue have informed me there is not sufficient information available to provide an estimate.

In order to cost such a measure, the number of potential landlords eligible would have to be identified and a definition of 'affordable levels of rent' provided.

VAT Rate Application

83. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the first and full year cost of reducing VAT on residential construction from 13.5% to 9%. [27313/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The VAT rating of goods and services is subject to EU VAT law, with which Irish VAT law must comply. Under the VAT Consolidation Act 2010, the construction and supply of new residential housing, including renovation and repairs, is charged to VAT at 13.5%.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that it is tentatively estimated that introducing a 9% VAT rate specific to residential construction could cost in the region of €220m in the first year and €270m in a full year. This estimate is based on 2018 construction estimates using Revenue and third party data sources, including industry reports and property price register data. The estimate assumes no behaviour impact on consumer demand from a change to the VAT rate.

Applying a lower VAT rate to the construction of new residential properties would result in different VAT rates between residential and non-residential construction services, as non-residential construction services cannot go below 12% under the EU Directives. This would be very difficult to administer and could lead to accidental or fraudulent underpayments of VAT.

Question No. 84 answered with Question No. 82.

Public Sector Pay

85. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to renew FEMPI legislation in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27210/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The unwinding of the emergency FEMPI legislation commenced with the Lansdowne Road Agreement 2016-2018 and will be completed under the Public Service Stability Agreement 2018 -2020 (PSSA). In relation to the PSSA, the measures agreed were given legal effect through the enactment of the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017. The PSSA also makes provision for pay increases to be made to those public servants for whom FEMPI pay measures have already been unwound.

To complete FEMPI restoration for those public servants whose salary will not be fully restored (those on annualised remuneration greater than €70,000) through the PSSA increases, section 19 of the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act for those covered by the Agreement states these remaining amounts will be paid no later than July 2022.

I am obliged under Section 12 of the FEMPI Act 2013, to undertake an Annual Review of the operation, effectiveness and impact of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Acts (FEMPI) which is to be laid before the Oireachtas by the 30th June each year. That

report is currently being prepared for laying before both Houses of the Oireachtas.

Office of Public Works Properties

86. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans for the old Garda barracks building in Wexford town; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27165/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran) (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The former Garda station on Roche's Road, Wexford closed on the 22nd September 2017. The Garda authorities do not have an ongoing requirement for the property having relocated to the newly built Garda station on Mulgannon Road, Wexford.

The OPW's policy with regard to non-operational (vacant) State property including the former Garda station, Roche's Road, Wexford is to:

1. Identify if the property is required/suitable for alternative State use by either Government departments or the wider public sector.

2. If there is no other State use identified for a property, the OPW will then consider disposing of the property on the open market if and when conditions prevail, in order to generate revenue for the Exchequer.

3. If no State requirement is identified or if a decision is taken not to dispose of a particular property, the OPW may consider community involvement (subject to detailed written submission, which would indicate that the community/voluntary group has the means to insure, maintain and manage the property and that there are no ongoing costs for the Exchequer).

I am advised by the Commissioners of Public Works that the future use of the property is still under consideration, in line with the above policy.

State Bodies Data

87. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of positions on the board in respect of the board of agencies and commercial State companies under his Department's aegis in tabular form; the quorum required for a board meeting; the number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date; the length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27225/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The details requested by the Deputy are set out in the following table.

Name of Body	Number of positions on the Board	Quorum required for meeting of the Board	Number of Ministerial Appointee Vacancies on the Board to Date	Length of time the Ministerial Appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy
Public Appointments Service	9	5	0	N/A*
National Shared Services Office	9	6	0	N/A
Institute of Public Administration	12	6	0	N/A**
Economic and Social Research Institute	14	3	0	N/A**

* CEO is ex officio and other three board members nominated by the Minister for Health, Minister for Justice and Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government

** These bodies are companies limited by guarantee, in receipt of grant funding from the Department, and are classified as public bodies for the purposes of certain legislation. They are also registered charities. The Board / Council are appointed in line with the relevant Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Appointments to State Boards

88. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the grievance mechanisms in place if a person is of the view that they have been wrongly excluded from being appointed by the Public Appointments Service to the board of the DAA. [27292/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Public Appointments Service (PAS) conducts the state boards appointments process in accordance with the Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards. All campaigns are openly advertised on Stateboards.ie for a minimum of 3 weeks.

PAS convenes an Assessment Panel to review the applications and select suitable candidates for submission to the relevant Department for consideration by the Minister. Assessment Panels to date have involved people from a diverse range of backgrounds and experience. The Panel seeks to ensure that lists provided to Ministers contain a sufficient number of suitable candidates to allow the Minister to exercise appropriate choice in his or her decision-making. Any listed candidates must meet the relevant criteria agreed for the Board role.

Once advised of the Minister's decision, PAS issues all candidates with the result of their application. Under the Guidelines there is no provision for a grievance process for state board appointments. However, feedback is available to candidates on request.

I am pleased that positive feedback has been received on the efficiency and effectiveness of the specification and assessment process from Government Departments. In particular, there is widespread general satisfaction with the quality and calibre of the names proffered by PAS for consideration for appointment.

Public Sector Pensions

89. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) will have a pension penalty if service is broken; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27270/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In 2004 the Public Service Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004 became law. This legislation set the minimum pension age at age 65 for most public servants, including teachers, appointed for the first time on or after 1 April 2004 and for those who returned to public service employment on or after that date following a break of more than 26 weeks in their public service employment. In addition the legislation removed the compulsory retirement age for persons covered by it. Following the enactment of the legislation in 2004 a detailed circular was issued to the Management Authorities of schools on this matter by my Department. A return to public service employment directly from a period of approved leave of absence paid or unpaid or other statutory leave does not constitute a break in service for the purposes of the Act.

Based on the information provided by the Deputy, it appears that the person in question commenced public service employment as a teacher in 2000 when the minimum pension age was age 60, although teachers could also retire on pension on reaching age 55 years having completed 35 years of reckonable teaching. However, the person left his/her public service position in 2006 and a period of more than 26 weeks elapsed before his/her return to teaching. While the change in legislation had occurred some years prior to leaving, it was on return to teaching in 2008 that his/her superannuation terms were governed by the provisions of the 2004 Act. Although the 2004 Act changed the minimum age at which pension may be paid the method of calculation of pension benefits remains the same as that which applied when the person first commenced teaching in 2000.

Capitation Grants

90. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the student capitation grants will be restored to their full amounts (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27125/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I recognise the need to improve capitation funding for schools having regard to the reductions that were necessary over recent years.

Restoring capitation funding as resources permit is one of the actions included in the Action Plan for Education.

Budget 2018 marked the second year of major reinvestment in the education sector, as we continue to implement the Action Plan for Education, which has the central aim to make the Irish Education and Training service the best in Europe within a decade. In 2018, the budget for the Department of Education increased by €554 million to over €10 billion. Through budget 2017 and Budget 2018, we are now investing €1 billion more in education.

The process is underway for restoring grant funding that is used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff. The ancillary grant was increased by €6 in 2016, €5 in 2017 and €5 in 2018, in order to enable primary schools to implement the arbitration salary increase for grant funded school secretaries and caretakers and to also implement the restoration of salary for cleaners arising from the unwinding of FEMPI legislation.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

91. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of exempting refugees and asylum seekers from the three year residency requirement to avail of SUSI grants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27188/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): To be eligible for a grant, a “student”, as defined in Section 14 of the Student Support Act 2011, must demonstrate that he/she has been resident in the State for at least 3 years out of the 5 year period ending on the day before the start of his/her approved course of study.

It is possible for students, who did not meet the residency requirement at the commencement of their studies, to have their eligibility reviewed if they meet the residency requirement during the course of their studies.

It is not possible to cost a proposal to exempt refugees and asylum seekers from the residency requirement of three out of five years. Reducing the residency requirement will attract additional students, who currently don't apply to SUSI. As such, it is difficult to predict what the impact of such a change would be.

State Bodies Data

92. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of positions on the board in respect of the board of agencies and commercial State companies under his Department's aegis in tabular form; the quorum required for a board meeting; the number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date; the length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27218/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Details of the State Boards that fall under the remit of my Department, including details on board appointments and board vacancies, are available on my Department's website at the following link; <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Agencies/>

As the Deputy will be aware, individuals may be nominated for appointment by various organisations arising from the terms in the relevant legislation regarding the Body concerned and accordingly board appointments made by me are not in all cases made at my discretion.

The information requested by the Deputy in regard to the number of vacant positions on boards, the date vacancies arose, details of board appointments to bodies and the timeline for the board appointments are provided in the following two tables.

The information sought in regard to the quorum required for a board meeting in each body is being collated and I will arrange to have it forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it becomes available.

PQ - 27218/18 Board Vacancy Details as at June 20th 2018 in regard to Bodies under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills

Body	Name (Identify Chair)	Date Term of Office Ceased/ Date Vacancy Arose	Position Type	Basis of appointment (e.g. Pas Process, Ex-Officio, Employee Representative)
Léargas	Vacancy	07/03/2018	Ordinary Member	Ministerial appointment
Irish Research Council	Vacancy	18/03/2018	Ordinary Member	Ministerial appointment
Irish Research Council	Vacancy	18/03/2018	Ordinary Member	Ministerial appointment
National Centre for Guidance Education (NCGE) Management Committee	Vacancy	21/02/2018	Ordinary Member	Nominee of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors
Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board (RISF) Caranua	Vacancy	01/02/2018	Ordinary Member	PAS Process
Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board (RISF) Caranua	Vacancy	16/02/2018	Ordinary Member	PAS Process
Teaching Council	Vacancy	12/06/2018	Ordinary Member	Elected Teacher - Primary Munster

[[/debates%20authoring/webattachments.nsf/0/CC4AE1DE76BB5039802582B30052CA17/\\$File/PQ92%20210618.xlsx?openelement](/debates%20authoring/webattachments.nsf/0/CC4AE1DE76BB5039802582B30052CA17/$File/PQ92%20210618.xlsx?openelement)] Board Members - Department of Education and Skills up to 20/06/18]

Schools Building Projects

93. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to correspondence (details supplied) regarding a school building project in Maynooth, County Kildare; the action he is taking to ensure that the project is completed within the original timeline; the progress made to date in appointing a new contractor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27265/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am aware of the correspondence in question and as the Deputy is aware the delivery of the Maynooth Education Campus has been devolved to Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB).

KWETB, their design team and officials from my Department's Planning and Building Unit are working closely to ensure that a new contractor is appointed as quickly as possible to complete both schools. As a result of the liquidation it will not be possible to have the schools completed within the original timeline. I understand that an eTenders notice will be published early

next week seeking expressions of interest from contractors wishing to be considered for the completion of the project. Work is also on-going on the identification of all outstanding works necessary to complete both schools.

Schools Complaints Procedures

94. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if complaints received directly by him from a parent or a pupil of grievous bodily harm in a school setting are dealt with by him; if not, if they are only dealt with in cases in which the complaint is referred by the board of management of the school; his views on whether this is acceptable in view of the serious nature of the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27273/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Statutory responsibility for child protection lies with the Child and Family Agency.

My Department has no role in assessing or investigating allegations of harm against children, or any other child protection concerns. Its role is to refer any allegations it receives to the appropriate authorities and to do so without making judgment on same.

Whereas my Department provides funding and policy direction for schools, my Department does not have the power to instruct schools to follow a particular course of action with regard to allegations or other complaints. In dealing with complaints, the Department's role is to provide advice to parents and students on the operation of schools' complaints procedures and to clarify for parents and pupils how grievances and complaints against schools can be progressed.

If the Deputy, or any other person, has a child protection concern regarding a school it should be reported to the Child and Family Agency.

The Deputy will appreciate that I cannot comment on individual cases.

School Staff

95. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if matters raised in correspondence by persons (details supplied) will receive a reply. [27277/18]

102. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the issue of teaching principal release days and the way in which they are calculated will be prioritised in budget 2019; if he will liaise with an organisation (details supplied) on this and related matters; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27363/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 95 and 102 together.

Recently published Circular - 40/2018 is available on the Department's website, which outlines the number of days that teaching principals may take as release time in a school year in order to assist them fulfilling their principal duties. Under these arrangements my Department pays for a substitute teacher to be employed by a school to facilitate administrative functions to be undertaken by the teaching principal.

Building on measures in previous budgets to enhance school leadership, Budget 2018 made €0.4 million available to fund almost 4600 additional release days for teaching principals in

primary schools. This additional funding will see an increase in the number of release days available to teaching principals in the 2018/19 school year to 17, 23 or 29 days depending on the size of the school.

Budget 2017 allowed for the commencement of restoration of middle management posts as part of an agreed distributed leadership model and meant lifting the rigidity of the long-standing moratorium on these posts at primary and post-primary levels. This recognises the key role school leadership has in promoting a school environment which is welcoming, inclusive and accountable.

€2.75m was allocated in Budget 2017 to restore middle management positions i.e. the equivalent of approximately 1,300 middle management posts (Assistant Principal I and Assistant Principal II) at both Primary and Post-Primary. (2,600 in total)

Circular 63/2017 was issued by my Department in September 2017 which sets out a leadership and management framework for posts in recognised primary schools. Flexibility in identifying and prioritising the evolving leadership and management needs of the school, and in assigning and re-assigning post holders to specific roles and responsibilities to meet the evolving needs of a school, is an essential feature of this school leadership model.

While the Principal is ultimately responsible to the Board of Management for the management and leadership of the school, the Deputy Principal occupies a position of vital importance within the senior leadership team in each school. The Deputy Principal co-operates with the Principal in the fulfilment of the Principal's role and acts or deputises as the Principal in the Principal's absence.

In relation to the duties assigned to Assistant Principal posts, the Principal following consultation with staff, agree the schedule of duties as best meet the needs of the school. These duties are designed to reduce the workload of the Principal.

The selection and recruitment process is well under way in most of our primary schools and the majority of these new middle management posts will be filled in the current school year, including schools where the Principal is a "Teaching Principal".

I recently announced an extension to the arrangements for schools with teaching principals to cluster their release days into full-time posts, with one teacher covering the release days of all the schools in the cluster. Up to 50 principal release cluster posts will be put in place for the 2018/19 school year. This measure will assist teaching principals to more effectively plan their release days for the benefit of the school.

The Teacher Allocation section of my Department are currently processing these applications and schools are being notified as the cluster posts are approved.

Any additional increase in the number of release days will be considered as part of the next annual budgetary process alongside the many other demands from the education sector.

Minor Works Scheme

96. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to put the minor works grant on an annual footing with greater certainty on timing to provide clarity for schools that rely on it as an important source of finance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27289/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Minor Works Grant was introduced in 1997 and since then has issued to primary schools each school year with the exception of the 2012/2013 school year. The payment of the Minor Works Grant is not confined to any particular date and can be issued during any month of the school year. For the 2002/2003 school year, part of the grant was paid in May 2003, with the balance in October 2003. The grant in respect of the 2017/2018 school year issued in December 2017.

It is intended that the Minor Works Grant in respect of the 2018/2019 school year will issue no later than January 2019.

My Department recognises the importance of the Minor Works Grant to primary schools. The National Development Plan 2018-2027 signals a gradual ramping up in capital expenditure in the schools sector over the coming years. In that context, and as part of our longer term infra-structural planning, my Department would intend to put the Minor Works Grant on an annual footing and to provide greater certainty to schools on the timing of payments.

Capitation Grants

97. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the level of the capitation grant for schools will be reviewed to ensure its restoration to pre-cut levels; his plans to further increase the grant to ensure it meets the increasing financial demands facing schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27295/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I recognise the need to improve capitation funding for schools having regard to the reductions that were necessary over recent years.

Restoring capitation funding as resources permit is one of the actions included in the Action Plan for Education.

Budget 2018 marked the second year of major reinvestment in the education sector, as we continue to implement the Action Plan for Education, which has the central aim to make the Irish Education and Training service the best in Europe within a decade. In 2018, the budget for the Department of Education increased by €554 million to over €10 billion. Through budget 2017 and Budget 2018, we are now investing €1 billion more in education.

The process is underway for restoring grant funding that is used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff. The ancillary grant was increased by €6 in 2016, €5 in 2017 and €5 in 2018, in order to enable primary schools to implement the arbitration salary increase for grant funded school secretaries and caretakers and to also implement the restoration of salary for cleaners arising from the unwinding of FEMPI legislation.

Third Level Fees

98. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if matters raised in correspondence by a person (details supplied) in relation to student fees and the impact of Brexit will receive a response; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27297/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Students who qualify for entry to the Graduate Entry Medicine (GEM) programme are liable for the cost of their tuition fees as they already hold an undergraduate qualification. However, the costs for EU students are partly subsidised by the State through a grant provided by the Higher Education Authority.

21 June 2018

My Department does not provide free fees or core funding for post-graduate programmes. The criteria governing the level of tuition fees to be charged in the case of **postgraduate** study is solely a matter for each of the higher education institutions to determine in accordance with its own criteria as an autonomous body.

Following the UK triggering Article 50 of the Treaty in March 2017 and the ongoing negotiations, my Department has confirmed that eligible UK students who enrol for eligible **undergraduate** courses for the 2018/19 academic year in a third level college recognised for the purposes of free fees will be able to avail of the Department's Free Fee Schemes. Arrangements for an intake of such students for subsequent years will be kept under review in the context of the Brexit negotiations.

My Department does provide supports for post graduate students who meet the relevant qualifying conditions (including residency and nationality) of the Student Grant Scheme and provides additional assistance through measures such as the Student Assistance Fund (SAF) and relevant details are available on *www.susi.ie* and the website of the HEA (*www.HEA.ie*).

However, I would recommend that the student in question makes contact with UCC in the first instance to determine its policy in relation to tuition fees and entry requirements for Graduate Entry Medicine for the 2019 academic year.

Schools Amalgamation

99. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of secondary and national school mergers and amalgamations since 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27301/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that 140 primary schools amalgamated to form 69 new primary schools between 2008 and 2017.

I can also advise that, in the same period, 37 post primary schools amalgamated to form 16 new post primary schools.

Schools Building Projects Status

100. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a school building project (details supplied); when the building works are likely to commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27334/18]

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 have informed the Department that it experienced delays in securing the Fire Safety Cert and the Disability Access Cert. A decision on these applications had been expected from Louth County Council in December 2017. A decision on the FSC and DAC were finally granted on the 10th and 12th April 2018 respectively.

The Design Team have confirmed that they are currently working on finalising the Stage 2b report and expect to be in a position to submit this report to my Department, through the Board

of Management in October 2018.

Upon receipt and review of this report my Department will revert to Board of Management with regard to the further progression of the project at that time.

Student Support Schemes

101. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the correct procedure to be followed by a person (details supplied) who wishes to transfer college after suffering a physical assault in their current institution and who has already completed two years of study; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27339/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Higher education institutions are autonomous bodies and therefore the day to day operations including the transfer of students from college to college is a matter for the Governing Authority of each institution.

Student services and associated activities are an integral part of the whole student experience at each higher education Institute. Each Institute provides a range of student and support services. Student services support each individual student achieve his/her intellectual, cultural and social potential while supporting and complementing the formal academic programme. Student services can fall under a number of headings which includes 'Welfare and Guidance'.

While my Department has no function in relation to the transfer of students between institutions, I would advise the student in question to contact the Student Services Offices at their institute in the first instance in order to establish what options or assistance is available.

Question No. 102 answered with Question No. 95.

Court Accommodation Refurbishment

103. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when works will commence on a project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27166/18]

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

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that they are aware that the railings surrounding Carlow Court-house are in poor condition and are committed to their full restoration at the earliest possible date. Restoring the railings is a significant and complex task requiring specialist conservation and iron-working expertise. The Courts Service does not have this expertise itself and is reliant on OPW resources to undertake and manage the task on its behalf.

The restoration work will be undertaken in phases. The first phase of the restoration will see 10 sections repaired and will be subject to a competitive OPW tendering process. A great deal of background work has been undertaken by the OPW to date including technical appraisals, experimental repairs, exploratory works and specification of repair methodologies. The OPW is at present finalizing the tender documentation for the restoration of the initial 10 sections. Subject to a satisfactory tender process it is anticipated that work will commence during the Au-

turn. The cost of restoring the initial 10 sections will be determined by the tendering process however the Courts Service has approved funding to cover this anticipated cost.

The first phase will inform how future phases of the project can be undertaken and will give an indication of the likely cost of restoring all sections of railings. It is anticipated that restoring all sections will take a number of years.

Prison Committals

104. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason for the daily increase in numbers incarcerated at Cloverhill Prison from 337 on 15 June 2017 to 424 on 15 June 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27138/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy, that in the past 12 months, the Irish Prison Service has experienced an increase in the numbers of people committed to all committal prisons in the country. As Cloverhill Prison is the primary remand prison for the Leinster area, it has been affected more significantly in terms of committals in the past year.

Prison Governors are, by law, required to admit into custody all prisoners committed to prison by the Courts. The Irish Prison Service therefore has no control over the numbers committed to custody in any given year.

Prisoner Data

105. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners at Cloverhill Prison sleeping on the floor in April, May and June 2018, in tabular form. [27139/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to inform the Deputy that it has not been possible in the timeframe available to collate the information sought, as this entails a manual check of the individual records for each month. I will revert to the Deputy as soon as this information has been compiled.

Personal Insolvency Act

106. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to act on the recommendations made by the Insolvency Service of Ireland as part of its section 141 consultation submission made in June 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27200/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department is currently finalising the section 141 review of Part 3 of the Personal Insolvency Acts. Part 3 is the core of the personal insolvency legislation, dealing with the operation in practice of the three personal insolvency mechanisms – Debt Relief Notices, Debt Settlement Arrangements, and Personal Insolvency Arrangements. This review also responds to the commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government to review personal insolvency thresholds and processes, including for small to medium enterprises.

In practice, the insolvency legislation has already been extensively reviewed and developed

since 2012. Key reforms already introduced include the section 115A court review process (which removed the so-called ‘bank veto’) and the Abhaile Mortgage Arrears Resolution Service (which in effect ensures that borrowers at risk of losing their homes due to mortgage arrears can access free independent expert financial and legal advice to get solutions into place).

Nevertheless, we have always said that we will keep this important legislation under review, and will take any further action needed to ensure that it operates effectively.

My officials have completed extensive work on the review, which included a public consultation launched last year. A range of detailed submissions was received and these have been carefully analysed. Furthermore, a number of additional issues and concerns emerged in recent months, following the closing date for the receipt of submissions. In light of these emerging issues, the timeframe for the review was extended to allow these to be taken into account.

The Insolvency Service of Ireland was among the organisations that made a submission to the public consultation. Given the ISI’s statutory role in monitoring the personal insolvency system and advising me on matters related to their functions, their suggestions are particularly important for the purposes of the review. Their submission highlighted a variety of areas where the ISI believes that legislative amendments may be beneficial. These suggestions are being considered as part of the review. Subsequent discussions with the ISI have also highlighted additional possible changes to the Personal Insolvency Act.

The Consultative Forum, which was established by the ISI and consists of a variety of stakeholders involved in the personal insolvency context including both debtor and creditor representatives, also made a submission to the review. This submission reveals a strong level of consensus amongst both debtors and creditors in relation to streamlining the personal insolvency process. In addition, the submissions received have suggested measures to extend access to personal insolvency options to a wider cohort of borrower and to encourage more constructive engagement with the legislation by both creditors and debtors so that the agreement of sustainable statutory personal insolvency options can be accelerated. All of these recommendations are under consideration.

I expect to receive a report from my officials on the review in the coming weeks. In consultation with the Minister for Finance, I expect shortly afterwards to bring proposals to Government to address the review’s recommendations, including proposals for legislative change.

State Bodies Data

107. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of positions on the board in respect of the board of agencies and commercial State companies under his Department’s aegis in tabular form; the quorum required for a board meeting; the number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date; the length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27224/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): In respect of the Deputy’s question please find the following table which outlines the number of positions on the board of agencies and commercial State companies under my Department’s aegis, the quorum required for a board meeting, the number of current ministerial appointee vacancies on the board and the length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been vacant.

In respect of the Deputy’s question please find the enclosed table which outlines the number of positions on the board of agencies and commercial State companies under my Department’s

aegis, the quorum required for a board meeting, the number of current ministerial appointee vacancies on the board and the length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been vacant.

Name of Board	Number of Positions on Board	Quorum required for Board Meeting	Number of current Ministerial Appointee Vacancies on the Board	Length of time Ministerial Appointee Vacancy has been Vacant
Courts Service Board	18	7 or more (See Section 14 of the Courts Service Act 1998)	2	Approx. 7 months
Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission	3	2	N/A	N/A
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission	Currently 15. The Commission shall consist of not more than 15 and not less than 12 members.	5, or such other number, not being less than 5 as the Commission may determine.	N/A	N/A
Legal Aid Board	13 including chair	5	0	N/A
National Disability Authority	13	7	0	N/A
Policing Authority	9	5	N/A	11 months
Private Security Authority	11	4	0	N/A
Private Security Appeal Board	6	3	N/A	N/A
Property Services Regulatory Authority	11 (1 Chair, 10 Ordinary Members)	4	0	N/A
Property Services Appeal Board	5 (1 Chair, 4 Ordinary Members)	3	N/A	N/A
Censorship of Publications Board	5 (1 Chair, 4 Ordinary Members)	Quorum not specified in legislation.	1	3 months
Classification of Films Appeal Board	9 (1 Chair, 8 Ordinary Members)	Quorum of 3 members required, 5 for re-hearing.	2	19 months 13 months

In addition the Censorship of Publications Appeal Board currently has no members appointed to it and this has been the case for some years.

Garda Reform

108. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the €28.6 million allocated to Garda reform as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27246/18]

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.

The Deputy will be aware that as part of the Five Year Reform and High-level Workforce Plan for An Garda Síochána, the Government has agreed an overall vision for a Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 to include 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Garda Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. To support this, Budget 2018 included provision of €28.6m for Garda Reform to support the continued provision of policing services in 2018 as well as the implementation of Garda reform including resources for the Policing Authority. Predominantly, this allocation will support the recruitment of up to a further 500 civilian staff and 800 trainee Gardaí this year. Further significant funding to support the reform programme is embedded across the overall Garda budget of approximately €1.65 billion for 2018.

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 by 2021 will require some 2,400 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis for the years 2018 to 2021. Already in 2018, 400 new recruits have entered the Garda College and a further 400 will begin their training before the end of the year. This recruitment is in addition to the just under 2,000 new recruits who have attested as members of An Garda Síochána, including 404 attestations in 2018, and who have been assigned to mainstream duties around the country since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. It is anticipated that Garda numbers, taking account of retirements, at year end will amount to approximately 14,000.

Civilianisation is a key element of the reform programme that is being pursued by An Garda Síochána. The projected 4,000 civilians represents a medium-term target of 20% of the Garda full-time workforce comprised of civilians. Real, tangible progress is being made in relation to civilianisation. To date under the reform programme, 292 new civilian positions have been sanctioned, the bulk of which were to address critical skills gaps and capacity issues with a proportion sanctioned to make a start on the redeployment of Gardaí to policing duties. I am informed by the Commissioner that there were 2,289 civilians undertaking administrative and technical duties within An Garda Síochána as of 30 April 2018.

This target of 4,000 civilians by 2021 will be achieved through a twin-track approach of firstly, a “civilian by default” policy to be adopted in relation to the filling of all new posts other than operational policing posts and for non-operational policing posts that become vacant and, secondly, the redeployment of Gardaí to policing roles where their skills can be used to best effect with the backfilling of these roles by suitably qualified civilians where necessary. The Garda Inspectorate identified some 1,500 posts held by Gardaí that could be examined for suitability for civilian staff.

Data Retention

109. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the €4 million allocated to protecting the security of the State as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27247/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The European Union Passenger Name Record (PNR) Directive establishes a common legal framework for the processing and transfer of PNR data to assist in the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences and serious crime. Member States were required to bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with the Directive by 25 May 2018.

The Directive requires carriers to provide Member States' authorities with PNR data in respect of flights entering or departing the EU (known as extra-EU flights). The Directive provides that Member States may, on a non-mandatory basis, require carriers to collect PNR data in respect of flights operating within the EU (intra-EU flights). The Directive requires each Member State to establish a Passenger Information Unit (PIU) which will receive the PNR data from carriers and exchange data and processing results with other Member States and with Europol.

The PNR Directive has been transposed into Irish law with effect from 25 May by the EU (PNR Data) Regulations 2018. As a result, the Irish PIU has been formally established and the processing of passenger data has commenced. Passenger screening using PNR data is being introduced on a phased basis. Firstly, the non-discretionary aspects of the Directive (i.e., screening extra EU flights) have been transposed by way of the Regulations referred to above. Secondly, primary legislation will be introduced in due course to provide for screening intra EU flights.

Up to 31 May 2018, circa €200,000 has been expended in relation to the IPIU, primarily in relation to office equipment, office premises and establishment and configuration of ICT systems. In addition, a Principal Officer and two Assistant Principals Officers have been assigned to the unit. It is too early at this stage to provide accurate end of year out-turn expenditure figures. However, I can say that I will ensure that the IPIU receives the funding necessary to fulfil its responsibilities under Irish and EU law.

Data Protection Commissioner

110. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the €4 million allocated to regulatory functions and the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27248/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): In Budget 2018 the Data Protection Commission (DPC) was allocated an increase of just over €4m on the DPC's 2017 total allocation of €7.5m.

This increase is being used by the DPC to continue to build capacity and capability within the organisation to enable it to effectively perform its expanded regulatory functions and more prominent international role under the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the new Data Protection Act 2018.

Total expenditure to end May 2018 is approximately €2.8m. Expenditure for the rest of the year is expected to increase with the recruitment of additional expert staff, including legal, technology, investigations and data protection specialists.

Additional funding is also being dedicated to a number of important projects such as a major programme of public GDPR awareness and to the redesign and enhancement of the DPC's business processes, systems and structures in light of the requirements of the GDPR.

Assisted Decision Making

111. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the €3 million allocated to assisted decision making as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27249/18]

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

New administrative processes and support measures, including the setting up of the Decision Support Service within the Mental Health Commission (a body under the Department of Health), must be put in place before the substantive provisions of the Act can be commenced. A high-level Steering Group comprised of senior officials from the Department of Justice and Equality, the Department of Health, the Mental Health Commission and the Courts Service, together with the Director of the Decision Support Service, is overseeing the establishment and commissioning of the Decision Support Service and this work is ongoing. Ms Áine Flynn was appointed Director of the Decision Support Service on 2 October 2017.

The Director is working in a very determined way to get the necessary staff resources, processes, IT system, expert panels, codes of practice and regulations in place in order that the Decision Support Service can be up and running as quickly as possible. There are many complex strands to this work, including involvement of multiple organisations. Every effort is underway to ensure that the Decision Support Service has all necessary capacity to open for business as soon as possible.

The Mental Health Commission has recently engaged the consultancy firm BearingPoint to support the development of a detailed, costed plan to establish a fully operational Decision Support Service. The contract also includes ongoing project management support for the design and establishment of the organisation, business processes, IT systems and risk management framework.

The 2018 Budget provided for an allocation of €3 million for the Decision Support Service in a new subhead D. 10 of the Justice and Equality Vote. Funds from this subhead are released by my Department to the Mental Health Commission on foot of written drawdown requests from the MHC.

I am advised by the Mental Health Commission that €242,934 has been spent on the establishment of the Decision Support Service so far in 2018, with further expenditure of €149,004 expected before the end of June, which comes to a total amount of €391,938 by end-June. This can be broken down as follows:

Staff costs: €116,314

Rent: €91,668

General expenses: €3,571

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Legal, finance and compliance: €17,733

Project management/Business advisory: €161,976

ICT: €676

As the plans towards the establishment of the Decision Support Service progress during the rest of the year and additional full-time staff are recruited, it is expected that the expenditure rate will accelerate significantly.

Coroners Service

112. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the €2 million allocated to the Coroner Service as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27250/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The budget allocation for the Coroner Service, as set out in the Revised Estimates for 2018, is €2.802 million and it includes €2 million in additional funding in respect of the transfer of responsibility for the Dublin Coroner Service from Dublin City Council.

The expenditure to the end of May 2018 for the Coroner Service subhead is €840,000 and is comprised of payroll expenditure of €308,000 and non-pay costs of €532,000.

Courts Service

113. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the €1.5 million allocated to courts reform as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27251/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service which is independent in exercising its functions.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that additional funding of €1.5 million, which represents a 1.9% increase on 2017 funding, was provided to the Courts Service in 2018. The additional funding provided in 2018 forms part of the overall Courts Service budget and it is not possible to isolate expenditure as directly attributable to the additional €1.5 million allocated.

The Courts Service has advised that given the demands for funding it was necessary to spread the additional allocation across a range of existing programmes and also to support the day to day operation of the courts. Programmes supported by the additional funding include Change Management (supporting the implementation of a range of reform projects), Learning and Development (including technical/legal skills training), Business Support and support for the implementation of Government legislative initiatives including the establishment of the new Assisted Decision Making Regime under the Assisted Decision Making Act 2015 and the establishment of the Legal Costs Adjudicators Office under the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015.

A significant element (€1 million) of the additional funding has been targeted at planned maintenance of the large number of court buildings around the country as well as at a comprehensive survey of all court buildings to be carried out during 2018.

Refugee Resettlement Programme

114. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the model for resettlement being delivered by the Irish Refugee Protection Programme in the various counties in which it is operational in terms of the number of persons included in a programme; the staffing in terms of refugee resettlement workers and intercultural workers on a programme; and the length of time the programme is in place. [27290/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): As the Deputy will be aware, the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI) is the primary entity within my Department responsible for resettling refugees. It has overseen the humanitarian resettlement programmes run by Ireland since they were established in 2000. The Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) was subsequently established in September 2015 and is now part of the OPMI.

The model for resettlement being used by the IRPP is identical to the model used by the OPMI in resettlements prior to the establishment of the IRPP. This has three broad phases:

1. Overseas selection missions in collaboration with the UNHCR.
2. Placement of refugees in Emergency Response and Orientation Centres (EROCs) for the purposes of acclimatisation, orientation, etc.
3. Settlement in communities in local authority areas, coordinated by an inter-agency working group chaired by the relevant local authority, with refugees supported by an “implementing partner” procured by the local authority. The funding for the implementing partner is provided by the IRPP and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), both under the auspices of my Department. Local Authorities play a critical role in ensuring the success of each resettlement through the procuring of a suitable implementing partner with expertise in community integration and relevant supports.

The implementation of the resettlement programme requires a high level of coordination among service delivery agencies at both national and local level. Service provision is mainstreamed and all the main statutory service providers such as Government departments, the HSE, Tusla and Local Authorities are represented on the national Taskforce which oversees delivery of the programme. The programme is coordinated overall by the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) but service provision remains the responsibility of the relevant statutory entity.

Once resettled, the implementing partner provides appropriate services for a period of twelve to eighteen months to assist with integration. The standard model is now focussed on an eighteen month period.

The following tables show the position in the counties in which resettlement programmes are underway. As the Deputy will appreciate, the numbers reflect the fact that the programme is a work in progress, with further resettlements planned and personnel yet to be recruited. Some counties will be resettling further refugees as their overall allocation is higher than their initial allocation.

Persons Included in the Resettlement Programme:

County	Initial Agreed Allocation	Persons Resettled
Galway	90	94
Mayo	100	134
Cork	120	116
Clare	100	89
Limerick	100	84
Kerry	120	97
Leitrim	50	60
Longford	60	0
Carlow	80	16
Roscommon	90	5
Sligo	99	73
Westmeath	140	59
Kilkenny	140	49
Donegal	150	77
Wexford	210	196
Meath	160	33
Monaghan	90	55
Waterford	100	93

Staffing Levels:

County	Resettlement Workers: Agreed Number	Resettlement Workers Employed	Intercultural-Support Workers: Agreed Number	Intercultural-Support Workers: Employed
Galway	2	2	1	1
Mayo	1	1	0.5	0.5
Cork	1	1	0	0
Clare	2	2	1	1
Limerick	1	2	0	0
Kerry	1	1	1	1
Leitrim	1	2	0	0
Longford	1	0	1	0
Carlow	1	1	1	1
Roscommon	1	1	1	0
Sligo	1	1	1	1
Westmeath	1	1	0.5	0.5
Kilkenny	1	1	1	1
Donegal	2	2	1	1
Wexford	1	2	1	2
Meath	1	1	1	1
Monaghan	1	1	1	1
Waterford	1	1	1	1

Refugee Resettlement Programme

115. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an evaluation of the Irish Refugee protection programme on the ground has been undertaken in the counties in which resettlement has taken place or is taking place; if not, if there are plans to do so; and if so, the way in which the work is procured. [27291/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): As the Deputy is aware, the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) commenced in September 2015 with the first significant tranche of protection applicants only arriving in Ireland under in June 2016, due largely to delays in the establishment of hotspots and related arrangements overseas by the beneficiary States. Large scale resettlements in counties therefore only began in March 2017. It is too early to undertake an evaluation of the current resettlement programme as the resettlement process has not been underway for sufficiently long and the Programme remains in a heavily operational phase.

The IRPP constantly re-evaluates its operations and fine-tunes elements of the Programme as required. The Deputy should be aware that a provisional analysis of previous resettlements, prior to the establishment of the IRPP, is now underway. These resettlements employed the same model as currently used by the IRPP. This evaluation is in the early stages and is being undertaken on a contract basis.

Once this process has been concluded, which should be by the end of 2018, a determination will be made on future steps including the scope of any further evaluation process and how this might best be undertaken.

Garda Data

116. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of assaults perpetrated against members of An Garda Síochána in the course of their duties in each of the past ten years; the number of successful prosecutions for such assaults in the same period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27296/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have requested a report from the Garda authorities in relation to this matter and I will contact the Deputy directly when the report is to hand.

Immigration Status

117. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the residency status in the case of a person (details supplied) who wishes to become an Irish citizen; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27335/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, entitlement to Irish citizenship is governed by the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. The Act provides that if either of a child’s parents was, at the time of that child’s birth, an Irish citizen, that child is an Irish citizen irrespective of the place of birth.

Section 6A of the Act also provides that a child born in the island of Ireland on or after 1 January 2005 has an entitlement to Irish citizenship if, at the time of the birth of the child, one of his or her parents had, during the period of 4 years immediately preceding the person’s birth,

been resident in the island of Ireland for a period of not less than 3 years or periods the aggregate of which is not less than 3 years. Periods of unlawful residence, periods of residence which were for the sole purpose of having an application for refugee status determined or periods of residence where permission was granted for the purposes of study are excluded under the Act from the determination of periods of reckonable residence.

Where a child born in the State did not at birth have an entitlement to Irish citizenship, the parent or guardian or person who is in loco parentis to the child may lodge an application for naturalisation on behalf of the child if and when the conditions for naturalisation are satisfied, including a requirement to have 5 years residence in the State. Detailed information on citizenship and the naturalisation process, including the relevant application forms, is available on the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) website at 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 INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Residency Permits

118. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the eligibility for upgrade of stamp 4 in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27336/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned was granted residence permission and a right to work based on parentage of an Irish citizen child on 12 January 2016. The permission was subsequently renewed by the INIS until 08 July 2018. Documentary evidence has been sought from the person concerned and the application will be considered further on receipt of same.

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.

Immigration Status

119. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the residency status in the case of a person (details supplied) who has submitted representations pursuant to section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 as amended outlining their case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27337/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that, in response to a notification pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), written representations have been submitted on behalf of the person concerned.

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

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

Citizenship Applications

120. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedure to be followed in the case of a person (details supplied) who wishes to become an Irish citizen; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27338/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that, in response to a notification pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned has not submitted written representations.

The position in the State of the person concerned will now be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation. If any representations are submitted, they will be considered before a final decision is made.

The Deputy may wish to note that as the person concerned has no current right of residency in the State, he would not be in a position to meet the lawful residency criteria applicable to persons applying to my Department for a Certificate of Naturalisation.

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

Naturalisation Applications

121. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of an application for naturalisation in the case of persons (details supplied); if all required details in this case have been received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27340/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the processing of the applications for a certificate of naturalisation from the persons referred to by the Deputy, is on-going. On completion of the necessary processing the applications will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a

privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements, not only within the State but also at European Union level, and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

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.

Immigration Status

122. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the residency status in the case of a person (details supplied) in view of the fact that they have been signing on at their local Garda station for three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27344/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order made on 16 December 2010. That order remains valid and in place.

In relation to the Deportation Order, the Deputy might wish to note that the person concerned made a request, pursuant to the provisions of section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), to have that order revoked. Following the detailed consideration of the request made, a decision was taken to affirm the order and that decision was communicated to the person concerned by letter dated 16 June 2017.

The person concerned then lodged judicial review proceedings in the High Court, challenging the decision to affirm the Deportation Order. The High Court gave its Judgment in the matter on 23 January 2018. While the High Court did not set aside the decision to affirm the Deportation Order, the presiding Judge instead directed that certain specified matters be re-examined by my Department. I am advised that this judgment is being examined by the relevant personnel in the INIS at the present time to see how the Judge's directions can be accommodated. That process has not yet been completed.

I am also advised that, separately, the person concerned has sought to be re-admitted to the international protection process. This request is under consideration at present. The Deputy might wish to note that the decision to ensue from the consideration of this request will be to grant or refuse consent to re-apply for international protection. Written notification of this decision will issue shortly to the person concerned.

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

The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Brexit Issues

123. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the contingencies and supports in place to safeguard Irish SMEs and export businesses from a hard Brexit scenario; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27128/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Brexit presents the most significant economic challenge of the past 50 years for businesses in all parts of the country, and my Department and its agencies are working hard to ensure that potentially impacted firms are taking the necessary steps to prepare and mitigate risks and to take advantage of potential opportunities.

I am confident that the agencies under my remit have the supports available to enable companies to consolidate market share within the UK, and also to become more resilient by broadening their sales to other international markets. Enterprise Ireland (EI) and the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are actively supporting their clients to achieve this. My Department provided for additional monies in 2017 to enable EI and the LEOs to ramp up supports in light of Brexit to drive improvements in:

- productivity,
- innovation,
- management capability and leadership skills.

Enterprise Ireland has launched several initiatives in response to Brexit, including:

- **Brexit Scorecard:** This interactive online platform can be used by all Irish companies to self-assess their exposure to Brexit under six business pillars. Based on answers supplied by the user, the Scorecard generates an immediate report which contains suggested actions and resources, and information on events for companies to attend, to prepare for Brexit.

- **Be Prepared Grant:** This grant offers SMEs a grant of up to €5,000 to assist them in preparing an action plan for economic shocks such as Brexit. The grant can be used to help cover consultancy, travel and travel expenses associated with researching the direction of their action plan.

- **Brexit Advisory Clinics:** Enterprise Ireland held four Brexit Advisory Clinics over the past few months in Portlaoise, Mayo, Cavan, Cork and today in Dublin's Aviva Stadium. The purpose of these Clinics is to support companies affected by Brexit to take immediate action to address their exposure.

- **Brexit 'Act On' Programme:** This funding is to support the engagement of a consultant to draw up a report with tailored recommendations to help clients address weaknesses and become more resilient.

In addition, EI is implementing extensive trade mission and event schedules focussed on global and sectoral opportunities, further developing in-market expertise and networks, placing greater focus on identifying new sectoral opportunities and stimulating demand for Irish products and services through international marketing campaigns. In 2017, EI launched a new Eurozone Strategy to increase exports to Eurozone countries by 50% by 2020.

The 31 LEOs nationwide are assisting clients with a suite of supports which includes information, training and mentoring on Brexit related issues as well as advice on other sources of support.

InterTrade Ireland (ITI), has also been very active in assisting businesses address the challenges that Brexit may present for future cross-border commerce. A series of information and awareness raising events have been underway in towns across both North and South over recent months. ITI is also rolling out a 'Start to Plan' readiness voucher scheme, which enables companies to purchase specialist advice in areas such as customs, tax, tariff and non-tariff barriers, legal and labour mobility issues.

Other initiatives that my Department are advancing include the €300 million Brexit Loan Scheme, under which accessible finance is made available to businesses at favourable terms. I recently launched the second call of the Regional Enterprise Development Fund, which is aimed at supporting the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative projects that can sustain and add to employment at a national, regional and county level. Twenty-one successful applicants representing all regions of the country have secured up to €30.5m for their projects in the first competitive call.

The work of my Department is focused on supporting businesses throughout the country to withstand current challenges and succeed into the future, therefore I feel that all our efforts will put Ireland in a strong position in the event of a hard Brexit scenario.

Action Plan for Jobs

124. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the key measures in the Action Plan for Jobs 2018 for persons with disabilities. [27129/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Action Plan for Jobs is one of the Government's key instruments to support job creation. The Action Plan for Jobs process has worked well to achieve its primary objective. Since the first Plan was launched in early 2012, there are over 345,000 more people at work. The unemployment rate has fallen from a high of 16 per cent to 5.8 per cent in May 2018.

The four key aims of Action Plan for Jobs 2018 are that:

- Ireland's enterprise base remains successful amid the uncertainty created by Brexit;
- all parts of the country achieve their potential in terms of job creation;
- those entering, re-entering, or in the workforce have the incentives and skills needed to prosper; and
- Ireland's enterprise base remains successful by focusing relentlessly on competitiveness, productivity, and innovation.

The Action Plan for Jobs 2018 reflects the Enterprise 2025 Renewed priorities and also the priorities within other Government strategies that are relevant to job creation, including for people with disabilities, e.g. Pathways to Work Strategy and the Action Plan for Education. Pathways to Work is the main Government initiative encouraging access to the labour market and ultimately participation in employment. It is complemented by the Action Plan for Jobless Households, the National Disability Inclusion Strategy, and the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities.

Under the Action Plan for Jobs 2018, there is a focus on increasing participation in the labour market, including assisting access to work for those who wish to do so, by ensuring they have opportunity to address real or perceived skills deficiencies, whether they are discouraged workers or people with disabilities.

Specific measures in Action Plan for Jobs 2018 include implementing the Pathways to Work Strategy, increasing awareness among employers of the range of services and supports available to maximise take up, and improving information flow on welfare-to-work schemes, targeting employers and inactive people.

There is also a specific action to increase the focus of activation efforts on groups outside the labour force, by:

- reviewing the range of income supports (including in-work supports) for people with disabilities to ensure payments are aligned between schemes and, if appropriate, amend the payment structure to ensure that it supports a return to work for people who wish to do so;
- expanding the use of Intreo Centres as a gateway to engage with people with disabilities and increase the number of Intreo staff trained in the provision of employment supports to people with disability; and
- developing online ready-reckoner tools for people on disability payments to assess the net benefits of returning to work.

Gender Balance

125. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the progress in achieving more gender balance in funded research under Science Foundation Ireland's Agenda 2020 strategy; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27130/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In 2016, Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) published its Gender Strategy for the years 2016-2020. This strategy provides a comprehensive framework for delivering SFI's actions to retain and increase the participation of excellent female researchers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) careers. Since the launch, SFI has moved towards streamlining gender initiatives across all its programmes, with the overarching aim of redressing the gender imbalance amongst SFI award holders.

SFI's Gender Strategy sets out the agency's roadmap to improve the representation and progression of women in all aspects of STEM careers in Ireland:

- Strand 1 of the strategy focuses on gender equality across SFI education and public engagement initiatives, with the aim of increasing the participation and interest of girls in STEM-related activities.
- Strand 2 targets female representation within the SFI funded portfolio and SFI review panels. Concrete measures to achieve these targets are outlined.
- Strand 3 will ensure that gender perspectives are integrated into the research content of SFI funded research programmes.

In 2017, SFI achieved its Agenda 2020 target of making 25% of its awards to female researchers and this target has now been revised upward to 30%. This target has been aided by SFI providing incentives for research bodies to submit applications from female researchers to

various programmes, with a focus on those aligned with early career stage.

The SFI Research Outputs Census 2017 shows that the percentage of female SFI Award Holders Active in 2017 was 28%, up on 25% in 2016 and 21% in 2015. The percentage of female team members (those employed on SFI awards) was 37%, an increase on 35% in 2016, which represents progress towards redressing gender imbalance.

Furthermore, award holders' success rates (2016) shows that female researchers are as competitive as their male counterparts in terms of their SFI funding success rate i.e., 32% across all programmes. However, female researchers within the same cohort (2016) accounted for only 25% of SFI funding applications received.

SFI is also supportive of the Athena SWAN Charter which is the internationally recognised 'quality mark' for gender equality. It was established to encourage and recognise commitment to advancing the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine.

Science Foundation Ireland continues to implement specific grant management policies to deal with the needs of female researchers during periods of maternity and adoptive leave, and will continue to innovate in this regard. The policies being developed and associated outcomes will complement and support the Athena SWAN initiative, whereby the Irish Research Council, Science Foundation Ireland and the Health Research Board will require research bodies to have attained a bronze institutional Athena SWAN award by the end of 2019 and a silver institutional Athena SWAN by the end of 2023, to be eligible for research funding.

In further recognition of the Athena SWAN initiative, Science Foundation Ireland has, under the Starting Investigator Research Grant (SIRG) programme set criteria around addressing gender imbalance. SIRG aims to support excellent postdoctoral researchers and others who are yet to hold an independent research post in taking the initial steps towards a fully independent research career. Research Bodies are permitted to put forward a maximum of 12 candidates. A maximum of six candidates, out of the 12 permitted from each eligible research body, may be male candidates.

Another aspect of Science Foundation Ireland's Gender Strategy is to ensure that gender is integrated as a perspective in all the research Science Foundation Ireland funds, when this is relevant. While this approach was launched for some programmes during 2017, applicants will in future be required to provide a statement articulating the sex/gender variables in their research and will include guidance for applicants and a request for comment from the reviewers.

Finally, further rollout of gender redressing initiatives amongst SFI award holders will include those to address gender imbalance in senior academic roles. Specifically, in order to encourage more applications from excellent female researchers to the SFI Research Professorship Programme, SFI is mandating that for all institutions wishing to nominate candidates to the programme, one of the next two successful Expressions of Interest (i.e., approved by SFI) must be associated with a female candidate, which must then be followed up with the submission of a Full Proposal.

The above detail shows that SFI is proactive in bringing about a sea change on gender equality matters in the field of research and development and I am confident that the initiatives employed by SFI to date will continue to bring further successes in the future.

Skills Shortages

126. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to resolve the issue of the serious shortage of chefs here. [27187/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In March 2017, following a review of the Highly Skilled and Ineligible lists of Employment earlier this year, which included a public consultation, I announced the removal of certain chef grades from the ineligible occupation list. This means that if an employer is unsuccessful in filling a vacancy either domestically or from across the European Economic Area (EEA) it can be filled by a suitably qualified non- EEA national.

The changes to the Employment Permit Regulations, which came into effect from 26th March 2018, involved removing the following chef grades from the ineligible list:

- Executive Chef with minimum of 5 years’ experience at that level
- Head Chef with minimum of 5 years’ experience at that level
- Sous Chef with minimum of 5 years’ experience at that level
- Chef de Partie with minimum of 2 years’ experience at that level

My decision to remove certain chef grades from the ineligible lists will ensure that there is a mechanism to address the shortage of qualified chefs in the short-term. I have applied a quota of 610 employment permits to ensure that in the longer term the demand for chefs is met from a steady supply in the Irish labour market and to that end I am aware of the work that is underway to increase the supply of chefs through training initiatives such as the development of a new Commis Chef Apprenticeship and a Chef de Partie Apprenticeship.

An Interdepartmental Group (IDG), chaired by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, is currently reviewing the economic migration policies underpinning the employment permits system, the purpose of which is to ensure that current policies are fully supportive of Ireland’s emerging labour market needs, be they skills or labour shortages in certain sectors. A full report with recommendations on a framework for the future operation of the employment permits regime is due by the end of June.

State Bodies Data

127. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of positions on the board in respect of the board of agencies and commercial State companies under her Department’s aegis in tabular form; the quorum required for a board meeting; the number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date; the length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27213/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The process for selection of Ministerial appointees to boards of agencies is managed by the Public Appointments Service in accordance with the Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards that is published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The information requested by the Deputy is listed in tabular form.

State Agency/ Commercial State Body	No. of Board Members/Posi- tions:	Quorum re- quired for Board Meeting	No. of Ministe- rial Appointee Vacancies on the board to date	Length of time of Ministe- rial Appointee Vacancy
Design & Crafts Council of Ire- land	12	5	0	n/a
Enterprise Ire- land	12	5	1*	12 months
Health & Safety Authority	12	6	0	n/a
Irish Auditing & Accounting Supervisory Authority	9	3	0	n/a
IDA Ireland	11	3	3**	Since Q1 2018
National Stan- dards Authority of Ireland	13	5	0	n/a
Personal Inju- ries Assessment Board	11	6	1***	2 months
Science Founda- tion Ireland	12	5	0	n/a

* One member retired from the EI Board in mid-2017. Following his retirement, significant consideration has been given to what additional experience and skills would most benefit the EI Board at this time. It is expected that the process for appointing a new board member will be concluded by the end of Q3 2018.

** Two of these vacancies will shortly be filled as the Minister has informed the Public Appointment Service of her decision on the successful applicants and a formal process to appoint these members to the Board is underway

*** A process is currently underway with the Public Appointments Service to fill this vacancy

Brexit Data

128. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of companies that have completed the Brexit scorecard to date since it was established (details supplied) by company size in tabular form. [27318/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): To be resilient to economic shocks, such as Brexit, Irish exporting companies need to be innovative, competitive and have a diversified global footprint. Enterprise Ireland's focus for 2018 is to help client companies build on the strength of their 2017 performance by putting an increased emphasis on market diversification, driving innovation and competitiveness.

In addition to the agency's increased focus on market diversification, innovation and competitiveness, Enterprise Ireland (EI) is undertaking a programme to promote companies' aware-

ness of and level of preparedness for Brexit which to date has included the launch and development of a Brexit SME Scorecard, an interactive online platform which can be used by all Irish companies, both clients of EI and non-clients, to self-assess their exposure to Brexit under six business pillars. There have been 2311 engagements on the scorecard to date.

The following table presents a breakdown of companies that have engaged with a Brexit Scorecard by company size:

Total Engaged With Scorecard	2311
Number of Employees	Number of Companies
<10 (Micro)	738
10 to 49 (Small)	548
50 to 150 (Medium)	215
151 to 249 (Medium)	71
>250 (Larger than SME)	110
Blanks (Where company sized not marked)	629

Enterprise Ireland Data

129. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of Enterprise Ireland exporting client companies that have availed of be prepared grants to date by county in tabular form. [27319/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): To be resilient to economic shocks, such as Brexit, Irish exporting companies need to be innovative, competitive and have a diversified global footprint. Enterprise Ireland's focus for 2018 is to help client companies build on the strength of their 2017 performance by putting an increased emphasis on market diversification, driving innovation and competitiveness.

In addition to the agency's increased focus on market diversification, innovation and competitiveness, Enterprise Ireland is undertaking a programme to promote companies' awareness of and level of preparedness for Brexit.

Enterprise Ireland's Be Prepared Grant supports the costs of SME clients in preparing a plan to mitigate risks and optimise opportunities arising from Brexit. This grant support, of up to €5,000, can be used to help cover consultancy, travel and out of pocket expenses associated with researching the direction of their Brexit action plan. To date, 112 companies have been approved for support under this initiative, as sorted by county in the following table:

County	No of Approvals
Carlow	5
Cavan	5
Clare	5
Cork	7
Dublin	52
Galway	7
Kerry	5
Kildare	6
Kilkenny	5
Laois	5

County	No of Approvals
Limerick	□5
Louth	□5
Mayo	□5
Meath	□5
Monaghan	□5
Sligo	□5
Tipperary South	□5
Westmeath	□5
Wexford	□5
Wicklow	6
Waterford	□5
Grand Total	112

Please note numbers for counties with less than 5 Be Prepared Grants cannot be provided to protect the identity of client companies.

It is important to highlight that the level of uptake of Enterprise Ireland Brexit supports is in line with the range of Enterprise Ireland supports that exist to help companies plan for both the opportunities and risks that Brexit poses. In that context, Enterprise Ireland provides a range of financial and non-financial supports to companies to support this, including the recently launched Market Discovery Fund and the Agile Innovation Fund.

Brexit Data

130. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of Brexit readiness vouchers from InterTradeIreland that have been availed of since being established by county; and the total value of such vouchers in tabular form. [27320/18]

131. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of companies that have sought help via the Brexit advisory service of InterTradeIreland since the UK referendum to leave the EU in June 2016. [27321/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 130 and 131 together.

As part of its Brexit Advisory Service, InterTrade Ireland offers vouchers which enable companies to get professional advice in relation to Brexit matters. This support can help businesses obtain advice on specific issues such as tariffs, currency management, regulatory and customs issues and movement of labour, good and services. InterTrade Ireland offers 100% financial support up to £2000/€2000 (inclusive of VAT) towards this professional advice in relation to Brexit matters. To date 281 “Brexit Start to Plan” vouchers from InterTrade Ireland have been approved and there are another 135 pending. Details by ROI county are given in the following table.

A total of 3,016 companies have availed of the various elements of the Brexit Advisory Service to date.

County	Vouchers Approved	Amount Committed	Vouchers Pending	Total
Carlow	0	-	0	0
Cavan	13	€26,000	1	14
Clare	2	€4,000		2
Cork	3	€6,000	7	10
Donegal	8	€16,000	2	10
Dublin	31	€62,000	19	50
Galway	4	€8,000	9	13
Kerry	0	-	2	2
Kildare	3	€6,000		3
Kilkenny	3	€6,000	1	4
Laois	1	€2,000	2	3
Leitrim	1	€2,000		1
Limerick	0	-	0	0
Longford	1	€2,000		1
Louth	8	€16,000	6	14
Mayo	1	€2,000	4	5
Meath	5	€10,000		5
Monaghan	9	€18,000	4	13
Offaly	1	€2,000	2	3
Sligo	2	€4,000		2
Tipperary	5	€10,000	1	6
Waterford	0	-	0	0
Westmeath	1	€2,000	4	5
Wexford	2	€4,000	5	7
Wicklow	3	€6,000	1	4

Insurance Costs

132. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the ten proposals as outlined by an organisation (details supplied) on reducing the costs of business insurance as recently presented at the Joint Committee on Business, Enterprise and Innovation; and if proposals regarding the calculation of awards at realistic and sustainable levels will be considered with respect to the book of quantum. [27322/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Apart from motor insurance, which falls under the remit of the Minister for Transport, policy responsibility for insurance is a matter for the Minister of Finance. I as Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation have no direct policy responsibility for insurance. However, officials of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, along with other Departments and Agencies, are members of the Cost of Insurance Working Group chaired by the Minister for Financial Services and Insurance, Mr Michael D'Arcy T.D.

The Cost of Insurance Working Group has undertaken a review of the factors which are influencing the increased cost of insurance. Its objective is to identify immediate and longer term measures which can address increasing costs, while bearing in mind the need to maintain a stable insurance sector. The first phase of this work involved an examination of the Motor In-

insurance sector. The second phase involved an examination of the Employer Liability Insurance and Public Liability Insurance sectors.

Recommendations from the Reports of the Cost of Insurance Working Group are currently being implemented and address many of the issues raised in the proposals, including:

- Review of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004;
- The establishment of a Garda Insurance Fraud Unit;
- The establishment of a new National Claims Information Database;
- Measures to Protect the Consumer;
- Examining the frequency of future Book of Quantum updates in terms of any future changes to its production.

The revised Book of Quantum was published in October 2016. The Book was compiled by independent consultants and commissioned by the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB).

This Book is not a recommendation for compensation levels but rather a reflection of the prevailing level of awards.

PIAB is considering the recommendation arising from the First Report of the Personal Injuries Commission in terms of linking future publications of the Book of Quantum to the newly standardised examination and reporting injury categories in the Whiplash Associated Disorder (WAD) scale.

The outcome of the final report of the Personal Injuries Commission on benchmarking of awards, including any relevant recommendations relating to the Book of Quantum, is also awaited. It is expected that the Personal Injuries Commission will publish this report shortly.

Foreign Direct Investment

133. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on a survey (details supplied) and the way in which Ireland has fallen out of the top ten most attractive European countries as a location for foreign direct investment. [27323/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Improving Ireland's competitiveness is a key priority for this Government. We are working hard to consolidate this country's traditional strengths in terms of talent, productivity and export competitiveness.

The decline in Ireland's overall ranking in this year's Ernst and Young (EY) attractiveness survey is disappointing. However, it is worth noting that despite the change in our ranking in this EY survey, the most recent Institute for Management Development (IMD) survey states that Ireland is the 12th most competitive economy in the world and the 3rd most competitive economy in the Euro area. This is still a significant achievement especially when you consider that the UK is ranked 20th. The World Bank's 2017 Ease of Doing Business Report shows Ireland is ranked 17th, an improvement of one place from the previous year.

It is also important to remember that a real indication of Ireland's competitiveness is the increase in employment across sectors and regions. In this regard, the impressive performance of clients supported by the enterprise agencies in winning exports, market share and job creation

in the face of intense global competition is to be commended.

The IDA has made significant progress in diversifying their portfolio of client companies and the overseas markets that offer sources of investments here. There were 111 new name investments in 2017, an increase of 12% compared to 2016 which saw 99 new name investments.

The Government is nevertheless conscious of our need to remain as competitive as possible. We cannot become complacent in relation to the hard-won gains of recent years. I will be working hard with my colleagues across Government, in collaboration with the IDA, to help ensure that Ireland remains a competitive destination for FDI.

Job Losses

134. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the actions she has taken to protect jobs at a company (details supplied) and put supports in place for employees who will be made redundant; if she has spoken with the management of the company regarding these job losses; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27324/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I am aware of reports of job losses at the Liebherr plant in Killarney. IDA Ireland is liaising closely with management at the company, and I understand that the 27 workers referenced are all contract workers and that there is no threat to the permanent jobs at the plant. IDA Ireland has a strong relationship with Liebherr, who established in Killarney in 1958. In 2017, the IDA supported the company with an R&D project and comprehensive training programme to upskill staff over a two year period. IDA Ireland will continue to work with Liebherr as the projects are being implemented.

Gender Balance

135. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the policies in place to increase female participation in the labour force; and if an analysis of this area has been carried out. [27325/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department understands the importance of female participation in the labour market. As we draw closer to full employment, it is essential that enterprise in Ireland has access to high-quality, adaptable and flexible talent pools. Enhancing female participation has the potential to address the growing need for skills and talent and to deliver significant social and gender equality benefits. With this in mind, I have included an action in the Action Plan for Jobs 2018 relevant to female participation. Action 28 aims to ‘identify relevant policy issues for cohorts with low participation rates based on patterns of labour market participation’. My Department has lead responsibility on this action and is currently working with several other Government departments to ensure the completion of this action in the second half of the year.

Policy responsibility for participation falls across several government Departments. A number of measures are underway to facilitate female participation in the labour market. It is clear that to make greater female participation a reality, barriers to entering/re-entering the labour market must be addressed. In recent years, several initiatives have been launched to facilitate the return of women to employment. These include:

- Action 27 in the Action Plan for Jobs 2018 relates to the development of the Affordable

Childcare Scheme. Access to affordable childcare is often identified as a barrier to women's labour market participation in Ireland. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs have responsibility for the continued implementation of reforms to existing schemes and progressing the Affordable Childcare Scheme. The deadline for this action is also for the latter half of this year.

- The Department of Justice and Equality introduced the 'Women Returning to the Workforce Initiative' in 2017. The supports range from confidence building, career guidance and support in completing applications, to training programmes and work placements.

- The Department of Justice and Equality launched the 'National Strategy for Women and Girls' in 2017. This strategy focuses on the needs of working women by proposing to continue to increase investment in childcare, to take action to tackle the gender pay gap, to improve the conditions of women in precarious employment and to provide additional help to women entrepreneurs.

- The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection implements the 'Pathways to Work Programme' which aims to increase active labour market participation by people (including lone parents and people with disabilities) of a working age so as to help ensure a supply of labour at competitive rates and to minimise welfare dependency. This strategy includes specific actions to increase labour market participation and employment progression of people who are not currently active in the labour market and to apply the concept of active inclusion as a guiding principle – particularly from 2018-2020.

- Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) aims to play a strong role in addressing gender imbalance in science by committing to increase the representation of women among SFI award holders to 30% by 2020 and to improve the representation and progression of women in all aspects of STEM careers in Ireland. Through its Starting Investigator Research Grant (SIRG) programme, SFI has piloted an initiative to encourage increased applications from female researchers. This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of SIRG applications from and SIRG awards to women.

- Industry have also initiated programmes to attract women back to the workforce. 'Women ReBoot' is a programme led by Technology Ireland and Skillnets (which is funded through the National Training Fund through the

Department of Education and Skills and private industry). The programme aims to redress the gender imbalance in tech by attracting women with STEM experience back to the sector. This is delivered through a mix of coaching, online learning, networking skills and work placements in leading tech companies. Women ReBoot has been highly successful in helping participants secure employment.

Skills Shortages

136. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the timeline for implementation of all the recommendations regarding the recently published report by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, Addressing the Skills Needs Arising from the Potential Trade Implications of Brexit; and the details of all customs awareness and higher level customs clearance training and advice for third country trading that are in place. [27326/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) is an independent body tasked with advising the Government on the current and future skills needs of the Irish economy, as well as any other

issues that impact on the national potential for enterprise and employment growth.

I welcome the recent EGFSN report on “Addressing the Skills Needs Arising from the Potential Trade Implications of Brexit” as an important contribution to the evidence base on Brexit and the Government’s wider contingency planning.

My Department is now formally engaging with the responsible bodies identified in the report to action and formally progress its recommendations. The timelines for implementation are being guided by the advice offered by the EGFSN. This is complementing the work the Government is already undertaking to ensure the enterprise base can respond to Brexit through enhancing its capacity to compete, innovate and trade.

On the customs awareness and higher level customs clearance training and advice currently in place, I refer the Deputy to the details of this provision contained in the EGFSN report.

Industrial Disputes

137. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on a matter (details supplied). [27327/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen): I understand that the dispute which the deputy is referring to relates to certain terms and conditions of employment, including that of pay and contractual security, which the trade union Mandate is seeking to negotiate with the company on behalf of its members.

At the outset, I would emphasise that Ireland’s system of industrial relations is, essentially, voluntary in nature and that responsibility for the resolution of industrial disputes between employers and workers rests in the first instance with the employer, the workers and their representatives.

For its part, the State provides the industrial relations dispute settlement mechanisms i.e. the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) and the Labour Court to support parties in their efforts to resolve their differences. The WRC and the Labour Court are independent statutory bodies and conduct their quasi-judicial functions independently and as Minister, I have no role in this regard.

As the deputy points out, this dispute was before the Labour Court earlier this year and in April, the Labour Court issued a recommendation urging the parties to engage with each other in order to seek agreement in relation to the matters at issue. In its recommendation, the Labour Court indicated also that if, following such engagement, matters remained unresolved, the parties should avail of the services of the Workplace Relations Commission and the Court in furthering efforts to secure resolution.

As Minister, I would encourage both parties to engage constructively with each other on the issues in dispute and to avail of the services of the WRC and the Labour Court which stand ready to assist in the resolution of disputes - reach a resolution by agreement. This will lead to a positive outcome for the company, its employees and the customers that it serves.

Job Creation

138. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her plans and the plans of the industrial promotion agencies to assist in 2018 and 2019 in the

maintenance of existing employment and in job creation throughout County Cavan; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27330/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, regional development is a key priority of mine and I am focused on maintaining existing jobs while also increasing the level of employment and investment in every county in Ireland, including Co. Cavan.

The North East/North West Regional Action Plan for Jobs is a key policy response for supporting employment growth in the Border region. The core objective of the Action Plan is to increase employment in the region by 10-15%, resulting in the delivery of 28,000 jobs by 2020. We are aiming to ensure the unemployment rate is within the 1% of the State average.

Some 12,000 jobs were created in the Border region since the regional Action Plans for Jobs initiative was launched in January 2015 while the unemployment rate in the Border region has fallen since then and now stands at 4.9% according to the CSO (Q4 2017).

Furthermore, Live Register numbers continue to fall in County Cavan, down from 7,793 in July 2012 to 3,655 in May 2018, a decrease of over 4,000. There is of course always room for improvement but the latest CSO figures are testament to the Government's efforts to help create jobs and reduce unemployment.

I recently launched the second call of the Regional Enterprise Development Fund, which is aimed at supporting the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative projects that can sustain and add to employment at a national, regional and county level. I would encourage all entities, including in the Cavan region, to use this fund to support job creation. The closing date is 3pm on Thursday 28th June.

Twenty-one successful applicants representing all regions of the country have secured up to €30.5m for their projects in the first competitive call. Cavan County Council and LEO Cavan were successful in acquiring funding as part of the Upper Shannon Erne Future Economy Project under the first Enterprise Ireland Regional Enterprise Development Fund call, for the development of a Digital Hub Facility in Cavan.

Enterprise Ireland (EI) together with the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) play a critical role in driving and nurturing entrepreneurship all the way from an originating idea at local level, to taking-on global markets. In 2017, EI paid €2.5m to companies in Cavan.

Total employment in EI supported companies in Co. Cavan now stands at 5,451, an increase of 28% since 2012. In May, EI facilitated a meeting of LEO and EI engineering companies from Cavan, Louth and Meath with a view to creating an engineering cluster in the region.

The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Cavan serves as the first stop shop to provide strategic, technical and financial supports and services to start, grow and develop small businesses in each county.

Some specific supports LEO Cavan provides for the development of existing indigenous businesses include the LEAN for Micro programme, Technical Assistance Grants for Micro Exporters and the Co-Innovate Programme. In July 2018, LEO Cavan is delivering a number of workshops and information seminars to assist local businesses with accessing these supports and guiding them towards growing their businesses by exploring export markets, trading online opportunities, innovation projects, cross border research and development collaborations and trade partnerships.

Last year LEO Cavan created 207 new jobs. They provided training to 1,293 clients and

mentoring to 91 clients.

Regarding foreign investment, Cavan has seven multinational companies employing 1,555 people. The county maintains an impressive base of FDI with companies such as CG Power Systems, Wellman International and Gyproc St. Gobain. We are making significant progress towards achieving our regional development targets, which include a 30% to 40% increase in FDI in the North-East Region by 2019.

Finally, in relation to Brexit, my Department and its agencies are carrying out extensive work to prepare for all eventualities. I was delighted to attend and speak at the Enterprise Ireland and InterTradeIreland Brexit Advisory Clinic in Cootehill, Cavan in March of this year. These clinics provide the opportunity for companies that may be affected by Brexit to take immediate action to address their exposure.

Industrial Development

139. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation when decisions are likely to be made in relation to the identification of suitable sites as locations for the establishment of data centres; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27331/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In 2017 IDA Ireland appointed Jacobs Engineering, supported by AOS Planning, to identify potential strategic land banks in Ireland that would be particularly suitable for the sustainable development of data centre projects. The study was commissioned to understand what locations in Ireland are best placed to win and sustain this type of investment. The review process was conducted in a number of stages and focused on evaluating all potentially viable land options that are compatible with the complex and ever evolving needs of data centre investments.

The national site evaluation process has now been completed by Jacobs. As previously indicated the study is for internal IDA Ireland purposes only and is not intended for publication due to its commercial sensitivity.

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

Foreign Direct Investment

140. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if a centre (details supplied) will be given further consideration in respect of the location of inward investment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27332/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): IDA Ireland markets Co. Cavan as part of its North-East region, together with Louth and Monaghan. There are currently seven multinational companies in Cavan employing a total of 1,155 people.

The IDA Ireland business and technology park in Killygarry, Co. Cavan covers approximately 17 hectares. Of this, around 11 hectares are currently available for marketing. The main tenant on the park is ATA Group, which is an Enterprise Ireland client company.

IDA Ireland is actively marketing the park to both existing and prospective clients as a location for overseas investment. The Agency will also consider opportunities to utilise the Park to attract other, less traditional investments into this location. These are investments which don't fall under the general remit of IDA or Enterprise Ireland but which could create investment and employment opportunities in Cavan.

The Agency has a dedicated regional manager for the North East/North West Region and has an office in the Cavan Innovation and Technology Centre. As part of its strategy to encourage investment to the area the Agency is focusing on sectors including agri-food, manufacturing, tourism, internationally traded services. The IDA also regularly engages with key stakeholders on the ground in Cavan including local authorities, public bodies, the education sector and companies from both its own client base but also from the indigenous sector.

Attracting FDI to regional areas is not without its challenges. That's largely because there is a global trend to base FDI around large urban areas. Quite often companies also want to be located near competitors or clusters of other similar enterprises. As a result, it's unavoidable that some businesses are intent in investing in larger urban areas. That sometimes is just a commercial reality.

Nevertheless I recognise that there is room for improvement in Cavan and we are working hard, across Government, to further unlock the economic potential of the area. The Enterprise Agencies remain pivotal to this and they continue to engage with their clients, and with one another, to create jobs and source new investment for the region.

Commencement of Legislation

141. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health when the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 will be commenced (details supplied). [27140/18]

198. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health when Parts 2 and 3 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 will be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27328/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 141 and 198 together.

A number of technical drafting issues have come to light in relation to Parts 2 & 3 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015. Consideration of a resolution to these issues and the likely need for primary legislation are close to conclusion and I expect to be in a position to progress shortly.

Hospital Consultant Remuneration

142. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the cost of the agreement reached with consultants in June 2018; the cost of retrospective payments to consultants as a result of the agreement; the cost of additional pay per year; the expected impact on the fiscal space for budget 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27361/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Last Friday Minister Donohue and I announced that a settlement agreement in relation to cases taken by consultants seeking payment of increases provided for in Consultant Contract 2008 was concluded between the State and the consultants' representative bodies after two weeks of intensive negotiations. This agreement

applies to 10 lead cases that were before the High Court and other cases that involved the same contract and other eligible consultants who had not initiated cases.

The settlement terms achieved represent a substantial reduction on previous estimates of potential liability of up to €700 million. Under the terms of the settlement, it has been agreed to correct the pay rate only for those Consultants who signed ‘Consultant Contract 2008’ between 25 July 2008 and 30 September 2012. Correction of remuneration/pension entitlements will be effective from the ‘Date of Settlement’ (15 June) but payable from January 2019.

The total cost of retrospective payments (“arrears”) under the agreement is estimated at €182 million. The additional cost of correcting the pay rates is approximately €62 million per year backdated to the ‘Date of Settlement’.

Payments of arrears will be phased over 2019 and 2020, as follows:

- 40% (€73 million) payable on or before 01 June 2019, and
- 60% (€109 million) payable on or before 01 March 2020.

The impact of the settlement on the fiscal space for 2019 is a matter for the Minister for Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform.

While this settlement is costly it is the most cost-effective outcome for the Exchequer and the taxpayer resulting in significant savings and prevents a lengthy and costly legal battle. This settlement brings to conclusion a disagreement between the parties that has been ongoing since 2009 and I look forward to a reinvigorated working relationship with consultants.

Home Help Service Provision

143. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if extra home help hours will be allocated to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27124/18]

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 Data

144. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the number of home care packages being provided in each LHO area. [27131/18]

146. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for a home care package in each LHO area; and the number waiting 0 to 3, 3 to 6, 6 to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively. [27133/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 144 and 146 together.

As these are service matters I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Medical Card Data

145. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons covered by medical cards as of 1 May 2018. [27132/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As of 01 May 2018 1,587,447 people held eligibility for a medical card.

Question No. 146 answered with Question No. 144.

General Practitioner Services

147. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons covered by general practitioner visit cards as of 1 May 2018. [27134/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As of 01 May 2018, 496,583 people held eligibility for a GP visit card.

General Practitioner Contracts

148. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if matters raised in correspondence by a person (details supplied) will be examined. [27135/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The GMS GP contract stipulates that fees are not paid to GPs by the HSE in respect of certain medical certificates which may be required, for example, "under the Social Welfare Acts or for the purposes of insurance or assurance policies or for the issue of driving licences".

Consultation fees charged by GPs outside the terms of the GMS or GP Visit Card contracts are a matter of private contract between clinicians and their patients. I have no role in relation to such fees.

Hospital Appointments Status

149. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited [27137/18]

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 since 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

150. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will have maxillofacial surgery which has been delayed and is causing the person distress; and the reason for the long delay for the operation [27141/18]

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, since 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 Consultant Remuneration

151. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the settlement reached with hospital consultants on 15 June 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27142/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Last Friday Minister Donohoe and I announced that a settlement agreement in relation to cases taken by consultants seeking payment of increases provided for in Consultant Contract 2008 was concluded between the State and the consultants' representative bodies after two weeks of intensive negotiations. This agreement applies to 10 lead cases that were before the High Court and other cases that involved the same contract. This case was due to commence on 05 June 2018 however both agreed to an adjournment to facilitate settlement discussions.

The settlement terms achieved represent a substantial reduction on previous estimates of potential liability of up to €700 million. Under the terms of the settlement, it has been agreed to correct the pay rate only for those Consultants who signed 'Consultant Contract 2008' between 25 July 2008 and 30th September 2012. Correction of remuneration/pension entitlements will be effective from the Date of Settlement (15 June) but payable from January 2019.

Under the Settlement an eligible Consultant shall be entitled to retrospective payment ("ar-rears") of remuneration and/or retrospective payment of pension entitlements as follows:

- For consultants who have initiated proceedings against the State: for a period commencing up to six years prior to the date of issue of proceedings and ending on the Date of Settlement.

- For non-litigating consultants: for a period of up to six years prior to the Date of Settlement and ending on the Date of Settlement.

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Any retrospective payment will be calculated as 55% of the difference between the remuneration paid to a Consultant during the period of retrospection and the remuneration which he or she would have been paid if the provisions of the Consultants' Contract 2008 had been fully applied.

The estimated costs which will arise from the settlement reached are €182m for arrears, and ongoing costs of €62m per annum from 2019, backdated to the date of settlement in June 2018. Payment of the arrears will be phased over 2019 and 2020. While this settlement is extremely costly it is the most cost-effective outcome for the Exchequer and the taxpayer resulting in significant savings and prevents a lengthy and costly legal battle.

The IHCA and IMO have committed to recommending the agreement to members and will not support any progression of the current cases that have been initiated or any new litigation.

All consultants who accept the terms also affirm the terms of Consultant Contract 2008 and accept the importance of compliance with the terms of that Contract. The agreement confirms the commitment of the parties to compliance with contractual obligations to ensure more timely delivery of effective care to patients. It specifically provides for co-operation in relation to arrangements put in place to verify the delivery of the consultant's contractual commitments, in particular those relating to private practice. This is going to help in ensuring accountability, compliance with the contract by consultants and improving services to patients.

This settlement brings to conclusion a disagreement between the parties that has been ongoing since 2009 and I look forward to a reinvigorated working relationship with consultants.

Written Answers Nos. 152-171

Maternity Services

152. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the disciplinary proceedings which were enacted as a result of the publication of the Report of the External Independent Review of Maternity Services at Portiuncula University Hospital. [27143/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Cancer Screening Programmes

153. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the schedule of supports being offered to women affected by the controversy surrounding the CervicalCheck screening service; the number of women for whom supports are in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27144/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): On 11 May 2018, the Government agreed a comprehensive package of health and social care measures to support the 209 women who have been diagnosed with cervical cancer and whose audit result differed from their original smear test and for their families.

A range of services is being made available to all women, tailored to their individual needs

and circumstances. This includes medical cards, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, home care packages, counselling, disability services, medication, transport and childcare costs and other supports.

Since the decision to establish the support package, a team of specially designated Liaison Officers has been appointed to work with individuals and put in place the required supports. At close of business on Thursday 14 June 2018, the Liaison Officers had contacted 203 individuals and held 143 face-to-face meetings to discuss their needs.

It is important to note that every individual's circumstances will be unique to them and thus the HSE has taken care to respect the wishes of the women and their families regarding the timing of contacts and subsequent meetings. Where meetings have not yet been held, this reflects the wishes of the individuals concerned either to meet at a future date that suits them or, in some instances not to take up the offer of support.

To date, the HSE has issued 246 new medical cards to women and family members or next-of-kin, and has also made amendments to the terms of existing medical cards or G.P visit cards in 87 cases to re-categorise these as medical cards under the terms of the CervicalCheck support package. A very small number of registration requests are currently on hand and liaison officers are working with clients to complete these, while any outstanding registration requests will be processed as a matter of priority as soon as they are submitted.

Where women have been prescribed a medicine by their treating clinician, any out-of-pocket costs will be met. This includes medicines not officially approved for reimbursement and any other non-standard therapies, once prescribed for the patient by their doctor.

Arrangements are in place to reimburse a range of costs that the women and their families incur from 11 May 2018 including travel costs, childcare costs and medical appointment costs among others. These will be reimbursed upon receipt of claims from individuals.

My Department is working with the HSE to gather information on the type and scale of costs that individuals have incurred retrospectively, to enable a decision to be made on the most appropriate means of supporting people in this regard.

In response to a recommendation from Dr Scally's recently published progress report, I have also made available an ex gratia payment of €2,000 to the women and families affected. As Dr Scally rightly states in his report, it is important that women do not encounter any financial obstacles to participating and making their voices heard in relation to the Scoping Inquiry or any subsequent Commission of Investigation. These payments will be made as quickly as possible. I am advised that the HSE aims to have all the payments processed by the end of June.

This should not be considered a bar to any further payment that Government may decide to make available. It should be noted that not all of the 209 women and families to whom the package of supports has been offered has taken this up, and this may also apply in relation to the ex gratia payment. The process and all required supports will continue to be rolled out to all women directly affected.

Cancer Screening Programmes

154. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the proactive outreach actions being taken to contact and offer additional screening services for those with a high risk profile for cervical cancer in view of the controversy surrounding the CervicalCheck screening service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27145/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Cervical screening tests women for changes in the cells of the cervix using a smear test. Changes are common and cervical screening by smear tests can pick up early cell changes so they can be monitored or treated. The earlier abnormal cell changes are found, the easier they are to treat. Early detection and treatment of changes in the cells of the cervix can prevent cervical cancer.

All women are actively encouraged to attend for cervical screening at appropriate intervals. Women aged 25 to 44 will be invited routinely for a free smear test every three years and women aged 45 to 60 will be invited routinely every five years.

Women who are recommended for increased surveillance are re-called after one year following a normal smear test result.

Cervical screening tests, like other screening tests, are not 100% accurate. Any women who has concerns or experiences suspicious symptoms should visit her doctor for further investigation.

Hospital Services

155. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the development of a business case for a modular catheterisation laboratory for the south east; the decision date for the business case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27146/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Following an independent review of the need for a second cath lab in University Hospital Waterford, the Herity report concluded that the needs of the effective catchment population for Waterford University Hospital could be accommodated within a single cath lab. Funding has been provided to support extension of the existing cath lab operating hours to 12 weekly sessions per week, or by 20%, as recommended in the Herity Report. The HSE has advised approval and funding has been provided for the posts required to facilitate this service expansion and recruitment is currently being progressed by local management and the HSE's National Recruitment Service. A mobile cath lab has been deployed since October 2017, initially for a period of 20 weeks but since extended to allow time for University Hospital Waterford to complete recruitment of the additional staff required for the service extension to the existing cath lab.

The aim of the National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services, which has been underway since January, is to achieve optimal patient outcomes at population level with particular emphasis on the safety, quality and sustainability of the services that patients receive by establishing the need for an optimal configuration of a national adult cardiac service. The anticipated timeline is 18 months although the Chair will seek to expedite the submission of the Final Report if possible.

As set out in the National Development Plan 2018-2027, investment in cardiac catheterisation laboratories and other cardiac services infrastructure nationally will be informed by the outcome of the National Review.

The Deputy might wish to note that I met with South East Oireachtas members on 14 February and indicated that I would give some consideration to the various issues raised by the group, including the potential for the deployment of a modular cath lab, as an interim solution, pending the outcome of the National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services. My Department is currently examining this matter at my request and it is envisaged that this examination will be completed shortly.

Ambulance Service Staff

156. **Deputy Hildegarde Naughton** asked the Minister for Health the reason intermediate care staff are the only grade in the Ambulance Service not entitled to a long service increment in view of the fact that this discriminates against just one grade of the service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27148/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on this matter.

Ambulance Service Data

157. **Deputy Hildegarde Naughton** asked the Minister for Health the number of occasions in which intermediate care operatives have been tasked before the community responders groups in 2017 and to date in 2018. [27149/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Emergency Services Provision

158. **Deputy Hildegarde Naughton** asked the Minister for Health the reason the volunteer community response groups are being tasked to 999 emergency calls and in some cases dispatched to calls beyond the scope of that for which the community groups were intended. [27150/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Ambulance Service

159. **Deputy Hildegarde Naughton** asked the Minister for Health the reason none of the control measures identified in the risk assessment reports regarding the design and ergonomics of the intermediate care vehicles carried out in 2016 and 2017 have been implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27151/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Patient Transport

160. **Deputy Hildegarde Naughton** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent nationally on private ambulances for patient transport in comparison to that which is spent on the intermediate care service overtime in each of the years 2014 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27152/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

HSE Expenditure

161. **Deputy Hildegarde Naughton** asked the Minister for Health the amount it costs the HSE for one discharge from the emergency department to a local address if a private ambulance is used in comparison to an intermediate care operative vehicle on overtime; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27153/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Ambulance Service Staff

162. **Deputy Hildegarde Naughton** asked the Minister for Health the reason there are no career progression prospects for intermediate care operatives in view of the fact that intermediate care operatives cannot go to a basic level of lead supervisor positions or managerial roles due to lack of lead supervisor experience (details supplied). [27154/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on this matter.

Health Services Data

163. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Health the number of sexual assault treatment units here; the location of each unit; the opening hours of each unit; the location to which complainants are brought if the closest unit is not open at the time a complaint is made; if consideration has been given to opening each unit on a 24 hour basis seven days a week; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27162/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

HSE Expenditure

164. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the amount paid to private investigators to investigate hospital consultants in preparation for the court case regarding the 2008 consultant contract. [27163/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on this matter.

Hospital Consultant Contracts

165. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the value of private activity in public hospitals by publicly employed consultants on type B contracts for each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27164/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on this matter.

Medical Card Data

166. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of medical cards issued per LHO in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018. [27168/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

167. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27169/18]

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 since 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.

Ambulance Service Data

168. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health the average number of ambulances suitable for an echo or delta response; the number of echo and delta response calls; the number of echo and delta response calls that fall outside of the 18 minutes 59 second response time in each of the past five years by county and NUTS 3 regional basis in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27173/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Ambulance Service Data

169. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health the average number of qualified ambulance personnel at each grade; the allocated budget and expenditure of the National Ambulance Service in each of the past five years by county and NUTS 3 regional basis in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27174/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Ambulance Service

170. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health if he will identify non-service issues for purposes of raising a parliamentary question in relation to the National Ambulance Service. [27175/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am happy to answer any questions in relation to pre hospital emergency care policy; however as the operation of the ambulance service is the responsibility of the HSE, questions in relation to services are referred to the National Ambulance Service for direct reply.

Hospital Appointments Status

171. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27176/18]

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 since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Departmental Schemes

172. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the progress made to date regarding the development of a new statutory homecare scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27177/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Department of Health is currently engaged in a detailed process to develop plans for a new statutory scheme and system of regulation for home care services. The statutory scheme for home care will introduce clear rules in relation to the services for which individuals are eligible and in relation to service-allocation. For that reason, developing a new statutory scheme will be an important step in ensuring that the system operates in a consistent and fair manner for all those who need home care services. It will also help to improve access to the home care services that people need in an affordable and sustainable way. The system of regulation for home care will help to ensure that the public can be confident that the services provided are of a high standard.

As an initial step in this process, the Department commissioned the Health Research Board to undertake a review of the home care systems in four other European countries. This review,

which was published in April 2017, will help us to learn from the experiences of other jurisdictions and will inform the debate and future consideration of approaches to formal home care financing and regulation here in Ireland. I, along with Minister Harris, also launched a public consultation process in July 2017 which closed in October 2017. The purpose of this consultation was to allow all those with views on this topic to have their say, including older people themselves, their families, and healthcare workers. There was a very high response rate to the consultation process with approximately 2,600 submissions received. I intend to publish a report of the findings of the consultation process next week.

It is important to note that a significant amount of detailed work remains to be carried out before final decisions are taken on the form of home care scheme and the system of regulation for these services. This is required if reforms are to be successful, affordable and sustainable.

However, while the new home care scheme is under development, the Department of Health and Health Service Executive (HSE) are continuing efforts to incrementally improve the existing services. The HSE has begun streamlining services in 2018 by bringing together the funding for home help and standard home care packages, which now operate as a single home support service. This new approach will provide significant benefits including making the services easier to understand; streamlining the application and decision-making processes; and facilitating service users to move to changed levels of service as their assessed needs change, without the need for an additional application process.

2018 has also seen a significant increase in the provision of home support services. The HSE's National Service Plan provides for a target of some 17.094m home support hours to be provided to 50,500 people. This represents an increase of 754,000 hours to 500 more people over last year. In addition 235 intensive home care packages will provide 360,000 home support hours for people with complex needs.

The HSE will also continue to encourage local integration of services and build appropriate care pathways, in particular for people with dementia and complex needs.

Home Help Service Provision

173. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health his plans to deal with the continued increases in persons waiting for home care supports in the short-term; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27178/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Consultant Contracts

174. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 160 of 14 June 2018, and in view of the recent settlement that has been agreed, the role his Department played in the sanctioning of the use of private investigators to monitor the work of hospital consultants in the context of a current pay claim; the nature and extent of the surveillance; the duration and number of consultants involved; the other departments or State agencies involved in the decision to undertake such surveillance; the role of the HSE in the matter; if the HSE approved the method; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27204/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I welcome the opportunity to clarify the position in relation to the use of private investigators in defending the legal cases taken by consultants. I am aware that there has been some criticism of the Departments approving the use of private investigators as part of the defence. The use of these services is not unusual where legal proceedings are in train and where evidence is being gathered.

Arising from the High Court proceedings taken against the State for alleged breach of Consultant Contract 2008, the Government made a decision to vigorously defend these cases. Examination of possible non-compliance with the terms of the plaintiff's contract was part of the defence strategy mounted against the plaintiffs; particularly in relation to the level of private practice undertaken. Under the 2008 Contract, consultants with certain contract types may engage in off-site private practice, others are limited to on-site private practice up to specified levels and others are not allowed engage in private practice. Of the ten lead-cases, three were subject to particular scrutiny.

Gathering data in relation to off-site private practice is more difficult than on-site practice and to do so in a thorough manner required the services of a private investigator in order to establish if excessive off-site private practice work was being undertaken by the consultants and the extent of such work. The HSE instructed private investigators to gather evidence to support the HSE's counter-claim in relation to non-compliant consultants. This approach was approved by the Departments of Health, Finance, and Public Expenditure and Reform and was reaffirmed by the Departments as appropriate in the lead-up to the hearing date in conjunction with the State's legal advisors. It should be noted that no consultants outside of the lead cases were subject to surveillance by a private investigator.

The settlement agreement reached between the parties provides that by accepting the settlement, eligible consultants who settle under this agreement affirm the terms of the Consultants Contract 2008. This is a positive commitment that the HSE and the Department can use to strengthen monitoring of compliance and sends a strong signal that there is renewed commitment by all sides to ensuring adherence to public/private practice ratios as set out in the contract.

State Bodies Data

175. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of positions on the board in respect of the board of agencies and commercial State companies under his Department's aegis in tabular form; the quorum required for a board meeting; the number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date; the length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27222/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The nomination and appointment process for boards of bodies under the aegis of my Department is set out in legislation. In line with Government Decision SI80/20/10/1617 of 2014 and Guidelines set out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform relating to the advertising for expressions of interest in vacancies on State Boards, my Department in conjunction with the Public Appointments Service (PAS) currently advertises for board vacancies as they arise, where I, as Minister for Health, have nominating rights under relevant legislation. I also appoint members on the nomination of various bodies, again in accordance with relevant legislation.

The following table sets out most of the information requested by the Deputy. It has not been possible to obtain quorum details for each board in the time-frame requested. This information will be sent to the Deputy as soon as it is collated.

Questions - Written Answers

State Body	Number of positions on the board as per legislation	Number of vacant positions	Date vacancy occurred
Dental Council	19	1	Dec 17
Dublin Dental Hospital Board	14	0	
Food Safety Authority of Ireland	10	1	Feb 18
Health and Social Care Professionals Council	29	1	Dec 17
Health Information and Quality Authority	12	1	May 18
Health Insurance Authority	5	0	
Health Products Regulatory Authority	9	0	
Health Research Board	10	0	
Irish Blood Transfusion Service	12	1	May 17
Medical Council	25	1	Jun 18
Mental Health Commission	13	0	
National Cancer Registry Board	7	2	Aug 17 / Dec 17
National Treatment Purchase Fund Board	9	0	
Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland	23	2	Dec 17 / Jun 18
Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland Council	21	0	
Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council	17	0	
Voluntary Health Insurance Board	12	2	Feb 18 / Mar 18

Hospital Waiting Lists

176. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the status of the €35 million allocated to the waiting list initiative as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27228/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving waiting times for hospital pro-

cedures is a key commitment in the Programme for Government and in 2018 €50 million was allocated to the NTPF to provide treatment for patients. This more than doubled its 2017 total allocation of €20m. This funding was to build on the work started in 2017 in addressing waiting times for Inpatient/Daycase (IPDC) procedures, and to create a strategy to ensure a continued downward trend in waiting times.

In April 2018 I launched the Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan which outlines the combined impact of HSE and NTPF activity in 2018 to reduce the number of patients waiting for treatment to below 70,000 in 2018. This plan marks a very important milestone in delivering on this commitment.

In 2018 the NTPF will outsource 20,000 inpatient day cases, while the HSE will deliver 1.14 million hospital operations or procedures. This will mean that by the end of 2018 we will expect to see a significant reduction in the number waiting for a procedure to under 70,000 - from a peak of 86,100 in July 2017.

There are seven high volume procedures that are the focus of the NTPF funded treatments, specifically cataracts, hip/knee replacements, tonsils, angiograms, cystoscopies, skin lesions and varicose veins. All patients who are waiting more than 9 months and suitable for treatment at an outsourced facility will be offered treatment in 2018-for targeted high-volume procedures. For patients who are waiting longest for other procedures, the NTPF and HSE will work together to identify the requirements, develop treatment plans, and where possible offer treatments from within existing HSE and NTPF resources.

In terms of treatment offers, the NTPF authorises public hospitals to offer outsourced treatment to clinically suitable long waiting patients who are on an inpatient/day case waiting list for surgery, having been referred on to such a list following clinical assessment by a consultant/specialist at an outpatient clinic. NTPF authorisations are made in respect of the longest waiting patients first.

Furthermore, the funding provided to the NTPF for 2018 is also being used to address the Outpatient waiting list, which remains a significant challenge to be addressed this year. Each year, 3.3 million patients attend Hospital Outpatient clinics for appointments. It is worth noting that in 2017 almost half a million (477,000) outpatients did not attend their appointment.

In order to address the issue of growing Outpatient waiting list numbers, I instructed the HSE to commence development of an Outpatient Action Plan for 2018, which has been submitted to my Department and is currently being finalised. This plan will support the HSE's compliance with their National Service Plan targets, reduce the increase in the number of patients waiting for outpatient services, improve the accuracy of the waiting list, and trial a number of NTPF funded interventions, including weekend and out of hours clinics.

Hospital Services

177. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the status of the €50 million allocated to acute services as outlined in budget 2018; the amount has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27229/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In Budget 2018, €50 million was allocated to improve access to scheduled and unscheduled care services and this is the funding that I understand the Deputy is referring to in his question.

I can confirm that €40 million of this funding was allocated to implement measures aimed at

alleviating pressure in our Acute Hospitals over the winter period and €10 million was allocated to improve access to scheduled care in the area of orthopaedic services and scoliosis. Between January and June 2018, over €38 million of this funding was released to the HSE.

This funding has been spent on a range of measures this winter, including the opening of new bed capacity in Drogheda, Limerick, Kilkenny, Cork and the provision of home support packages and transitional care beds to support the timely discharge of patients from hospital.

This funding has also supported the treatment of young patients with scoliosis under the 2018 Scoliosis Action Plan.

Health Services Expenditure

178. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the status of the €32 million allocated to older persons as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27230/18]

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.

Patient Safety

179. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the status of the €2.5 million allocated to patient safety and quality as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27231/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Department, in recognising the challenges of healthcare associated infections and antimicrobial resistance for the health system, held back dedicated funding of €2 million for 2018. Of this, €1.8 million (FYC) has been allocated to date. The HSE has prioritised work programmes for this funding in line with assessed risk. The majority of the funding available has been allocated for the purposes of providing support to hospitals currently managing CPE/HCAI outbreaks, hospitals that have had a CPE/HCAI outbreak in the past, and the National Reference Laboratory for CPE.

In addition, it is intended that the balance of the €500,000 will be allocated to a number of HSE patient safety initiatives. The HSE is also establishing a Patient Safety Programme that will coordinate efforts in this area both to enhance existing efforts and bring forward new initiatives.

Services for People with Disabilities

180. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the status of the €15 million allocated to disabilities as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27232/18]

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 servic-

es they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Mental Health Services Expenditure

181. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the status of the €35 million allocated to mental health as outlined in budget 2018; the amount has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27233/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Budget 2018 made allowance for an additional €35 million for mental health services, bringing the total HSE Mental Health Budget to €910 million. This represents an increase of over €200 million since 2012.

€30.7 million has been allocated to the HSE so far in 2018, with the remaining €4.3 million to be allocated in September 2018.

This increase has funded improved Mental Health Nurse training, enhanced drug treatment options for Mental Health service users, enhanced access to counselling and talk therapies, improvements to the mental health physical infrastructure and an increase in specialist rehab services. It has also helped to facilitate improved 7-day-a-week Mental Health services, improvements to Eating Disorder and Perinatal Mental Health services, an increase in Psychiatric Nurse undergraduate places and the introduction of Advanced Nurse practitioners.

Primary Care Services Provision

182. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the status of the €40 million allocated to primary care as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27234/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The additional funding for primary care development announced by the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform in Budget 2018 is detailed in the table. The Deputy may wish to note that the allocation for new primary care developments was finalised at €39m under the HSE National Service Plan for 2018.

-	Allocation(€m)	Drawn Down at end Q1(€m)
New Primary Care Centre Lease and Operating Costs	10.2	9.68
Community Intervention Team expansion and OPAT provision from Q3 2018	2.8	0
60 Additional Paediatric Home Care Packages	2.1	2.1

-	Allocation(€m)	Drawn Down at end Q1(€m)
Occupational Therapy Posts (40 OTs to be recruited from Q3 2018)	1.043	0
Nursing Development Initia- tives	3	0
GP Initiatives	2.357	0
GP Out of Hours expansion (Dublin South, South-East and North Wicklow)	2	0
GP Training (addition- al places to bring total to 198)	1.5	1.5
TOTAL	25	13.28

As can be seen from the table, some of the measures are being supported to cover full-year costs while in other instances funding is intended to cover costs arising in the latter part of 2018. In those instances where monies have not yet been drawn down, it is expected that this funding will be utilised in the second half of the year. However, savings have been identified under the heading of Nursing Development Initiatives, and sanction has been given to reallocate €1m to support the further rollout of the Taskforce for Safe Nurse Staffing and Skill Mix in General and Specialist Medical and Surgical Care Settings.

In addition to the measures outlined above, a further €14m was provided for the funding of new drugs under the Primary Care Reimbursement Scheme. To date in 2018, the HSE has given approval for the reimbursement of a number of new medicines with cost implications for the current year of approximately €11 million.

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme Expenditure

183. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the status of the €7.5 million allocated to social inclusion as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27235/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): The social inclusion remit of the Department of Health provides targeted interventions for people from socially excluded groups who experience severe health inequalities. These groups include people involved in substance misuse, the homeless, Travellers and Roma, and refugees and asylum seekers. They frequently have difficulties accessing mainstream services and present with complex health and needs that require integrated and tailored responses.

Additional funding of €7.5 million was provided in 2018 for new developments in social inclusion and drugs policy. This funding is being used to:

Address the health needs of people who are homeless and have mental health and addictions issues in line with the Rebuilding Ireland,

Respond to the pressing health needs of refugees arriving in Emergency Reception & Ori-

entation Centres by improving access to primary care services, with a particular focus on addressing oral health needs,

Expand drug and alcohol services, with the objective of reducing waiting times and promoting person-centred care, and

Implement priority actions in the national drugs strategy, Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery.

To date, nearly €4m has been released to the HSE to progress these initiatives. The HSE is expected to drawdown the remainder of its allocation in Quarter 4.

A further €930,000 is allocated to the Department under the Drugs Initiative Fund, including an additional €250,000 for local and regional task forces and new programmes targeting young people at risk of substance misuse and community action on alcohol.

I am committed to ensuring that adequate resources are provided to implement the national drugs strategy and to meet departmental commitments on homeless, refugees and Travellers.

Health Services

184. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the test results of a facility (details supplied); the impact this delay is having on the facility; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27257/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

185. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if delays in x-ray readings at a hospital (details supplied) will be addressed; if extra staff to clear the backlog will be allocated; the number of persons waiting to date; the number of weeks it is taking to turn results around; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27258/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Hospital Appointments Status

186. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a cataract operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27262/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Orthodontic Services Provision

187. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of orthodontic treatment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[27266/18]

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.

Hospital Appointments Status

188. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called for cataract surgery. [27267/18]

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 since 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.

Psychological Assessments

189. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a physiological assessment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27271/18]

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.

Dental Services

190. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason there is no provision for dental care at a centre (details supplied); the reason the service has been removed; if it will be replaced; if so, when it will be replaced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27272/18]

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.

Home Care Packages Data

191. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the budget by CHO for home care

packages in 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27279/18]

192. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if CHOs have already exceeded their budget for 2018 in relation to the provision of home care packages and are not able to allocate new packages due to lack of funding by CHO in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27280/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 191 and 192 together.

As these are service matters I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Home Care Packages Data

193. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of CHOs that have patients listed as priority 1 cases but are unable to provide home care packages due to lack of funding for 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27281/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Home Care Packages Data

194. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of intensive home care packages for persons with dementia allocated in 2018, by CHO in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27282/18]

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

195. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health the steps he will take to engage with an organisation (details supplied) and the pharmaceutical industry to ensure that patients with MS have faster access to life changing medicines and to new and effective treatments through a fair and effective system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27287/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement decisions, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. As Minister for Health, I do not have any statutory power or function in relation to the reimbursement of medicines. The Act specifies the criteria for decisions on the reimbursement of medicines.

In line with the 2013 Act, if a company would like a medicine to be reimbursed by the HSE pursuant to the Community Drugs scheme, the company must first submit an application to the HSE to have the new medicine added to the Reimbursement List.

As outlined in the IPHA agreement, and in line with the 2013 Act, the HSE will decide,

within 180 days of receiving the application (or a longer period if further information is sought from the company), to either add the medicine to the reimbursement list or agree to reimburse it as a hospital medicine, or refuse to reimburse the medicine.

HSE decisions on which medicines are reimbursed by the taxpayer are made on objective, scientific and economic grounds, on the advice of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE).

The NCPE conducts health technology assessments (HTAs) for the HSE, and makes recommendations on reimbursement to assist HSE decisions. The NCPE uses a decision framework to systematically assess whether a drug is cost-effective as a health intervention.

The HSE strives to reach a decision in as timely a manner as possible. However, because of the significant monies involved, it must ensure that the best price is achieved, as these commitments are often multi-million euro investments on an on-going basis. This can lead to a protracted deliberation process.

I am keen to engage with Industry and to explore ways in which new medicines might be more easily introduced in Ireland. However, any innovative approaches that may be tabled must be compatible with the statutory provisions which are in place and must also recognise the fundamental pricing/funding issues in the context of finite Exchequer resources.

I have indicated willingness to meet with MS Ireland and my office is in contact with the organisation to arrange a mutually convenient date.

Primary Care Centres Provision

196. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Health the timeline for the new primary care centre in Rowlagh, Clondalkin, Dublin 22, including planning application, construction and completion; the services to be located at the centre should it secure planning permission; the future plans for the existing HSE facility in Rowlagh after the new centre has been opened; the funding and ancillary elements of the plan which may be of interest to the local community; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27294/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department has asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly in relation to the development of a primary care centre at Rowlagh, Clondalkin, Dublin.

Medicinal Products Availability

197. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health when he plans to make the drug Pembrolizumab available through the HSE in view of the comments of leading oncologists of the value and importance of this medication; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27317/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement decisions, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. The Act specifies the criteria for decisions on the reimbursement of medicines.

The Minister for Health does not have any statutory power in relation to the reimbursement of medicines.

In line with the 2013 Act and the Framework Agreement with industry, if a company would like a medicine to be reimbursed by the HSE, the company must first submit an application to the HSE to have the new medicine added to the reimbursement list.

Reimbursement applications are made for indications which have been granted market authorisation by either the European Medicines Agency or the Health Products Regulatory Authority.

As outlined in the Framework Agreement, and in line with the 2013 Act, the HSE will decide, within 180 days of receiving the application (or a longer period if further information is sought from the company), to either add the medicine to the reimbursement list or refuse to reimburse the medicine.

HSE decisions on which medicines are reimbursed are made on objective, scientific and economic grounds, on the advice of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE).

The NCPE conducts health technology assessments (HTAs) for the HSE, and makes recommendations on reimbursement to assist HSE decisions. The NCPE uses a decision framework to systematically assess whether a drug is cost-effective as a health intervention.

The HSE strives to reach a decision in as timely a manner as possible. However, because of the significant monies involved, it must ensure that the best price is achieved, as these commitments are often multi-million euro investments on an on-going basis. This can lead to a protracted deliberation process.

Pembrolizumab is currently reimbursed for the following indications:

- KEYTRUDA as monotherapy is indicated for the treatment of advanced (unresectable or metastatic) melanoma in adults.
- KEYTRUDA as monotherapy is indicated for the first-line treatment of metastatic non-small cell lung carcinoma (NSCLC) in adults whose tumours express PD-L1 with a $\geq 50\%$ tumour proportion score (TPS) with no EGFR or ALK positive tumour mutations.

The Department has been informed by the HSE that they are currently deliberating on the following indications for reimbursement:

- Pembrolizumab (Keytruda) as a monotherapy for the treatment of adult patients with relapsed or refractory classical Hodgkin lymphoma who have failed autologous stem cell transplant and brentuximab vedotin (BV), or who are transplant-ineligible and have failed BV.
- KEYTRUDA as a monotherapy for the treatment of locally advanced or metastatic NSCLC in adults whose tumours express PD-L1 with a $\geq 1\%$ TPS and who have received at least one prior chemotherapy regimen. Patients with EGFR or ALK positive tumour mutations should also have received targeted therapy before receiving KEYTRUDA.

The National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE) completed a health technology assessment on 28 May 2018 for the latter indication. They recommended that pembrolizumab (Keytruda) be considered for reimbursement if cost-effectiveness can be improved relative to existing treatments. The HSE will now evaluate this application for reimbursement in line with criteria laid out within the 2013 Act before making a final reimbursement decision.

In addition to this, the HSE have commissioned HTAs on the following indications:

- Pembrolizumab (Keytruda) for the first-line treatment of patients with locally advanced or metastatic urothelial carcinoma who are not eligible for cisplatin-containing chemotherapy.

- Pembrolizumab (Keytruda) as monotherapy for the treatment of locally advanced or metastatic urothelial carcinoma in adults who have received prior platinum-containing chemotherapy.

There are no other indications for Pembrolizumab approved in the European Union at this time. Clinical trials are ongoing globally in relation to a range of other possible indications which may receive marketing authorisation in the EU over the next number of years. Each of those indications will be considered for reimbursement as market authorisations are received.

Question No. 198 answered with Question No. 141.

Medical Card Drugs Availability

199. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if medication required while abroad can be covered by the medical card scheme in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27343/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Medical Cards cannot be used outside of Ireland. As medical cards are only valid in the Republic of Ireland a person cannot apply for a refund of medicines purchased abroad.

Anyone travelling abroad within the EU should apply for a EHIC (European Health Insurance Card) before they travel. The card ensures that a person will get the same access to necessary medical treatment under public sector health care (e.g. a doctor, a pharmacy, a hospital or a health care centre) as nationals of the country they are visiting. The Department would also advise taking out adequate travel insurance before any trip abroad.

GLAS Eligibility

200. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment under the 2017 GLAS scheme will issue to a farmer (details supplied) in County Galway; the reason for the delay in issuing this payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27126/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 3 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2017 and has received the 85% advance payment in respect of 2017.

As the required Commonage Management Plan has not been submitted this participant is not eligible for further payments. Both the participant and their advisor have been advised of the requirement to submit this plan immediately to ensure further payments and indeed participation in the scheme.

Departmental Meetings

201. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the relevant officials in his Department will agree to meet with a group (details supplied) to discuss issues with the foal levy. [27167/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I wish to ad-

wise the Deputy that officials from my Department will, in the near future, meet with the individuals concerned. A convenient meeting date is being agreed with the group.

GLAS Applications

202. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason 2017 GLAS payments for a person (details supplied) have not been finalised despite all the necessary documentation being submitted; the expected date that the data checks will be finalised; the expected date as to when payment will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27186/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The above named was approved into GLAS 2 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016 and has received all payments in respect of scheme year 2016.

In relation to payment for 2017, administrative checks involving a number of sections within the Department take place on all GLAS claims. All cases must clear validation checks before payment can issue. Department officials are working proactively to complete the checks in this case. Once this case clears validations the 2017 advance payment will be made. GLAS payments are issuing on a weekly basis.

GLAS Applications

203. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a GLAS payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27189/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The above named was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2015 and has received all payments in respect of scheme years 2015 and 2016.

In relation to payment for 2017, administrative checks involving a number of sections within the Department take place on all GLAS claims. All cases must clear validation checks before payment can issue. Department officials are working proactively to complete the checks in this case. Once the case clears validations the 2017 advance payment will be made. GLAS payments are issuing on a weekly basis.

Fisheries Protection

204. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the authority which has jurisdiction over an area (details supplied) for the purpose of sanctioning spurdog fishing by gill net; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27196/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Currently there are no targeted commercial spurdog (also known as picked dogfish) fisheries anywhere in the EU, regardless of gear type. The spawning biomass of this species is at an extremely low level, although conservation measures in recent years have had an impact in terms of stabilising the decline. The species is a long-lived, slow growing and late maturing species and is, therefore, particularly vulnerable to over-fishing. The International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) advice is that there should be no targeted fisheries in 2017 and 2018 and that

any possible provision for landing of bycatch should only happen as part of a management plan.

The Marine Institute fully supports the ICES advice and has very serious concerns about the state of the stock.

A very limited quota is available (53t for Ireland) for use in Pilot schemes designed to reduce such by-catches. Any such schemes are subject to EU Commission approval and must relate to reducing by-catches of spurdog in other fisheries i.e. the targeting of spurdog would remain prohibited.

Such a scheme for spurdog avoidance was explored by the Marine Institute and, following consultation with industry, a draft pilot scheme was submitted for review to the Commission's Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF).

STECF raised a number of queries about the proposed scheme, in particular on whether or not it would result in a reduction in catches of spurdog relative to the catches that would occur in the absence of a scheme. Having considered the STECF comments and concerns, the Marine Institute reviewed the draft scheme and has now advised that Ireland should not proceed further with the spurdog avoidance scheme but rather work collaboratively with other Member States and the Commission to explore possible management measures for 2019.

There is perhaps a mis-perception that a spurdog scheme as described here would allow small directed fisheries to operate. That is not the case. Any such scheme would be a strictly controlled avoidance scheme only.

Animal Identification Schemes

205. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if, in cases in which a person purchases untagged goats, the purchaser can have the goats tagged without obtaining a dispatch docket from the seller; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27206/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The rules regarding the identification and movement of goats are determined by Council Regulation 21/2004, as transposed into national legislation via S.I. 792 of 2005 (as amended). These rules are implemented through the National Goat Identification System (NGIS) which provides that any person keeping goats must firstly register the holding on which the goats are to be kept with my Department and must obtain a herd number. This is done through my Department's regional office network.

All goats kept are required to be tagged by 6 months of age or on leaving the holding of birth, whichever is soonest. When goats are being sold, the selling keeper must complete a NGIS dispatch / movement document on which the individual tag numbers of the goats are listed. One copy of this document must be retained by the selling keeper and another given to the purchaser. These must be retained by both parties for record keeping purposes. It is not permitted to purchase goats without the holding, on which the animals are to be kept, being registered with my Department.

It is an offence to keep a goat on a holding that is not registered with my Department. Similarly, it is an offence to keep a goat that is not properly identified or to move a goat without completion of a dispatch document, which must accompany all goats on movement.

A farmer may consult the Department publication "The National Goat Identification System

(NSIS) - A Step by Step Guide” which explains the rules that farmers must comply with for goat identification and movement. This publication can be accessed on the Department’s website.

State Bodies Data

206. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of positions on the board in respect of the board of agencies and commercial State companies under his Department’s aegis in tabular form; the quorum required for a board meeting; the number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date; the length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27212/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I wish to advise the Deputy that the information requested is outlined in the following table.

Name of State Body	Number of positions on the board	Quorum required for a board meeting	Number of ministerial appointees vacancies on board to date	Length of time Ministerial vacancy has been present
Aquaculture Licensing Appeals Board (ALAB)	7	4	1	W.e.f 1/03/2016*
Bord Bia	15	4	3	W.e.f 30/01/2017 (One)W.e.f 16/06/2018 (Two)
Bord Iascaigh Mhara	6	2	0	N/A
Bord Na gCon	7	4	1	W.e.f. 27/05/17 – member remains in situ until position is filled
Coillte	9	4	0	N/A
Horse Racing Ireland (HRI)	14	7	0	N/A
Irish National Stud (INS)	7	3	0	N/A
Marine Institute	9	4	0	N/A
National Milk Agency	14	8	0	N/A
Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA)	3	**	0	N/A
Teagasc	11	6	0	N/A

Name of State Body	Number of positions on the board	Quorum required for a board meeting	Number of ministerial appointees vacancies on board to date	Length of time Ministerial vacancy has been present
Veterinary Council of Ireland (VCI)	19	(a) Where there is full board membership the quorum is 8. (b) Where there are not more than 2 vacancies on board membership the quorum is 7	0	N/A

* Nominations have been received from prescribed organisations and are currently under consideration for appointment to the Board.

** The Authority may act notwithstanding a vacancy or vacancies in its membership – Section 47 (11) Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006.

Basic Payment Scheme Appeals

207. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision has been made on appeals lodged by farmers on Killery, Crossboy, Dromore and Castleore mountains covering 56 shareholdings with respect to land eligibility and burnt land for the purpose of basic payment scheme payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27260/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): It is specified in the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) Terms & Conditions circulated annually to farmers that under the Wildlife Acts, growing vegetation cannot be burnt between 1st March and 31st August of any given year, on any land not yet cultivated. Where land has been burned, it is not in a state suitable for an agricultural activity such as grazing or cultivation and therefore it is not eligible, except where controlled burning is carried out.

When illegal burning of lands was detected in 2017 my Department wrote to the farmers concerned, including those on mountains mentioned, outlining that the burned land parcel(s) were ineligible for the purpose of BPS and had given rise to over-claims. In general terms, where the area determined to have been burned exceeds 3% of the eligible area declared, an administrative penalty is applied. The letters explained the options open to them including the right to a review and also requesting them to submit any relevant documentation.

My Department has been in contact with 33 farmers in relation to ineligible land due to burning on the mountains mentioned. To date, 29 of these farmers have lodged an appeal with my Department on this issue. Where the applicant provides appropriate evidence that he/she was not involved in the burning of the affected lands, the administrative penalty may be waived. However, the burnt land remains ineligible for payment.

A decision has been made on 25 of these appeals and my Department has communicated these decisions directly to the farmers concerned and advised them of their right of further appeal to the Agriculture Appeals Office. A further 4 cases remain under review. Of the 25 ap-

peals decided upon, 12 farmers have now lodged an appeal with the Agriculture Appeals Office.

All things being equal the lands burnt illegally in 2017 are likely to be eligible for the 2018 Basic Payment Scheme. Those affected were informed accordingly and the updated eligible areas were provided at the time of application to on-line BPS applicants.

This year, press releases were issued in March and in May reminding farmers not to burn during the closed season, and not to include ineligible land in their applications. In addition discussions have been held with farmer representative bodies to further ensure clarity of message around this important issue.

GLAS Data

208. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons in receipt of GLAS 1, 2 and 3 that have received the 2017 balancing payment; the number that have passed all payment approval checks and are awaiting their 2017 balancing payment; the number in receipt of GLAS payments that have yet to receive the 2017 balancing payment by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27302/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): GLAS 2017 balancing payments commenced payment week ending 18 May 2018 as per my Department's commitment at the beginning of the year to commence these in May.

To date, over 98% of eligible GLAS participants have received their balancing payment. A number of cases remain ineligible for payment as the GLAS participant and/or their Advisor need to take action. I would encourage any GLAS applicant with outstanding obligations, such as the submission of a Nutrient Management Plan or finalisation of a Commonage Management Plan to ensure that this work is completed. Without the submission of all the required information, these applicants will remain ineligible for further GLAS payments.

Please find in the following table a further breakdown of GLAS 2017 payments made to date.

GLAS 1									
County	Cases	Advance	Advance Amt	Advance+	Advance+ Amt	Balance	Balance Amt	Balance+	Balance+ Amt
Carlow	271	265	€998,321.08	6	€1,947.30	210	€138,284.87	€0.00	€0.00
Cavan	901	891	€3,238,628.30	16	€14,769.54	775	€501,192.29	€12.00	€1,832.87
Clare	1599	1,574	€5,642,137.18	235	€331,367.12	1,368	€866,927.62	€172.00	€42,527.26
Cork	2121	2,082	€7,179,992.61	180	€240,821.87	1,694	€1,030,884.38	€128.00	€31,127.77
Donegal	1919	1,862	€6,175,524.29	120	€147,025.27	1,245	€720,060.90	€77.00	€18,809.61
Dublin	58	57	€206,476.66	2	€1,718.48	41	€26,059.85	€1.00	€300.01
Galway	3036	2,949	€10,536,128.37	160	€157,147.44	2,310	€1,463,258.64	€70.00	€14,291.52
Kerry	1757	1,695	€6,000,094.55	276	€341,654.76	1,120	€685,431.93	€139.00	€32,362.73
Kildare	239	229	€852,314.60	0	€0.00	178	€117,790.32	€0.00	€0.00
Kilkenny	424	415	€1,518,319.74	0	€0.00	364	€235,648.35	€0.00	€0.00
Laois	366	362	€1,302,414.65	18	€24,459.26	307	€195,504.33	€11.00	€2,721.50
Leitrim	1011	998	€3,588,649.30	38	€48,887.01	860	€542,683.90	€26.00	€6,105.39
Limerick	1039	1,026	€3,675,077.19	158	€236,000.03	945	€596,675.09	€139.00	€36,640.69
Longford	509	505	€1,824,869.10	1	€1,699.99	465	€296,241.81	€0.00	€0.00
Louth	147	135	€494,012.13	0	€0.00	91	€59,484.22	€0.00	€0.00
Mayo	2527	2,389	€8,446,356.43	154	€120,563.01	1,845	€1,147,011.45	€78.00	€11,021.63

Questions - Written Answers

GLAS 1									
County	Cases	Advance	Advance Amt	Advance+	Advance+ Amt	Balance	Balance Amt	Balance+	Balance+ Amt
Meath	418	411	€1,480,910.96	0	€0.00	353	€224,386.20	€0.00	€0.00
Monaghan	571	564	€1,859,104.38	7	€7,438.53	466	€270,434.14	€7.00	€1,312.77
Offaly	472	464	€1,639,856.09	13	€17,320.84	393	€244,280.33	€11.00	€2,681.66
Roscommon	1513	1,499	€5,455,851.38	5	€3,152.92	1,365	€872,931.74	€5.00	€556.59
Sligo	928	906	€3,185,653.41	17	€21,078.63	769	€481,695.11	€9.00	€2,054.27
Tipperary	1114	1,087	€3,987,663.00	74	€100,241.55	944	€607,437.60	€53.00	€13,654.47
Waterford	355	332	€1,174,313.26	25	€29,127.68	259	€158,165.81	€10.00	€2,237.57
Westmeath	639	633	€2,307,231.94	4	€3,805.89	569	€366,583.38	€3.00	€603.71
Wexford	746	726	€2,727,123.88	7	€6,811.70	628	€414,909.11	€2.00	€430.75
Wicklow	325	314	€1,190,575.79	11	€7,842.52	230	€153,418.73	€4.00	€463.25
TOTAL	25,005	24,370	€86,687,600.27	1,527	€1,864,881.34	19,794	€12,417,382.10	957	€221,736.02

table continued

GLAS 2									
County	Cases	Advance	Advance Amt	Advance+	Advance+ Amt	Balance	Balance Amt	Balance+	Balance+ Amt
Carlow	125	118	€421,768.28	0	€0.00	93	€59,328.81	€0.00	€0.00
Cavan	428	418	€1,503,839.13	15	€21,577.15	357	€225,855.38	€13.00	€3,449.90
Clare	685	670	€2,449,460.44	114	€158,662.21	553	€355,689.87	€91.00	€22,573.05
Cork	992	954	€3,364,310.19	116	€160,256.74	765	€472,525.22	€83.00	€20,288.01
Donegal	993	955	€3,099,024.33	120	€147,393.30	531	€304,253.44	€77.00	€18,805.84
Dublin	17	17	€63,772.73	1	€1,699.99	14	€9,014.30	€1.00	€300.01
Galway	1,285	1,220	€4,186,695.04	94	€101,905.10	857	€528,188.50	€38.00	€9,601.52
Kerry	864	831	€2,998,477.15	178	€216,378.42	518	€325,026.51	€86.00	€20,932.20
Kildare	76	64	€226,328.10	0	€0.00	51	€32,197.04	€0.00	€0.00
Kilkenny	207	201	€754,015.49	0	€0.00	174	€115,542.61	€0.00	€0.00
Laois	191	185	€654,579.19	8	€11,056.15	160	€98,630.84	€3.00	€671.79
Leitrim	419	406	€1,474,117.59	39	€51,440.93	336	€215,214.21	€29.00	€6,781.22
Limerick	296	286	€1,014,037.13	44	€58,869.53	259	€162,345.79	€37.00	€9,272.29
Longford	341	332	€1,224,651.94	5	€5,745.69	303	€198,024.55	€4.00	€884.49
Louth	78	71	€246,745.65	0	€0.00	41	€26,469.86	€0.00	€0.00
Mayo	1,316	1,216	€4,152,188.15	129	€112,789.47	813	€491,267.85	€64.00	€10,361.99
Meath	195	192	€687,702.48	0	€0.00	166	€106,049.15	€0.00	€0.00
Monaghan	143	142	€484,904.20	5	€8,499.92	129	€77,502.34	€5.00	€1,500.08
Offaly	275	262	€995,684.86	17	€25,248.49	232	€154,739.45	€15.00	€3,863.54
Roscommon	547	526	€1,886,448.33	12	€8,713.93	465	€295,140.43	€11.00	€1,238.18
Sligo	362	351	€1,204,314.67	18	€21,852.76	264	€157,852.36	€7.00	€1,753.64
Tipperary	500	478	€1,773,773.93	44	€55,709.40	381	€247,989.41	€33.00	€7,553.87
Waterford	130	114	€403,956.67	6	€10,199.84	95	€59,908.34	€3.00	€900.09
Westmeath	263	255	€940,014.54	8	€9,325.55	234	€152,061.85	€6.00	€1,395.52
Wexford	262	244	€911,451.68	7	€7,953.33	219	€144,383.93	€6.00	€1,350.28
Wicklow	151	145	€565,851.23	16	€13,421.39	76	€50,950.00	€4.00	€1,158.88
TOTAL	11,141	10,653	€37,688,113.12	996	€1,208,699.29	8,086	€5,066,152.04	616	€144,636.39

table continued

GLAS 3									
County	Cases	Ad- vance	Advance Amt	Advance+	Advance+ Amt	Balance	Balance Amt	Balance+	Balance+ Amt
Carlow	127	125	€456,647.42	5	€4,137.69	46	29275.4	2	101.52
Cavan	534	521	€1,847,584.45	12	€15,613.16	258	158246.04	6	1224.78
Clare	803	783	€2,775,809.71	69	€85,902.27	377	230813.78	22	4330.84
Cork	930	895	€3,026,868.89	67	€96,175.84	599	347767.77	31	7892.39
Donegal	1,406	1,362	€4,192,533.44	116	€141,935.22	597	312984.21	49	11759.36
Dublin	19	19	€64,567.68	0	€0.00	9	6126.53	0	0
Galway	1,584	1,541	€5,292,703.80	93	€79,533.49	900	540840.48	20	4061.18
Kerry	762	734	€2,537,528.76	113	€126,944.02	371	223439.69	40	8668.05
Kildare	114	107	€399,728.36	4	€4,277.30	65	42440.29	1	42
Kilkenny	191	177	€673,061.32	2	€1,959.03	93	61141.73	1	288.14
Laois	231	220	€801,395.21	10	€13,037.61	89	56845.5	2	600.06
Leitrim	526	517	€1,805,624.72	38	€45,074.95	228	138236.52	8	1707.39
Limerick	402	396	€1,397,250.31	28	€35,088.10	282	175698.49	19	4272.84
Longford	328	322	€1,164,276.38	1	€885.32	157	100632.14	0	0
Louth	92	91	€326,537.64	1	€41.33	35	22217.65	1	7.31
Mayo	1,661	1,578	€5,262,748.22	122	€90,211.43	697	417098.6	42	5466.49
Meath	247	237	€848,537.28	2	€2,821.98	76	48521.42	1	198.02
Monaghan	334	332	€1,127,288.74	2	€1,792.95	205	119713.45	2	316.41
Offaly	294	284	€1,054,725.56	18	€20,885.12	86	56954.59	8	1190.98
Roscom- mon	715	698	€2,493,781.70	15	€17,433.09	304	189989.56	5	612.24
Sligo	492	479	€1,684,478.79	24	€22,214.86	135	83692.2	7	891.03
Tipperary	498	485	€1,799,265.61	32	€47,731.49	221	141826.95	10	2505.02
Waterford	120	111	€400,605.07	11	€14,049.78	64	38460.42	5	1284.91
Westmeath	278	272	€1,003,813.28	3	€2,623.91	129	80843.34	2	303.39
Wexford	307	292	€1,118,059.16	15	€21,568.93	89	57584.05	7	1999.41
Wicklow	199	191	€709,584.82	3	€3,647.25	36	23599.32	1	300.06
TOTAL	13,194	12,769	€44,265,006.32	806	€895,586.12	6,148	€3,704,990.12	292	€60,023.82

Sheep Welfare Scheme Data

209. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons in receipt of the sheep welfare scheme payment that have received their 2017 balancing payment; the number that have passed all payment approval checks and are awaiting their 2017 balancing payment; the number in receipt of sheep welfare payments that have yet to receive the 2017 balancing payment by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27303/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is outlined in the following table. The figures remain unchanged from the information provided in response to the parliamentary question of 13 June 2018.

Table 1

County	Number of applicants who have received a balancing payment as of 20th of June 2018
CARLOW	417

Questions - Written Answers

CAVAN	419
CLARE	203
CORK	990
DONEGAL	3531
DUBLIN	103
GALWAY	2391
KERRY	1678
KILDARE	358
KILKENNY	295
LAOIS	243
LEITRIM	681
LIMERICK	89
LONGFORD	219
LOUTH	227
MAYO	2997
MEATH	565
MONAGHAN	210
OFFALY	282
ROSCOMMON	1034
SLIGO	880
TIPPERARY	450
WATERFORD	239
WESTMEATH	402
WEXFORD	543
WICKLOW	825
TOTAL	20,271

Table 2

County	Number of applicants not yet cleared for payment - issues still outstanding as of 20th June 2018
CARLOW	25
CAVAN	21
CLARE	16
CORK	38
DONEGAL	88
DUBLIN	3
GALWAY	64
KERRY	29
KILDARE	22
KILKENNY	9
LAOIS	17
LEITRIM	7
LIMERICK	4

County	Number of applicants not yet cleared for payment - issues still outstanding as of 20th June 2018
LONGFORD	10
LOUTH	10
MAYO	46
MEATH	14
MONAGHAN	16
OFFALY	16
ROSCOMMON	29
SLIGO	13
TIPPERARY	26
WATERFORD	7
WESTMEATH	13
WEXFORD	55
WICKLOW	52
TOTAL	650

As further cases in table 2 are resolved, pay runs are put in place to process them to payment. Some of these cases might not receive a payment e.g. where the actions have not been completed by the applicant.

GLAS Data

210. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the length of all contracts for active GLAS 1, 2, 3 and GLAS Plus participants; and the year in which the contracts commenced and will end for GLAS 1, 2, 3 and GLAS Plus participants in tabular form. [27304/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): GLAS+ is payable to participants with Priority Environmental Assets and entitlement is established when the basic GLAS payment entitlement has been verified.

Currently entitlement to GLAS+ has been established for just over 3,300 participants of which 2,555 contracts end on 31 December 2020 and 800 have contract completion dates of 31 December 2021.

Public Sector Staff Recruitment

211. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason the Public Appointments Service did not run a competition for technical agricultural officers as previously advertised in February 2018; if the qualification levels have changed for these positions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27362/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): A campaign to recruit Technical Agricultural Officers was advertised by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of my Department on 15th April 2016 with a closing date of 5th May 2016. Two rounds of the competition were undertaken throughout late 2016 and the first half of 2017.

It was intended to hold a third round of that competition in early 2018, and it is this phase to which I presume that the Deputy refers in this question. In respect of this latter phase, and taking account of the time that had passed from the campaign initiation and advertisement, the Public Appointments Service considered the time lapse between the original round of applications and the proposed third round to be too great. A further consideration was that people who would have become eligible for the competition in late 2016 and throughout 2017 would not have the opportunity to participate.

Taking the above into account, it was decided appropriate to initiate and advertise a revised campaign. The current competition for the role of Technical Agricultural Officer was advertised on 18th May with a closing date of 7th June 2018.

The qualifications required for the current competition are broadly the same as those specified in the 2016 competition, namely a level 6 Advanced Certificate in Agriculture or Horticulture. An appropriate broadening with respect of the range of courses that are acceptable has been incorporated by allowing for courses considered equivalent to the above in areas such as animal health, animal welfare, plant health and food safety to be included in making applications.

Waste Management

212. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the Waste Reduction Bill 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27159/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I have welcomed the principles of the Private Members Bill on Waste Reduction and I asked the Joint Committee on Communications, Climate Action and the Environment to look at the merits of the proposals therein. The Committee have published their report on the Bill and there are clear issues arising that need to be addressed. Firstly, it is clear that the Bill as it currently stands cannot proceed without amendments. The EU recently published its proposal to address the top ten single use plastic items that make up approximately 70% of beach litter (cotton bud sticks, cutlery, plates, straws, beverage stirrers, balloon sticks) and these proposals do include a possible ban on some items. I fully welcomed the EU proposal on plastics, having written to the EU Commissioner in support of this, and I will not delay in introducing the necessary bans on the items provided for in the proposal when the EU legislation is finalised. However, Section 3 of the Waste Reduction Bill goes beyond the EU proposal to include plastic beverage containers, which are considered as packaging under the EU Packaging Directive. Under this Directive, I am prohibited from banning such items. Secondly, more information is needed in relation to the introduction of a Deposit and Return scheme. As such I cannot support a mandatory introduction of a scheme about which we do not have sufficient information to fully understand the impacts, positive or negative. The Joint Oireachtas Committee report supports these concerns, particularly around costs of implementation, the effectiveness of this in achieving the desirable environmental outcomes and any potential impact on the existing kerbside collection system. To address this, I have asked my officials to set up a pilot scheme which is in early planning stages. This will allow us to assess the likely impacts and costs of Deposit and Return in an Irish context.

Finally, in line with Oireachtas procedures, once a Bill is examined after second stage, the Ceann Comhairle may write to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform requesting

a money message which informs both the Committee and the sponsors of the Bill as to the decision received. The Ceann Comhairle has determined that this Bill could place a cost on the exchequer and as such, at this juncture the Bill can only progress in accordance with the procedures of the Oireachtas.

I have made it absolutely clear to the Joint Oireachtas Committee, at every opportunity, that I am very happy to help progress this important Bill. However, in addition to the proposals which are incompatible with EU law, I cannot agree to the compulsory introduction of a national Deposit and Return Scheme. To agree to a mandatory scheme without proper analysis on the likely effect of increased costs for families and householders or evidence of its effectiveness in improving the recycling rates in this jurisdiction would be financially reckless.

Broadband Service Provision

213. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the fibre optic broadband system at a location (details supplied) can be extended due to poor broadband connectivity in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27161/18]

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, 7 out of 10 of the 2.3 million premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband. 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. In April 2017 I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map, available at www.broadband.gov.ie, which shows those areas that will be served by commercial operators and those that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the NBP. This includes approximately 300,000 premises to be passed as part of eir's rural deployment of high speed broadband as part of the Commitment Agreement signed in April 2017

Both eircodes referenced by the Deputy fall within the townland of Ballybaun (Killiam By) in Co. Galway. The townland comprises a total of 9 premises. 5 of these premises are in an AMBER area on my Department's High Speed Broadband Map, this includes the first of the eircodes referenced by the Deputy. These premises will therefore be 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.

The remaining 4 premises, which includes the second referenced eircode (the commercial premises) referenced by the Deputy, are part of eir's planned rural deployment and will receive high speed broadband under that commercial deployment. Information on eir's planned rural deployment is available at <http://fibrerollout.ie> .

Data for Q1 2018 recently verified by my Department indicates that the company has passed some 145,000 premises nationwide as part of its ongoing deployment. eir has signalled that there has been some knock-on effects to the delivery of the 2018 milestone targets due to the severe weather impacts of both storms Ophelia and Emma. I have met with the senior management in eir and expressed to them the importance of implementing measures to catch up with milestone targets as a priority.

With regard to the rollout of broadband infrastructure, decisions made by private telecommunication operators relating to the rollout and siting of infrastructure to provide high speed broadband services throughout Ireland are undertaken on a commercial basis by competing service providers operating in a liberalised market. I have no statutory role or function to intervene in the commercial decisions of private operators, and therefore cannot direct operators regarding infrastructure installation or delivery of services.

For those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives are being undertaken 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.

A list of Broadband Officers, is available on my Department's website at <https://www.dcae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Broadband/national-broadband-plan/latest-news/Pages/Broadband-Officers-Workshop.aspx>.

State Bodies Data

214. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of positions on the board in respect of the board of agencies and commercial State companies under his Department's aegis in tabular form; the quorum required for a board meeting; the number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date; the length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27215/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The following table sets out the composition of the State boards under the remit of my Department, including the vacancies on each Board, as at 31 May 2018. The detail of all State Boards vacancies is available at www.stateboards.ie.

State Board	Maximum Number of persons on Board	Quorum Required for a Board Meeting	Ministerial Appointee Vacancies (Date of Vacancy)
An Post	15	6	One vacancy (11 December 2017)
Bord na Móna	12	5	None
Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI)	9	5	None
BAI Compliance Committee	8	5	None
BAI Contracts Awards Committee	8	5	None

State Board	Maximum Number of persons on Board	Quorum Required for a Board Meeting	Ministerial Appointee Vacancies (Date of Vacancy)
Digital Hub Development Agency (DHDA)	14	6	Five vacancies: It is not proposed to fill these vacancies given the proposals to merge DHDA with Dublin City Council.
EirGrid	10	3	None
EPA Advisory Committee	12	2	None
ESB	12	4	None
Inland Fisheries Ireland	10	5	Two vacancies (11 August 2017 and 31 January 2018)
Irish National Petroleum Corporation (INPC)	3	3	None
Loughs Agency	12	6	None
Mining Board	3	No specific quorum required*	None
National Oil Reserves Agency (NORA)	6	2	One vacancy (9 February 2018)
RTE	12	7	One vacancy (4 November 2017)
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland	12	5	One vacancy (1 October 2017)
TG4	12	7	None

*Section 169 of the Minerals Development Act 2017 provides that “the quorum of The Mining Board is all 3 members and its decisions may be made by a majority of its members.” This section of the Act has not been enacted as yet.

Mobile Telephony Services

215. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will request mobile phone operators to provide mobile phone coverage in an area (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27298/18]

216. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will request mobile phone operators to provide mobile phone coverage in an area (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27299/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 215 and 216 together.

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

Notwithstanding ComReg's independence, I recognise the frustration felt by Irish consumers where telecommunications networks are not always delivering the services people expect. Accordingly, I specifically included in the Programme for Government a commitment to a Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce. The Taskforce worked with key stakeholders to produce a report in December 2016, available on my Department's website, which contained 40 actions to alleviate some of the deficits. The Implementation Group I co-chair with Minister Kyne is overseeing implementation of the actions and comprises all key stakeholders responsible for delivery. This includes ComReg, which attends as both an action owner, and in an observer capacity in its role as the independent Regulator.

Minister Kyne and I published the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce Implementation Review 2017 on 21 February 2018, which comprehensively outlines the progress made in 2017 on the actions identified by the Taskforce. Of the 40 actions, 29 have been completed, with work on the remaining 11 carrying into the 2018 Work Programme. Following close engagement with stakeholders at the National Stakeholder Forum, an additional 23 new measures have been identified for delivery in 2018, which will lead to improvements for consumers across Ireland.

The fifth meeting of the Taskforce Implementation Group was held on 25 April 2018, and the Quarter 1 2018 Progress Report has since been published on my Department's website. This report offers progress updates on all Q1 actions.

In terms of addressing mobile coverage blackspots, various initiatives are under way:

- My Department and the Department of Rural and Community Development have worked to achieve a greater consensus around site selection for deployment of telecoms infrastructure and therefore improve mobile phone coverage.

- Both Departments also worked with a pilot group of local authorities to identify the issues associated with mapping local blackspots. This pilot exercise has been completed, with all local authorities having been asked to map local blackspots and identify infrastructure that could potentially be used to provide additional coverage on an economic basis. This exercise is ongoing under the 2018 Taskforce Work Programme. It is planned to have dedicated Geographic Information System (GIS) resources in place to support this.

- A review was conducted to identify recommendations to address blackspots. A focus group is continuing this work in 2018, to inform future policy development and initiatives. The work of this focus group will provide guidance on location categories where high quality mobile phone coverage should be made available as a priority, taking account of customer expectations.

- ComReg is also developing a composite national coverage map, which will, in tandem with its work on handset testing and awareness raising activities, allow people across Ireland to optimise the services available to them.

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

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

Haulage Industry

217. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of Irish trucks that use Britain as a land bridge to export goods to mainland Europe each week; his contingency plans if this land bridge becomes unusable due to a hard Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27315/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I am acutely aware of the potential impact that a hard Brexit may have on the transport of goods to and from Ireland via the UK land bridge. Ireland is highly reliant on the use of the land bridge as a route for the transport of goods to and from European continental ports via ports in Great Britain.

The Irish Maritime Development Office is currently finalising a study into the use of the UK land bridge by Irish importers and exporters. The purpose of this research is to establish the volume of traffic using the UK land bridge at present, the likely consequences that Brexit will have on land bridge usage and the various alternative options that may be viable. This research is expected to be completed shortly and will be published. This will assist my Department, other key Departments, and the relevant agencies in their ongoing preparations for a disorderly Brexit scenario.

Irish ports operate as commercial companies and they are examining the implications of Brexit and preparing in order to ensure as far as possible the smooth transport of goods into and out of the State. Irish ports are also open to any opportunities that may arise from Brexit.

Shipping companies are market driven and are already making provision for larger vessels with extra capacity on direct routes to continental Europe. A new larger vessel, the MV Celine, was recently launched from Dublin Port and will serve routes to Rotterdam and Zeebrugge. The MV WB Yeats, which will operate between Dublin and France, is due to be launched later in 2018 and a new ferry route to Santander in Spain commenced from the Port of Cork last month.

Tourism Promotion

218. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the degree to which his Department encourages the creation of historical or heritage journeys in respect of various heritage sites throughout the country in a way similar to the development of the Wild Atlantic Way and other similar initiatives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27352/18]

219. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the degree to which his Department has evaluated the economic potential of various local, historical and heritage sites throughout the country with a view to their further utilisation for tourism

purposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27350/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 218 and 219 together.

Promoting and leveraging the appeal of Ireland's history, culture and heritage for the benefit of tourism and the local and national economy is an intrinsic element of all the tourism experience brands. With specific regard to historical and heritage sites and their related tourism product offering, these are particularly to the fore in *Ireland's Ancient East*, which has an especially rich and diverse range of heritage experiences including passage tombs, monastic sites and medieval castles.

Researching and developing attractions and experiences relating to our heritage offering (including trails/touring routes and other ways of linking various historical or heritage sites), as well as associated promotions and enterprise supports, are operational matters for Fáilte Ireland. My Department is not directly involved in the management or development of individual tourism projects or programmes.

Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy's questions to Fáilte Ireland and asked them to provide further information. Please contact my private office if you have not received a reply within ten working days.

Driver Licence Applications

220. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if matters raised in correspondence by a person (details supplied) will be examined. [27136/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Question correctly points out, there is no fee for a driving licence for those over the age of 70. It is however the practice that we require a medical report every three years, on grounds of safety. As Minister, I have no power over fees charged by medical practitioners.

Appointments to State Boards

221. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the selection process and criteria employed to make appointments to the board of the DAA; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27172/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The selection process for new appointments to the board of daa is set out in the published Information Booklet for each appointment and these Booklets are available on the dedicated website of the Public Appointments Service, www.stateboards.ie. In line with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Sponsored Bodies, the criteria for appointments in each case are agreed between my Department and the Public Appointments Service, following consultation with the daa, and are published in the Information Booklets.

In addition, I approved new internal principles and procedures within my Department which work to complement the Public Appointments Service process and allow for appointments to be made with greater confidence in the ability of the selected person to contribute effectively to a State Board, including the board of daa. These principles and procedures are available to view on my Department's website through this link.

Bus Services

222. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the exact low emission technology for BusConnects have been determined; the technologies being considered; the details of the research and analysis that has been carried out into electric bus solutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27179/18]

223. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there has been a further detailed assessment carried out as part of BusConnects as to the key locations being considered for park and ride facilities along the radial road network; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27180/18]

224. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the provision of continuous bus lanes as planned by the Lucan to city centre BusConnects route will have (details supplied); his plans to prevent further congestion at this point; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27181/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 222 to 224, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy is aware, the BusConnects Programme aims to transform the bus system in Dublin. It will include a full redesign of the bus network in order to provide a better and more efficient network for passengers; an expanded and modern fleet of vehicles; new road infrastructure to facilitate bus priority and faster journeys for public transport users, and also upgraded facilities for cyclists and pedestrians; improved passenger information and ticketing technology; and transition to a lower emission bus fleet.

Last week, the NTA published a discussion document outlining the Core Bus Corridor Project that is part of a wider BusConnects programme for Ireland's cities, starting in Dublin and rolling out to Galway, Cork and Ireland's remaining cities. The NTA's document focusses on the 230 km of continuous bus priority across 16 core bus routes expected achieve up to 40%-50% savings on current journey times and the 200km plus of cycle tracks/lanes and pedestrian facilities that are emerging as the likely core bus corridors in and out of Dublin city under this new investment Programme. It also confirms investment in low emission vehicles.

According to the most recent (2016) estimates from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), only about 3% of all transport-derived CO₂ emissions come from bus and coach fleets. Therefore, converting these vehicles to low-carbon alternatives will have a limited mitigation impact on Ireland's overall CO₂ emissions; however, it will show some important leadership in this area and will undoubtedly begin to promote and normalise the use of non-conventional fuels and technologies to the public. Under the new National Development Programme, we have committed that, from July 2019 onwards, we will no longer buy diesel-only buses for the urban public bus fleet. Work is underway on preparing for implementation of this. In tandem, an up-to-date and comprehensive set of vehicle trials is being planned to commence later this year to help further inform purchasing decisions for new buses over the coming years. The technologies likely to be tested include full electrification, diesel-electric hybrids, and compressed natural gas; it is expected that the vehicles will be tested in both the GDA and in a regional city. The trials are likely to consider CO₂ emissions, air quality impacts, and contribution potential towards renewable energy targets as well as costs, vehicle availability, and operational/infrastructural requirements. In 2017, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport established a 'Green Public Transport Fund' to support the uptake of energy-efficient technologies for PSO operators within the bus and small public service vehicle (SPSV) sector and it is envisaged that in 2018 the NTA will employ the Fund to support the alternative urban

bus fleet trials.

Noting its responsibility with regards to this matter, I have referred the Deputy's queries to the NTA for consideration and direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Park and Ride Facilities

225. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of park and ride facilities at train stations; the cost of constructing each of these facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27208/18]

226. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount spent on an annual basis on each park and ride facility in operation in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27209/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 225 and 226 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA), working with the other relevant State bodies, has statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure and services in the Greater Dublin Area and, on a non-statutory basis, works with relevant local authorities in planning transport strategy in the Regional cities of Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford.

Issues relating to the provision of car parking spaces at train stations on the heavy rail network outside of these cities are an operational matter for Iarnród Éireann which receives Exchequer funding for such works via the NTA.

In light of the role of the agencies, I have forwarded the Deputy's questions to Iarnród Éireann and the NTA for further response on the matters raised.

State Bodies Data

227. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of positions on the board in respect of the board of agencies and commercial State companies under his Department's aegis in tabular form; the quorum required for a board meeting; the number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date; the length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27227/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Information regarding State Boards is available on my Department's website at the following link: [State Boards](#).

The quorums required in respect of each State Board is typically a matter for that particular Board and I have forwarded your query to the agencies under my remit for direct reply to you. If you do not hear back from them within 10 working days please contact my private office.

Irish Aviation Authority

228. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 511 of 29 May 2018, if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there has been an effective change in the way in which the IAA is recognising written examination certificates issued by the UK authorised examiners which are held by many student pilots in training to become qualified pilots (details supplied); if he will examine the matter in view of the fact that this is causing great distress for the students; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27274/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I am advised by the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA), which is the State regulator of pilot training and licencing, that there has been no change to the practice of verification adopted by the IAA. When seeking verification, in the interests of safety, the IAA always seeks such verification directly from the Competent Authority in other States with oversight responsibility for the activity.

However, I am now advised that a policy change within the UK Civil Aviation Authority - in relation to the acquisition and retention of data from theoretical examinations (including results) - has impacted on the CAA's ability to provide the required verification to the IAA as previously given. The IAA has informed me that it has raised this issue with the UK CAA, and I have instructed the IAA to revert to me and also to advise you when there is a resolution.

Child and Family Agency Services

229. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will request Tusla to urgently engage in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27205/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am aware that young people face many difficulties in their school lives and I believe it is crucial that issues such as bullying are dealt with sympathetically by those in authority.

With regard to this particular case officials in my Department have referred the matter to the Educational Welfare Service of Tusla and will revert to the Deputy with the response.

State Bodies Data

230. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of positions on the board in respect of the board of agencies and commercial State companies under her Department's aegis in tabular form; the quorum required for a board meeting; the number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date; the length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27214/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am responsible for appointment of members to the boards of the Adoption Authority of Ireland, the Child and Family Agency (Tusla), Gaisce and the Board of Management of the Oberstown Children Detention Campus. The below table displays the maximum number of positions on each board, the quorum for board meetings, Ministerial appointed vacancies on each board and the date each vacancy occurred.

Board	Maximum number of positions	Quorum for Board Meeting	Ministerial Appointee Vacancies	Length of time since vacancy
Adoption Authority of Ireland	7	As per section 100(6) of the Adoption Act 2010 the quorum for a meeting of the Authority is the Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson and 2 ordinary members, one of whom shall be a social worker with experience in adoption practice or with research expertise in child welfare, child protection or both	0	N/A
Gaisce	15	5 members	0	N/A
Child and Family Agency/ Tusla	9	5 (If there is a vacancy on the Board the quorum is reduced to 4)	1 vacancy	Position vacant since 8 January 2018.
Board of Management of the Oberstown Children Detention Campus	13	Under section 175(2)(f) of the Children Act 2001, 'the quorum for a meeting shall be 6 or such greater number as the board may from time to time determine'.	1 vacancy	June 2018

Domestic Violence Refuges Provision

231. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if five additional family accommodation units were opened in County Dublin in early 2018; if five additional family units in County Galway will be opened in September 2018; and if five units will be opened in County Clare by the end of 2018 in view of her statement in the media (details supplied). [27275/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Under the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has statutory responsibility for the provision of care and protection to victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

Tusla allocates funding to emergency refuges and a range of community based services to provide services to adults and children affected by domestic violence. This is currently undertaken through service level arrangements with external organisations in receipt of funding from Tusla. Tusla does not provide capital funding for these services.

This year funding of €23.8m was allocated to Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence services, an increase of €1.7m over 2017.

With regard to the additional accommodation to which the Deputy refers there have been a number of delays that are outside the control of both Tusla and the service provider organisations involved.

Tusla has advised me of the current status of the three areas to which the Deputy's query relates:

1. The County Dublin Domestic Violence Service which was awarded funding under the Capital Assistance Scheme, operated by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, provides emergency accommodation units for victims and their children was due to open five new family units of accommodation early in 2018. There has been a delay in the transaction to acquire an identified property, which it is hoped will be resolved shortly. The identified building requires some work, and it is hoped that the units should come on stream in Q4, 2018.

2. Clare Haven Services, based in Ennis, Co. Clare plans to provide a new development with additional independent units of emergency accommodation. These new units will replace the current six refuge units that rely on shared communal areas. The project received approval for funding under the Capital Assistance Scheme. Since the original plan was approved there have been ongoing discussions locally about structure and ownership of the proposed development to achieve the most effective service model. However, the development will not be completed before 2020. Tusla will remain engaged with the service provider to support this development.

3. COPE Galway which currently runs Waterside House refuge in Galway, has plans to provide nine independent family units of emergency accommodation in Galway. These independent units will replace the existing six refuge units that rely on shared communal facilities. COPE Galway has started the tendering process to complete the building work, through the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Local Authority. The closing date for receipt of tenders is mid-July. The original completion target for this project was 2018. However, due to the building location and the history of the site, the process to deliver these units has been very lengthy. COPE Galway expects that construction will start in Quarter 1, 2019.

Tusla will continue to engage with service providers and other stakeholders to support and enable the provision of additional emergency domestic violence accommodation in areas of need.

State Bodies Data

232. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of positions on the board in respect of the board of agencies and commercial

State companies under his Department's aegis in tabular form; the quorum required for a board meeting; the number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date; the length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27226/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): There are four agencies under the remit of the Department of Rural and Community Development, Pobal, Irish Water Safety, the Charities Regulator and the Western Development Commission.

The following table contains the relevant information requested in respect of the boards of these agencies.

Agency/State company under aegis of DRCD	Number of positions on the board	Quorum required for a board meeting	Number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date	Length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy
Pobal	17	Not less than 50% members	1 vacancy	7 months (due to a retirement)
Irish Water Safety	13	5	0	0
Charities Regulator Authority	13	5	0	0
The Western Development Commission	11	5	0	0

Leader Programmes Expenditure

233. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the €5 million allocated to the Leader programme as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27252/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Subhead A6 of my Department's Vote shows an increase in funding of €5 million for the LEADER programme in 2018 compared to 2017. The allocation under the Subhead has increased from €30 million in 2017, to €35 million in 2018. In addition, a further €5 million has been assigned to the LEADER programme from capital allocations carried forward from 2017.

The programme is administered by Local Action Groups (LAGs) which deliver funding in accordance with Local Development Strategies that have been agreed for each LAG area.

Expenditure to date in 2018 under the programme amounts to over €6 million. This includes the administration costs of the LAGs, the cost of their engagement with communities to generate projects, expenditure on individual projects, and the running costs of the programme.

Over 1,000 projects with a value in excess of €29 million have been approved by the LAGs to date, with more than 340 additional projects with a value of €19 million at an earlier stage in the approvals process.

Expenditure on the programme will increase significantly over the coming months as proj-

ects are completed and promoters submit claims to my Department for payment.

Rural Development Programme Funding

234. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the €3.7 million allocated to the national rural development schemes as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27253/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Subhead A5 of my Department's Vote for 2018 shows an increase in funding of €3.7 million compared to 2017. The allocation under the Subhead has increased from €15.283 million in 2017, to €18.983 million in 2018. This increase was provided to build on the progress made by my Department last year in delivering a range of National Rural Development Schemes.

My Department operates a number of schemes under this Subhead, including the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, CLÁR and the Walks Scheme.

Of the total allocation of €18.983 million for this year, €11.38 million is allocated to the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, €5 million is allocated to the CLÁR programme and €2 million is allocated to the Rural Walks Scheme. The balance of funding is provided for smaller initiatives.

I launched the 2018 CLÁR programme in March, with a closing date of end-April, and I will be announcing the successful applicants shortly. The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme was launched on 1 June, with a July closing date for applications.

This year to date, €3.3 million has been drawn down from Subhead A5. However, expenditure will increase in the coming months, in line with my Department's projected profile of expenditure, as projects are approved under the various schemes referred to above.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

235. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the €3 million allocated to the town and village regeneration as outlined in Budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27254/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Town and Village Renewal Scheme is a key component in the revitalisation of rural towns and villages and in sustaining our rural communities. The scheme was introduced in 2016 and €10 million in funding was allocated to 170 projects in the first year of operation.

In 2017, as part of the Action Plan for Rural Development, I launched an enhanced Town and Village Renewal Scheme with a focus on projects that could bring a positive economic impact to our rural towns and villages. The allocation for the scheme in the 2017 Revised Estimates Volume was €12 million.

I launched a further round of the scheme in April of this year, with an indicative allocation of €15 million. This represents a €3 million increase on the 2017 Revised Estimates allocation.

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme is administered through the Local Authorities who

are required to consult with local communities in identifying town and village projects for submission to my Department for consideration. The closing date for the submission of applications to my Department under the 2018 scheme is 30th June. I anticipate that up to 200 projects will be approved arising from this call for proposals.

Projects under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme are typically delivered over a 12 to 18 period and straddle more than one financial year. Since its introduction in 2016, the scheme has supported over 450 projects and is having a positive impact on rural towns and villages in terms of supporting improvements in infrastructure, public realm enhancements, and job creation initiatives.

Cross-Border Projects

236. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the €2.9 million allocated to the PEACE programme as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27255/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Programme for Peace and Reconciliation 2014-2020 (PEACE IV) is a cross-border programme co-financed through the European Union's European Regional Development Fund. It supports peace and reconciliation through actions that promote social and economic stability in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland (Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo). The programme is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) on behalf of the Irish and UK Governments.

My Department is an Accountable Department under the programme and provides funding under three themes - Shared Spaces and Services, Building Positive Relations, and Children and Young People. My Department's primary role in implementing the programme and developing projects is as an advisor on the PEACE IV Steering Committee, together with other relevant Departments from Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The total value of the current PEACE programme is €270m. Some €229m (85%) will be provided by the EU, with the remaining €41m provided by the Irish (€9m) and UK (€32m) Governments. My Department will provide around €3.7m towards the implementation of local authority action plans and regional projects in 2018.

Some €1.3m has been provided by my Department to date in 2018, with details of the funding provided per theme set out in the following table. I expect a full drawdown of funding by the SEUPB by year-end.

Theme	Funding provided to date in 2018
Children & Young People	€0.170m
Shared Spaces and Services	€0.450m
Building Positive Relations	€0.700m
Total	€1.32m

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme Expenditure

237. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the €1 million allocated to the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme

as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27256/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I assume the Deputy is referring to the additional €1 million allocated to Social Inclusion/Regional Development Supports in budget 2018. This subhead primarily provides funding to the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).

SICAP is delivered locally, under the oversight of Local Community Development Committees, by contracted Programme Implementers who work to improve the life chances of those who are marginalised in society, living in poverty or unemployed. The additional €1 million allowed an increase of some €0.5 million in the SICAP funding allocation for 2018. Spend under the SICAP 2018 to date is €27,968,550.

The remainder of the additional €1 million allowed an increase of some €0.5 million for funding outside of the SICAP for some groups who operate in disadvantaged areas or with disadvantaged people. This includes a number of co-funded projects with Dublin City Council such as the Dublin Inner City Co-operative and the Cherry Orchard Equine Centre. The 2018 spend to date is €449,653.

Back to Work Allowance Data

238. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a back to work enterprise scheme application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27123/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The back to work enterprise allowance (BTWEA) is designed to provide a monetary incentive for people who are in receipt of a qualifying social welfare payment to develop a business while allowing them to retain a reducing proportion of their qualifying social welfare payment over two years; 100% in year 1 and 75% in year 2.

A review of the person's BTWEA application referred to by the Deputy has been conducted by the central policy unit and a decision has been made to award the claim. A letter has issued directly to the person concerned confirming this decision.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

239. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the ring-fencing of carer's allowance will be considered for families of children with rare neurogenic conditions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27171/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means tested income support paid to people who are providing full-time care and attention to a person requiring such support. The type of illness or the medical condition does not determine whether the person meets the care conditionality

The person receiving care is regarded as requiring full-time care and attention where:

- He or she is so incapacitated as to require continuous supervision in order to avoid danger

to him or her/self, or continual supervision and frequent assistance throughout the day in connection with normal bodily functions, and

- he or she is so incapacitated as to be likely to require full-time care and attention for a period of at least 12 months.

Also the means test for CA is the most generous in the social protection suite of income supports. The means test applies disregards of €332.50 of weekly income for a single/legally separated person and €665.00 of weekly income for a carer who is married, in a civil partnership or co-habiting. This disregard applies to any means that a carer may have i.e. earnings, savings, property, and in the case of weekly earnings from employment the disregard is applied after PRSI, superannuation and union contributions are deducted from the gross weekly income (in line with the disregards provided for all other social assistance schemes). For a couple, the combined gross weekly means is then halved to give the carer's weekly means.

A carer whose partner is on the average weekly wage and has annual earnings of €38,199 may therefore retain the full rate of €214.

The main benefits of the payment and its current structure are that it can provide flexible support in many varied circumstances in its current form and therefore I do not consider it appropriate or necessary to change the scheme for specific conditions.

I hope this answer addresses the Deputy's question.

Respite Care Grant

240. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a carer's respite grant in respect of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed. [27191/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Firstly may I take this opportunity to extend my condolences to the person concerned and his family on their recent bereavement.

The Carer's Support Grant (CSG) formerly known as the respite care grant is an annual payment made to full-time carers who satisfy certain conditions.

The grant is payable automatically to carers who are in receipt of carer's allowance (CA) on the first Thursday in June of the relevant year.

CA continues in payment for 12 weeks after the death of a care recipient.

In this case as the care recipient died on 3 March 2018, the person concerned continued to receive CA at a personal rate of €126.00 per week until 30 May 2018. As entitlement to CA ceased from this date the person concerned was not entitled to receive the CSG 2018.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Bodies Data

241. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of positions on the board in respect of the board of agencies and commercial State companies under her Department's aegis in tabular form; the quorum required for a board meeting; the number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date; the length

of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27219/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The statutory bodies operating under the aegis of my Department are the Citizens Information Board, the Low Pay Commission, the Pensions Authority, the Pensions Council (which does not have a board) and the Social Welfare Tribunal.

The Social Welfare Tribunal consists of a Chairman and four other members, two of whom are nominated by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and two by the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC). There is currently one vacancy on the Tribunal which will be filled when the replacement nomination is received from ICTU.

The details requested in respect of the other bodies are set out in tabular form:

State Board	No. of positions on the Board	Quorum required for a Board meeting	No. of Ministerial appointee vacancies on the Board to date	Length of time the Ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy
Citizens Information Board	15	8	Nil	Nil
Low Pay Commission	9	5 (non-statutory)	Nil	Nil
Pensions Authority	3	2	Nil	Nil

Disability Allowance Applications

242. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a claim for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [27264/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I confirm that my department received an application for disability allowance from this gentleman on 21 May 2018. On completion of the necessary investigations on all aspects of the claim a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

The processing time for individual DA claims may vary in accordance with their relative complexity in terms of the three main qualifying criteria, the person's circumstances and the information they provide in support of their claim.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Payments

243. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if supplementary welfare payment will be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27300/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As

advised in the reply to Questions Number 24681-18, the person concerned was awarded an interim payment of supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) following the withdrawal of her widow's pension on grounds of cohabitation. The SWA payment had been awarded as an interim payment while the person was awaiting a decision on an appeal against the disallowance of her pension and was advised that a negative decision on her appeal would result in discontinuation of the SWA payment.

On 27/4/18 the Social Welfare Appeals Office advised the appellant of their decision to uphold the disallowance of widow's pension. Accordingly, the SWA payment was suspended on 10/5/18.

No further correspondence on the matter has been received from the Social Welfare Appeals Office. If there have been any changes in her circumstances, or in the status of her appeal, the person concerned should submit a new claim for widow's pension or supplementary welfare allowance providing evidence of same.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Payments

244. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason correspondence of 8 June 2018 was issued to a person (details supplied) in view of the fact they were out of Ireland for two weeks from 30 May to 15 June 2018; if full payment will be restored forthwith to avoid hardship; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27342/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Except in certain exceptional circumstances, disability allowance (DA) is not payable for any period in respect of which the claimant is resident outside of the state. On an administrative basis, DA allows for two weeks holiday entitlement in any twelve month period.

In all circumstances, DA recipients must inform the department that they are intending to leave the state in advance of travel and submit their travel itinerary showing flight details when they return.

Arrears of allowance due have issued to this gentleman. The department has requested travel itinerary from the person concerned in order to establish the person's entitlement during that time. The person's case will be reviewed on receipt of the relevant documentation.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

245. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person (details supplied) will qualify for a carer's allowance in respect of their spouse in the event of reducing their work outside the home to 15 hours per week; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27345/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): An application for carer's allowance (CA) was received from the person concerned on 21 March 2018.

It is a primary condition for receipt of a CA that the person being cared for must have a dis-

ability whose effect is that they require full-time care and attention.

This is defined as requiring from another person, continual supervision and frequent assistance throughout the day in connection with normal bodily functions or continual supervision in order to avoid danger to him or herself and likely to require that level of care for at least twelve months.

It is a further condition for receipt of CA that the carer must be providing full-time care and attention. A person can be considered to be providing full-time care and attention where they are engaged in employment, self-employment or on training courses outside the home for a maximum of 15 hours per week, provided that they can show to the satisfaction of a deciding officer that adequate care has been provided for the care recipient in their absence.

The evidence submitted in support of this application was examined and the deciding officer decided that neither of these conditions were satisfied.

The person concerned was notified on 30 May 2018 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

The person concerned submitted documents in relation to their application on 1 June 2018 and a review of this decision ensued. The outcome of the review is that the original decision is confirmed.

The person concerned was notified on 7 June 2018 of this outcome, the reason for it and of her right of appeal.

A reduction in the hours of employment is not sufficient for this application to succeed. The husband of the person concerned has not been deemed to require full-time care and attention.

In addition, if he was deemed to require full-time care and attention, the person concerned would also need to show to the satisfaction of the department that adequate provision has been made for the care of her husband in her absence.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Rent Supplement Scheme Payments

246. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an increase in rent support can be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27347/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The purpose of the rent supplement is to assist with reasonable accommodation costs of eligible persons living in private rented accommodation, where they are unable to provide for their accommodation costs from their own resources and do not have accommodation available to them from any other source. According to the records of this Department the person concerned has not made any contact with the office administering their payment. If the person concerned is experiencing difficulties they can contact the office administering the rent supplement payment by telephone at 01-6732155 or by email at *RentsKildareSouth@welfare.ie* .

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Exceptional Needs Payment Eligibility

247. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an exceptional needs payment will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27348/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As advised in the reply to Question No. 26140-18, the person concerned is in receipt of a jobseekers allowance payment. The rate of payment was reduced in May 2018 for a number of weeks due to the application of a penalty rate arising from non-engagement with the Department's Employment Services. Full rate was restored when the customer resumed engagement. The person concerned enquired with the Community Welfare Officer on 7/6/18 as to whether the amount of the rate reduction would be reimbursed but was advised that under current legislation this is not possible. The person concerned was also given some general information about Exceptional Need Payments and details of how to apply. According to the records of this Department no application has been received to date. If the person concerned has a difficulty with their rent payment they should contact the office administering their payment by telephone at 01-6732155 or by email at RentsKildareSouth@welfare.ie

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Exceptional Needs Payment Applications

248. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an exceptional needs payment will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27349/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Following Parliamentary Question No 23070-18, the Community Welfare Officer (CWO) made several unsuccessful attempts to contact the person concerned by telephone. The CWO has now sent an application form by post to the person concerned. Upon return of the completed application form, the application will be considered and a decision will issue to the person concerned. I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Ministerial Staff Data

249. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the name, responsibilities and salaries of all advisers appointed by him since July 2017, in tabular form. [27197/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I have appointed two special advisers in my Department since my appointment as Minister, both of whom work across a wide range of areas within the remit of my Department including Housing, Planning, Local Government, Water Services and Electoral Reform as well as liaising with the media and other Government Departments and advisers.

The names and salary details of both advisers are set out in tabular form.

Name	Payscale
Jack O'Donnell	Principal Officer (Standard) PPC pay scale (€84,973 - €104,507).

Name	Payscale
Jennifer Carroll Mac Neill	Principal Officer (Standard) PPC pay scale (€84,973 - €104,507)

Fire Stations Provision

250. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if it will be guaranteed that Ballyshannon fire station will remain open; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a commissioned report affirmed the best practice cover for the towns of Ballyshannon and Bundoran are stations in both towns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27127/18]

268. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he has received a request from Donegal County Council for additional supports and or financial assistance to avoid the potential closure of a fire station (details supplied); if his attention has been drawn to proposals being considered by the local authority to reconfigure fire services in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27263/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): I propose to take Questions Nos. 250 and 268 together.

The provision of a fire service in its functional area, including the establishment and maintenance of a fire brigade, the assessment of fire cover needs, the provision of fire station premises, is a statutory function of individual fire authorities under the Fire Service Act, 1981. My Department supports the fire authorities through setting general policy, providing a central training programme, issuing guidance on operational and other related matters and providing capital funding for priority infrastructural projects.

Donegal County Council, in partnership with my Department, has made substantial progress in modernising fire stations in Co. Donegal and has replaced twelve fire stations following investment of some €11 million through my Department's Fire Service Capital Programme since 2000.

I understand that Donegal County Council is undertaking a review process to inform a new fire station proposal in South Donegal. My Department has indicated that it is open to considering a suitable fire station project proposal for South Donegal from the County Council, and would welcome a proposal which would effectively finish the county's fire station construction programme. A proposal which fits with the normal fire station project criteria will be fully considered and, if appropriate, will be included in the five year Capital Programme currently underway.

I await hearing further from Donegal County Council on this matter.

Social and Affordable Housing Eligibility

251. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to increase the maximum income limits for housing assistance payment, HAP, and the mortgage to rent scheme; if so, when; if there is discretion on the limits for the mortgage to rent scheme such as in the case of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27160/18]

274. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government

if matters raised in correspondence from persons (details supplied) will receive a reply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27365/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 251 and 274 together.

The Mortgage to Rent (MTR) scheme introduced in 2012 is targeted at those households in mortgage arrears who are eligible for social housing support whose mortgage is unsustainable and who have very limited options, if any to meet their long-term housing needs themselves. One of the main criteria underpinning the MTR scheme is that it is a social housing option and therefore is targeted at those borrowers in arrears who qualify for social housing support as prescribed by the Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011. The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) programme is also a social housing support option available to those who qualify for social housing support.

It is a matter for individual housing authorities to assess a household's income for social housing support eligibility in accordance with the Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011 which prescribe maximum net income limits for each housing authority, in different bands according to the area, with income being defined and assessed according to a standard Household Means Policy. As Minister, I am precluded from involvement in individual housing assessments, such as those outlined by the Deputies.

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. As part of the broader social housing reform agenda, a review of income eligibility for social housing supports has commenced. The Housing Agency is carrying out the detailed statistical work on behalf of my Department and I expect the results of this review to be available for publication in late Summer 2018.

The Abhaile service, formally launched by the Government in 2016, is a national mortgage arrears resolution service, provided free of charge to the borrower and its aim is to help mortgage holders in arrears to find the best solutions and keep them, wherever possible, in their own homes. The unique element of Abhaile is that it brings together, for the first time, the full range of supports and services required by borrowers in home mortgage arrears. A dedicated adviser will work with the borrower and their lender to find the best solution for their particular situation. The Money Advice and Budgetary Service (MABS) acts as the gateway for the service and can be contacted by telephoning (076)1072000 or by accessing their website at: www.mabs.ie/abhaile.

Home Loan Scheme

252. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of home loans applied for; the number of home loans drawn down under the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme for each local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27182/18]

256. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of Rebuilding Ireland home loans approved; the number of loans drawn down; the average loan approved; the amount approved; the draw down; and the number of loan applications rejected in each of the months since the scheme was introduced in tabular form. [27198/18]

273. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of Rebuilding Ireland home loan applications received from each county in tabular form; the average length of time taken to process these applications; the percentage of loans approved; the average length of time to issue approval; the number of loan applications refused; the average time taken to process same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27333/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 252, 256 and 273 together.

As with the previous local authority home loan offerings, loan applications under the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan are made directly to the local authority in whose area the property proposed for purchase is situated. My Department does not directly collect information on the number of enquiries to local authorities regarding the loan or the number of loan applications received by local authorities.

However, as is currently the case, my Department will continue to publish information on the overall number and value of (i) local authority loan approvals and (ii) local authority loan drawdowns. Information up to Q3 2017 is available on the Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/house-prices-loans-and-profile-borrowers/local-authority-loan-activity>, and this information will be updated on a quarterly basis as additional data is compiled.

The Housing Agency provides a central support service which assesses valid loan applications that are made to the local authorities and makes recommendations to the authorities as to whether loans should be offered to applicants.

I have asked the Agency to centrally compile figures of the numbers of applications that it has assessed and the most recent figures, as at the end of May, indicate that the Agency had received a total of 1,499 applications for assessment from local authorities. This was made up of 540 applications from Cork, Galway, Kildare, Louth, Meath and Wicklow and 619 applications from Dublin. There were 340 applications received from counties outside those listed.

Of the 1,499 applications received, 1,150 were deemed to be valid. Of these valid applications, 876 had been assessed and 52% of these had been recommended for approval. The average turnaround time for applications underwritten by the Housing Agency at the end of May was 22 calendar days.

Each local authority must have in place a credit committee and it is a matter for the committee to make the decision on applications for loans, in accordance with the regulations, having regard to the recommendations made by the Housing Agency.

With regard to the values of the loans approved to date, figures are not available concerning the breakdown of amounts approved in the manner referred to. However, the Housing Agency has advised that the average loan amount for the 458 applications recommended for approval by the end of May was €189,133.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

253. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of social housing completions by each local authority in 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27183/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Data relating to Quarter 1 2018 Social Housing Delivery, across all local authorities, is currently being finalised and will be published on My Department's website when complete.

In 2018, I expect to see nearly 26,000 households having their housing need met. I have advised all local authorities of their minimum social housing targets across build, acquisition and lease both for 2018 and also for the multi-annual period to 2021, details of which can be accessed on my Department's website at:

<http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/minister-murphy-publishes-social-housing-delivery-targets-for-local-authorities-2018-2021/>.

In respect of build targets for 2018, a strong pipeline is already in place for local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies to deliver on these targets. The 2018 build target is for the delivery of 4,969 additional social housing homes, including 3,819 local authority and Approved Housing Body build units. The Quarter 4 2017 Construction Status Report provides project detail on the existing pipeline in place, which will support the delivery against this target. The report can be viewed at the following weblink:

<http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/minister-murphy-publishes-social-housing-construction-status-report-q4-2017/>.

Over the course of the first quarter of 2018, projects will have progressed further through the approval process and additional projects will also have been added to the pipeline. The Q1 2018 Construction Status report will be finalised shortly and will be published at that stage.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

254. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of social housing completions by each local authority in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27185/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In 2017, 25,901 households had their housing need met, with some 7,095 of these properties delivered under through the build/acquisition and long-term leasing mechanisms.

A total of 1,014 new build homes were delivered directly by local authorities. In addition, 761 new build homes were delivered by Approved Housing Bodies and a further 522 new build Part V homes were provided by local authorities and approved housing bodies, bringing to 2,297, the total of new build homes provided in 2017. A breakdown by local authority is set out in the Table.

-	LA New Build	AHB New Build (CAS and CALF)	Part V -New Build (All delivery streams)	Total New Build
Carlow County Council	43	0	10	53
Cavan County Council	2	0	1	3
Clare County Council	0	28	4	32

-	LA New Build	AHB New Build (CAS and CALF)	Part V -New Build (All delivery streams)	Total New Build
Cork City Council	33	0	0	33
Cork County Council	123	9	7	139
Donegal County Council	11	0	0	11
Dublin City Council	295	214	56	565
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council	38	0	137	175
Fingal County Council	99	54	101	254
Galway City Council	0	23	34	57
Galway County Council	31	23	0	54
Kerry County Council	10	0	0	10
Kildare County Council	28	66	24	118
Kilkenny County Council	29	19	3	51
Laois County Council	0	0	1	1
Leitrim County Council	0	2	0	2
Limerick City and County Co	111	7	9	127
Longford County Council	14	7	0	21
Louth County Council	25	93	1	119
Mayo County Council	3	7	0	10
Meath County Council	16	101	23	140
Monaghan County Council	39	7	5	51
Offaly County Council	5	0	0	5
Roscommon County Council	16	0	0	16

-	LA New Build	AHB New Build (CAS and CALF)	Part V -New Build (All delivery streams)	Total New Build
Sligo County Council	8	0	6	14
Sth Dublin County Council	0	45	80	125
Tipperary County Council	1	12	0	13
Waterford City and County Council	4	10	13	27
Westmeath County Council	21	2	0	23
Wexford County Council	9	32	6	47
Wicklow County Council	0	0	1	1
TOTALS	1,014	761	522	2,297

The significant expansion of the social housing build programme is evident in the Quarter 4 2017 Social Housing Construction Status Report, which was published on 19 April. The programme includes 846 schemes (or phases) at the end of last year, delivering over 13,400 homes, a very substantial increase on the 8,430 homes in the programme a year earlier. The full report can be accessed at <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/minister-murphy-publishes-social-housing-construction-status-report-q4-2017/>.

Repair and Leasing Scheme

255. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he is satisfied with the level of uptake of the repair and leasing scheme in County Meath under the Rebuilding Ireland project. [27190/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS) was initially piloted in Carlow and Waterford and the pilot has been rolled out nationally since 23 February 2017. The scheme is one of a suite of measures available to local authorities to bring vacant properties back into use. Since the national roll out, my Department has been working intensively with local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) to develop and implement the scheme. There have been a number of national and local press advertising initiatives, as well as targeted online promotion, in an effort to ensure that property owners who can benefit from the scheme are aware of the benefits.

I can confirm that at the end of 2017, applications in respect of a total of 820 houses had been received by local authorities nationwide. A total of 8 applications were received in the Meath County Council area, one of which was deemed suitable for social housing following an initial evaluation. No lease agreements had been signed. A detailed breakdown of the RLS data up to end Q4 2017 is available on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordble/overall-social-housing-provision>.

The nature of the RLS means that the period leading up to the signing of contracts-sourcing and inspecting the properties, and negotiation with owners-is the slowest part of the process. All local authorities are active in sourcing and identifying potential properties and it is expected that significant numbers of contracts will be entered into once that process is complete. Once contracts are signed, delivery is estimated at between 2 and 6 months, a fraction of the time involved for a build project.

Feedback from local authorities indicates that, in many cases, properties requiring extensive repair work, and therefore not suitable for the RLS, have been secured under the Buy and Re-new Scheme which facilitates local authorities or AHBs to purchase vacant properties for social housing use. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that the levels of vacancy recorded as part of Census 2016 have significantly reduced in the interim, particularly in urban areas like Dublin where many previously vacant homes have since been occupied.

It is clear from end 2017 output, that RLS has not yet delivered the level of new social housing homes envisaged. I have reviewed the operation of the scheme, as part of the review of Rebuilding Ireland, and I have concluded that the scheme has significant potential but there are areas where it can be improved to make it more attractive and effective. At the Housing Summit held on 22 January 2018, local authority Chief Executives were advised that, from 1 February 2018, a number of key changes were being made to the scheme. These include:

- a reduction in the minimum lease term required from 10 to 5 years;
- increasing the proportion of market rent available to property owners where they take on more responsibilities under the tenancy, meaning that up to 92% of market rent will be available; and
- provision of additional funding for property owners, over and above the current €40,000 limit, where the dwelling is a bedsit type dwelling being brought into compliance with the Standards for Rented Houses Regulations and made available for social housing.

I am making €32 million available for the scheme in 2018 and I expect local authorities and AHBs to continue to implement the scheme locally.

Data in respect of Q1 2018 is currently being collated and will be available shortly. My Department is actively engaging with all local authorities to accelerate the delivery of homes under this scheme.

Question No. 256 answered with Question No. 252.

State Bodies Data

257. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of positions on the board in respect of the board of agencies and commercial State companies under his Department's aegis in tabular form; the quorum required for a board meeting; the number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date; the length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27223/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The following table presents the current number of Ministerial appointee vacancies, the date when these vacancies occurred and the quorum for the boards of each State Body under the aegis of my Department.

Questions - Written Answers

STATE AGENCY/ BODY	QUORUM	MAXIMUM NO. OF POSITIONS	CURRENT MIN- ISTERIAL APPOIN- TEE VACANCIES
An BordPleanála	3	10	NONE
Ervia	3	11	NONE
Gas Networks Ire- land	2	6	NONE
Housing Finance Agency	3	12	NONE
Housing and Sus- tainable Communi- ties Agency	3	9	NONE
Irish Water	2	12	NONE
Local Government Management Agen- cy*	4	11	ONE VACANCY - VACANT FROM 29/09/2017
National Oversight and Audit Commis- sion	4	9	NONE
National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Com- mittee	No quorum	12	NONE
Ordnance Survey Ireland	5	9	NONE
Property Registra- tion Authority	4	11	NONE
Pyrite Resolution Board	3	7	NONE
Residential Tenan- cies Board*	3	12	THREE VACAN- CIES VACANT FROM 31/05/2018
Water Advisory Body**	3	5	TWO VACANCIES VACANT FROM 01/06/2018

*The LGMA and the RTB both have defined minimum numbers of board members. The decision to appoint members in addition to the minimum number is at the discretion of the Minister. In neither case do the current vacancies bring board membership below these minimum membership levels.

**The Water Advisory Body was established on 1st of June 2018, the recruitment process to fill the two vacancies will commence shortly.

Full information on the membership of the boards of the State Bodies under the aegis of my Department is published on the Department's website and is available at <http://www.housing.gov.ie/corporate/transparency-data/appointments-state-boards/appointments-declg-state-boards>

Housing Assistance Payment Expenditure

258. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the €149 million allocated to housing assistance payment as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27236/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Budget 2018 increased the Exchequer funding for the Housing Assistance Payment scheme (HAP) by €149m to €301 million, in order to meet the continuing costs of supporting existing households and the costs of meeting the additional 17,000 households, targeted under Rebuilding Ireland, to be supported by HAP in 2018.

To date in 2018, expenditure of €117.8m has been incurred supporting over 37,000 active households on the HAP scheme.

Social and Affordable Housing Expenditure

259. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the €31 million allocated to the social housing current expenditure programme as outlined in budget 2018; the amount has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27237/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP) supports the delivery of social housing by providing financial support to local authorities for the long term leasing of houses and apartments from private owners, developers, as well as new social housing homes build and acquired by Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs). Properties made available under the Programme are used to accommodate households from local authority waiting lists and are allocated to tenants in accordance with the relevant local authority's allocation scheme. My Department recoups the cost of the agreements that are made with private property owners, including AHBs, to the local authorities. Therefore, the Programme plays a significant role in facilitating local authorities to achieve the range of Build, Acquisition and Leasing social housing delivery targets that have been set for them over the period of Rebuilding Ireland.

The 2018 budgetary provision for the SHCEP is €115 million which represents an increase of €31 million on the 2017 provision. This is expected to fund the ongoing cost of the 10,152 social housing homes secured with support of the Programme at the end of 2017. In addition, a further 4,060 new social housing homes, targeted for delivery across the build, acquisitions and leasing streams in 2018 are to be funded under the Programme.

The amount of funding expended under the SHCEP at end May 2018 was €22 million with the full budget for 2018 expected to be used by year end. My Department is currently gathering delivery data from local authorities for Quarter 1 of 2018 and this will be published on my Department's website as soon as it is available.

Homeless Accommodation Funding

260. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the €17 million allocated to homeless services and emergency accommodation as outlined in budget 2018; the amount has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27238/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Budget 2018 provides for a national Exchequer allocation of €116 million for homeless services, which is an additional €18 million on the Budget 2017 provision. The purpose of the additional funding is to address the increased demand for emergency homeless services as well as assisting in supporting homeless households with long-term and sustainable housing solutions.

My Department does not fund any homeless service directly but provides funding to housing authorities towards the operational costs of homeless accommodation and related services. Under the funding arrangements, housing authorities must provide at least 10% of the cost of any funded services from their own resources. Furthermore, housing authorities may also incur additional expenditure on homeless related services outside of the Exchequer funding arrangements that apply. Therefore, the exact amounts to be spent by housing authorities on homeless services are a matter for those authorities.

Exchequer funding is provided through my Department to housing authorities on a regional basis. The following table sets out the funding recouped to housing authorities on a regional basis to date in 2018.

Region	2018 (to date)
Dublin	€36,983,247
Mid-East	€600,000
Midland	€502,128
Mid-West	€875,000
North-East	€357,520
North-West	€214,522
South-East	€1,250,000
South-West	€1,225,241
West	€845,894
Total	€42,853,552

Rental Sector

261. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the €9 million allocated to the RTB and Housing Agency to support social housing deliver as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27239/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Residential Tenancies Act 2004 regulates the landlord-tenant relationship in the rented residential sector and sets out the rights and obligations of landlords and tenants. The Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) was established as an independent statutory body under the Act to operate a national tenancy registration system and to facilitate the resolution of disputes between landlords and tenants. The support of social housing delivery does not come under its remit.

While the RTB has recourse to sources of external funding primarily via tenancy registration fees, these resources are not sufficient to fund the anticipated full operating expenses for 2018, estimated at €15.8 million. As a consequence, Exchequer funding of €4.39m is being provided in 2018 to support the RTB's operations. This grant amount reflects the expansion of the RTB's core functions as a result of actions and commitments under Rebuilding Ireland and the Strategy for the Rental Sector. A further €950,000 has also been provided for in the RTB's 2018 budget in relation to the establishment of a Deposit Retention Scheme. In total, funding of

€2.355m has been drawn down by the RTB to date in 2018.

The Housing Agency provides essential support to Local Authorities, AHBs and my Department in the delivery of housing and housing services and is provided with an annual grant to fund its operational costs. In addition, under the Pyrite Resolution Act 2013, the Agency administers the Pyrite Remediation Scheme and makes payments on behalf of the Pyrite Resolution Board. In total, provision has been made for €37.1m in funding to the Housing Agency in 2018 to cover its range of activities, €30m of which relates to the Pyrite Remediation Scheme. To date, funding of €15.147m has been drawn down, €11.560m of which is pyrite remediation related.

An Bord Pleanála Data

262. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the €2 million allocated to An Bord Pleanála to assist in speeding up the planning process as outlined in budget 2018; the amount has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27240/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Section 116 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 provides for the payment to An Bord Pleanála in each financial year of a grant of such amount as the Minister may fix, with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. The grant goes towards financing the administration and general day-to-day expenses of the Board.

The current expenditure grant allocation to the Board for 2018 is €16.8m, an increase of €1.6m on the corresponding allocation for 2017. In addition, the Board has been allocated a capital grant of €0.5m for 2018 to implement an ICT strategy which will facilitate the introduction of on-line planning services as part of a complete upgrade and replacement of its core systems. In the year to date, the Board has drawn down €8.4m and €0.5m of its current and capital allocations, respectively.

The increase in the current funding requirements in 2018 is attributable to a number of factors, primarily relating to increased staffing costs. In particular, additional staffing has been provided in relation to the implementation of the strategic housing development process introduced under the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016.

Meteorological Services

263. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the €3 million allocated to Met Éireann as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27241/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The €3m referred to relates to subscriptions towards international meteorological organisations, membership of which by Ireland plays a vital role in the provision of meteorological services by Met Éireann. To date in 2018, €2.7m of this €3m has been drawn down.

Social and Affordable Housing Expenditure

264. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the €326 million allocated to social housing construction and acquisition as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27242/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Additional capital funding of €403 million was provided in Budget 2018 for the construction and acquisition of social housing units by local authorities and approved housing bodies. This additional funding was assigned to the Local Authority Capital Programme for the construction and acquisition of new social housing, the Capital Assistance Scheme, which delivers housing for specific categories of need, and the Capital Advance Leasing Facility, which provides funding to approved housing bodies to facilitate the construction and acquisition of new social housing units.

The 2018 budgetary provision and the funding expended to date in 2018 under these programmes is set out in the following table.

Programme	2018 Budget	Expenditure to 19 June 2018
Local Authority Capital Programme	€638.727m	€243.804m
Capital Assistance Scheme	€88.800m	€23.310m
Capital Advance Leasing Facility	€91.706m	€22.809m

The overall capital provision for housing in 2018 is €1.14 billion and this will support the delivery of almost 5,900 new social homes through construction and acquisition.

Repair and Leasing Scheme

265. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the €26 million allocated to repair and leasing initiative as outlined in budget 2018; the amount has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27243/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS), as well as the Buy and Renew Scheme, has been developed to assist private property owners and local authorities or Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) to harness the accommodation potential that exists in certain vacant dwellings across Ireland.

The RLS is targeted at owners of vacant dwellings, who cannot afford or access the funding needed to bring their dwellings up to the required standard for rental property. Subject to the suitability of the dwelling for social housing, and the agreement of the property owner, the cost of the necessary repairs will be met upfront by the local authority or an approved housing body (AHB).

Data for end Q1 2018 is currently being collated and will be available shortly. However, at the end of 2017, a total of 820 applications had been received under the scheme. Local authorities were engaging with the property owners in relation to 573 properties, 31 agreements for lease had been signed and 9 homes had been delivered and tenanted. A detailed breakdown of the RLS scheme data up to end Q4 2017 is available on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision>.

It is clear from the end 2017 output that RLS has not yet delivered the level of new social housing homes envisaged. I have reviewed the operation of the scheme, as part of the review of Rebuilding Ireland, and I have concluded that the scheme has significant potential but there are areas where it can be improved to make it more attractive and effective. At the second Housing Summit held on 22 January 2018, I announced a number of key changes to the scheme which took effect from 1 February 2018. These include:

- a reduction in the minimum lease term required from 10 to 5 years;
- an increase in the proportion of market rent available to property owners where they take on more responsibilities under the tenancy, meaning that up to 92% of market rent will be available; and
- provision of additional funding for property owners, over and above the current €40,000 limit, where the dwelling is a bedsit type dwelling being brought into compliance with the Standards for Rented Houses Regulations and made available for social housing.

I am making €32 million available for the scheme in 2018 and I expect local authorities and AHBs to continue to implement the scheme locally. The amount that has been spent to date in 2018 is set out in the following table:

End May 2018 RLS Capital Spend

Local Authority	€
Carlow County Council	€39,889
Meath County Council	€8,698
Waterford City and County Council	€64,620
Total	€113,207

Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund

266. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the €25 million allocated to the local infrastructure housing activation fund as outlined in budget 2018; the amount has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27244/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Additional funding of €50 million over the period to 2020 was announced in Budget 2018 for a second call for proposals under the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund. The aim of LIHAF is to increase housing supply through enabling infrastructure such as roads, bridges and parks.

However, it is now the case that significantly increased funding will be available for enabling infrastructure projects through the new €2 billion Urban Regeneration and Development Fund and the €1 billion Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, announced under Project Ireland 2040. Local authorities will also be able to apply to the new Serviced Sites Fund which will support delivery of both off- and on-site infrastructure which can unlock local authority-owned lands in order to deliver affordable homes.

Given the cross-over between these funds, I have reviewed whether it is necessary to have

a further call specifically under LIHAF, and I have concluded, in consultation with the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, that the funds that had been allocated for the second call under LIHAF should be transferred to the new Serviced Sites Fund to increase the Exchequer funding available under the Fund from €25 million to €75 million over the period 2018 to 2021. This funding will help to speed up the development of affordable housing from publicly-owned sites and I will be issuing a call for proposals under that Fund next week.

Urban Renewal Schemes

267. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the €10 million allocated to urban renewal and regeneration as outlined in budget 2018; the amount that has been spent; the way in which the money has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27245/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Further to the announcement in Budget 2018 of allocated expenditure of €10m in the current year under the proposed Urban Renewal Fund, the Government has since launched Project Ireland 2040 which includes a €2 billion Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) focusing on cities and towns in excess of 10,000 in population, as well as a complementary €1 billion Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) for smaller settlements and rural areas.

The €2 billion URDF is aimed at securing more compact, sustainable growth in Ireland's five cities and other larger urban centres. This funding, separate and in addition to normal sectoral funding streams, is designed to leverage a greater proportion of residential and commercial development, supported by infrastructure, services and amenities, within the existing built-up areas of our larger urban settlements. The URDF will be a competitive bid-based programme that will operate on a multi-annual basis over the period to 2027.

An outline of the approach that the Government intends to take in relation to the URDF will be published shortly with URDF bids for funding invited on an initial three-year period to 2021, with the scope for further bids in 2019 and subsequently over the lifetime of the National Development Plan.

Having regard to the potential for synergies and overlaps between the URDF and the proposed Urban Renewal Fund, which it is envisaged will have a funding stream of €50m over a four-year period, the scope of the latter scheme is currently being reviewed with a likely specific targeted focus on tackling dereliction and vacancy in our larger urban settlements. It is intended that the details of the scheme will be published as soon as possible after the publication of the details and call for proposals under the URDF, which will issue in the coming weeks.

Question No. 268 answered with Question No. 250.

Fire Safety Regulations

269. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 220 of 30 May 2018, if a list of compliant buildings will be established which can be accessed by website in the interest of transparency to aid prospective tenants. [27293/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

When a building is constructed and occupied, statutory responsibility for safety is assigned by section 18(2) of the Fire Services Acts, 1981 and 2003 to the ‘person having control’ of the building. Local authorities have powers of inspection and enforcement under these Acts, which may be relevant where fire safety concerns arise in apartment developments.

In such circumstances, Fire Services work with building owners to ensure immediate risks are addressed and that plans are put in place for works to bring buildings into compliance. They have enforcement powers for cases where co-operation is not forthcoming, or progress cannot be made on an agreed basis.

In the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower tragedy in June 2017, and in recognition of fears expressed for fire safety, the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management were requested to convene and coordinate a Task Force to lead a re-appraisal of our approach to fire safety in Ireland. The work of the Task Force has now been completed and its findings are reflected in “Fire Safety in Ireland: Report of the Fire Safety Task Force”, which is available on my Department’s website at the following link: http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/fire_safety_in_ireland_-_report_summary_of_conclusions_and_recommendations.pdf.

The Task Force discussed the issue of fire safety in apartment buildings and states in its Report that the key to life safety in apartment buildings is a proper two-stage fire detection and alarm system, an evacuation strategy, the involvement of residents in preventing nuisance alarms and knowing how to react in the event of fire alarms being activated. There are a number of recommendations in relation to this area in the report, but these do not involve the establishment of a list of compliant buildings. The Management Board of the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management have now been mandated to oversee the implementation of the report’s recommendations.

Capital Expenditure Programme

270. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the estimated first and full year cost of increasing the housing capital budget to 2008 levels. [27307/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The 2018 capital provision for housing is €1.141 billion. The cost of increasing the capital provision to the 2008 expenditure level is €375 million.

The total housing budget for 2018 is €1.9 billion compared with expenditure of €1.7 billion in 2008.

Housing Assistance Payment Expenditure

271. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the estimated first and full year cost of increasing housing assistance payment limits at 5% intervals. [27311/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) rent limits were increased significantly in July 2016, including by up to 60% in some areas. The Government also provided flexibility to each local authority to agree to a HAP payment up to 20% above the maximum rent limit, where it is

necessary, because of local rental market conditions.

At the end of Q4 2017, 22.4% of the total number of households being supported by HAP were benefiting from the additional flexibility. When the additional discretion available to homeless households in the Dublin Region is removed, 16.7% of households nationally were benefiting from the additional flexibility. In those cases, the average rate of discretionary payment being used was 15.2% above the relevant rent limits. Data for Q1 2018 will be available shortly.

The previous revision to the maximum rent limits was proposed jointly by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and my Department following a comprehensive rent review process. The review considered a number of data sources, namely the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) database, Daft.ie Rental Market Reports and the CSO Rental Indices. Consultation and engagement with those administering both schemes was also carried out. In relation to the Deputy's query, detailed analysis would be required to provide the figures requested in order to ensure any increases reflect the market trends experienced under both the rent supplement scheme and the HAP scheme.

My Department monitors HAP data on an ongoing basis, as well as other key information relating to the private rental market. Indications are that the current HAP rent limits, and the flexibility to exceed those rent limits, provide local authorities with sufficient capacity to assist households in securing rented accommodation that meets their needs.

I have no plans at present to increase HAP rent limits, a course of action which could have further inflationary effects on the private rented sector and thereby have a potentially detrimental impact on the wider rental market, including for those households who are not receiving HAP support.

Housing Adaptation Grant

272. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the estimated first and full year cost of increasing the housing adaptation grant funding to 2011 levels. [27312/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I recently announced total funding of €66.25m for the Housing Adaptation Grants schemes for Older People and People with a Disability in 2018. This is made up of €53m exchequer funding, which is an increase of some 11% on the 2017 figure, with the balance of €13.25m coming from local authority resources. Increasing funding for next year to 2011 levels would cost an additional €13.21m, made up of €10.63m from the Exchequer, with a further €2.58m to be contributed by the local authorities.

I am conscious of the social benefit accruing from the schemes, particularly in terms of facilitating the continued independent living by older people and people with a disability in their own homes. This is recognised in the Programme for Government and as a consequence, funding has been increasing year on year since 2014. Further consideration will be given to increasing funding over the coming years in the context of the range of housing supports and provision being made under the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.

Question No. 273 answered with Question No. 252.

Question No. 274 answered with Question No. 251.

National Orchestras

275. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans in relation to the RTÉ Symphony Orchestra in order to secure the future of the orchestras; and the discussions she has had with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment in this regard. [26708/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Both the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment and I have welcomed the recommendations of the recent report which was commissioned by RTE and completed by Helen Boaden and Mediatique-RTÉ Orchestras Ensuring a sustainable future - included the main recommendations that:

- the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra should be a national cultural institution in its own right or within the National Concert Hall and

- the RTÉ Concert Orchestra should continue to be part of RTÉ, functioning as a classic 'radio' or Public Service Broadcasting orchestra, on the model of many such orchestras world-wide.

The report offers the opportunity now to plan a way forward for both orchestras and ensuring that they can contribute fully to Ireland's rich cultural heritage.

Officials from my Department and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, have maintained ongoing contact since the report's publication and a memorandum will be brought to Government shortly on the proposed next steps in relation to the report.

State Bodies Data

276. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of positions on the board in respect of the board of agencies and commercial State companies under her Department's aegis in tabular form; the quorum required for a board meeting; the number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date; the length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27216/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The maximum number of positions, the size of the quorum for board meetings, the number of vacant positions to be filled by ministerial nominees and the length of time such positions have been vacant are detailed in the following table in respect of the State boards under the aegis of my Department.

A process is currently ongoing with the Public Appointments Service (PAS) to identify suitably qualified members of the public for appointment to the boards of the National Museum of Ireland, the Irish Museum of Modern Art, the Crawford Art Gallery, the Arts Council, and the Heritage Council.

Questions - Written Answers

Board	Number of Positions (maximum)	Quorum	Number of current Vacancies (Ministerial nominees)	Length of time vacancy has been present
National Gallery of Ireland	17	5	0	N/a
National Museum of Ireland	16	6	2	5 months - Preparations for the booklet to advertise the vacancies are being finalised and the vacancies will be advertised shortly on StateBoards.ie
National Library of Ireland	12	5	0	N/a
National Concert Hall	9	4	0	N/a
Irish Museum of Modern Art	15	5	2	9 months - 6 months - The vacancies have been advertised and the deadline for expressions of interest has passed. The Department is currently working with PAS to finalise a short-listing process.
Crawford Art Gallery	12	4	1	1 year - Preparations for the booklet to advertise the vacancies are being finalised and the vacancies will be advertised shortly on StateBoards.ie
Screen Ireland	7	3	0	N/a

Board	Number of Positions (maximum)	Quorum	Number of current Vacancies (Ministerial nominees)	Length of time vacancy has been present
Arts Council	13	5	3	8 months -5 months -3 months - The vacancies have been advertised and the deadline for expressions of interest has passed. The Department is currently working with PAS to finalise a short-listing process,
Heritage Council	17	7	1	8 months - Preparations for the booklet to advertise the vacancies are being finalised and the vacancies will be advertised shortly on StateBoards. ie
Irish Manuscripts Commission	21	5	0	N/a
Údarás na Gaeltachta	12	7	0	N/a
Foras na Gaeilge	16	5	0	N/a
Ulster Scots Agency	8	5	0	N/a
National Archives Advisory Council	12	No quorum	0	N/a

Heritage Sites

277. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the degree to which her Department has evaluated the economic potential of various local, historical and heritage sites throughout the country with a view to their further utilisation for educational purposes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27350/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan) (Deputy

Josepha Madigan): Market research clearly demonstrates that culture and heritage form an increasing share of the reasons why tourists come to Ireland. This is also true of domestic tourism and is reflected in the increasing visitor numbers at all our publicly accessible heritage sites and facilities.

My Department fully supports the appropriate conservation of Ireland's heritage sites, both as important assets in their own right and to optimise their contribution to economic development and tourism promotion. It is in regular and ongoing contact with the Office of Public Works and Fáilte Ireland to agree and devise shared priorities and policy approaches with respect to the management of these sites and their presentation to visitors.

My Department's is also tasked with increasing public appreciation and understanding of our cultural heritage. The Department disseminates extensive information about heritage sites and activities through its publications and its online presence covering areas such as architectural inventory, archaeological monuments and historic shipwrecks. Specifically in the educational field, the Department's National Monuments Service has collaborated with Limerick Education Centre to produce a series of lesson plans and resources that is available to primary and secondary school students to promote greater interest in and knowledge of our archaeological heritage.

The Heritage Council, which is funded by my Department, also plays an important role in education and community engagement with heritage through initiatives such as Heritage Week and the very popular Heritage in Schools Programme.

Finally, our national parks have been subject recently to a rigorous appraisal in the context of the potential to deliver enhanced amenity, tourism and conservation value. As indeed has our outdoor recreational infrastructure.

I am acutely conscious in particular of the educative, scientific and wellbeing value of our entire heritage estate.

Heritage Sites

278. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which her Department continues to liaise with the Office of Public Works to ensure that heritage sites and buildings continue to be protected and if necessary sealed to prevent water damage; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27351/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department cooperates closely with the Office of Public Works to protect and manage national monuments in state care. There are around 1,000 national monuments at approximately 750 sites around the country and these are managed by the OPW on the basis of a Service Level Agreement with the Department. The National Monuments Service of my Department provides archaeological advice to the OPW on a routine basis and also with regard to the OPW Flood Relief Scheme, to ensure the appropriate protection of archaeology in the context of flood relief. All works at or in the vicinity of a national monument – to include any works to mitigate water damage - are required to be notified to the Department, which ensures that appropriate controls are put in place for the protection of the site.

Officials of my Department meet regularly with their OPW counterparts to devise and agree shared policy approaches to areas of mutual interest, to review operational priorities while also working closely together on a day-to-day basis in relation to individual projects. My Department is also providing €350,000 of funding to the OPW in 2018 to assist in the conservation and

presentation of historic buildings and national monuments in State ownership.

Film Industry Promotion

279. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she continues to encourage internationally the use of Ireland as a film location with obvious beneficial economic implications and particular difficulties encountered in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27353/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Irish film, television and animation industry is experiencing a period of sustained success and critical acclaim. Over the last number of years, Irish talent has been a consistent presence at the Academy Awards, with Nora Twomey's debut animated feature, *The Breadwinner*, leading the Irish charge at the most recent ceremony alongside other nominations for Irish talent including Saoirse Ronan, Consolata Boyle, Martin McDonagh and Daniel Day-Lewis. The industry's current flourishing is the result of years of investment in Irish creative filmmaking talent by Screen Ireland (formerly the Irish Film Board).

Screen Ireland is the national development agency for Irish film making and the Irish film, television and animation industry. Its statutory remit is to assist and encourage the making of film in the State and the development of a film industry in Ireland.

Screen Ireland promotes the use of Ireland as a location for international production and provides support for companies filming in Ireland. In addition it highlights the Irish screen industry at major international markets and festivals and promotes inward investment. Screen Ireland liaises with IDA Ireland and Tourism Ireland to maximise opportunities for the promotion of Ireland as a location for film productions as well as a tourism destination. In Budget 2018, I allocated an increase of €1.55 million or 9.3% to Screen Ireland to build on its vital work in supporting Irish film, television drama, documentary and animation. This increased Screen Ireland's its annual budget to €18 million. Last month, the Government's capital investment plan Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018-2027 provides for funding of €200m to be invested in media production and audio visual industries through Screen Ireland over the next 10 years which will have a positive impact right across the country.

The other primary mechanism through which the Government supports the film industry is Section 481 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 - the film tax relief scheme - which provides tax relief of 32% on expenditure in Ireland by qualifying film projects.

Arts Funding

280. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which the sector continues to attract support from philanthropists; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27354/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Private support for the arts is an important funding source and the Government continues to support this through tax incentives and other initiatives. While my Department does not have a breakdown of the total flows of philanthropic funding to the sector, the Programme for a Partnership Government does contain a commitment to encourage strong, mutually beneficial links between the business community and the arts community to assist arts organisations to capitalise on sponsorship opportunities and to develop business partnerships and fundraising skills. In this

regard, I recognise the important work carried out by Business to Arts for which my Department provides a small amount of assistance.

In addition, the Arts Council, which is funded by the Department, operates the RAISE programme, which seeks to enhance fund-raising skills in arts organisations with a view to diversifying the sector's sources of funding. It is designed to assist the sector in securing philanthropic contributions to the arts in Ireland.

In terms of other capital investment requiring co-funding, a €10 million investment scheme for arts and cultural centres is in progress, focussed on upgrading the existing stock of such centres around the country. The funding, which is being made available as part of the Capital Investment Framework 2016-2021, is dependent on matching funding being secured by project promoters and therefore provides an opportunity for philanthropic support.

In addition, the Government capital investment plan Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage, which provides for investment of €460m in a significant number of capital projects in our National Cultural Institutions over the next 10 years states that individual cultural institutions will be raising their own contributions (typically around 10%-15% of project costs) through philanthropic effort.

Creative Ireland Programme

281. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she can assist various local musical and dramatic societies in respect of annual productions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27355/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department funds the Music Capital Scheme which provides grants to groups and individuals for the purchase of musical instruments. This year an increased allocation of €245,000 was allocated to the Music Capital Scheme with funding awarded to 31 performing groups and 17 individual musicians. Music Network manages the Scheme on behalf of my Department and the organisation referred to by the Deputy can apply for funding under the scheme. Further details are available at www.musicnetwork.ie

While my Department does not fund local dramatic societies, the Creative Ireland Programme does support the work of local authorities in enabling creativity in every community. The local authorities are currently preparing long-term Culture and Creativity Strategies which aim to ensure that people and communities across Ireland will have the opportunity to fully realise their creative potential.

As part of this process, each culture team is consulting widely in relation to how it will implement and deliver the Creative Ireland Programme vision at local level. These Strategies will be accompanied by a separate Activity Programme for 2018 and for every subsequent year of the Strategy. It is expected that both the Strategies and Activity Plans will be published later this year.

The implementation of these plans will be supported by a sum of €3m (€2m from my own Department and €1m from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government) with each local authority therefore receiving approximately €96,000 this year under the Creative Ireland Programme.

Arts Promotion

282. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she expects to be in a position to enhance the promotion and development of an awareness of the arts and culture with a view to maximising economic benefit in the future; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27356/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Arts Council, the main Irish Government agency for developing the arts, works in partnership with and provides funding for arts, artists, arts organisations, public policy makers and others to build a central place for the arts in Irish life. Festivals, and cultural events are important in this context and the Arts Council received €68m in funding from my Department in 2018.

In addition to the work of the Arts Council, the Creative Ireland Programme is a high level, high ambition, 5-year initiative, from 2017 to 2022 which aims to place creativity at the centre of public policy. The programme is being led by my Department in partnership with other Government Departments and Agencies, local authorities, the third level sector, arts and culture organisations (including the National Cultural Institutions) and relevant NGOs.

As part of the Creative Ireland Programme, each of the 31 local authorities has established a Culture Team and in 2017 published and implemented local Culture and Creativity Plans which were supported by an allocation of €2m (€1m from my Department and €1m from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government). In total, these plans listed over 750 local cultural projects, events and initiatives taking place nationwide last year which gave us a snapshot of the rich cultural activity taking place in each country.

Each local authority is now in the process of drawing up more detailed five-year Strategic Creativity Plans which will be published later this year. These strategies will be accompanied by an Activity Plan outlining initiatives being supported by the local authorities in their respective areas. The implementation of these Activity plans will be supported by a sum of €3m (€2m from my own Department and €1m from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government). Each local authority will therefore receive approximately €96,000 this year under the Creative Ireland Programme.

The overall aim of these plans will be to mainstream and promote culture and creativity in the life of the nation so that individually and collectively, we can realise our full creative potential with commensurate economic benefits.

We will continue to work across Government in 2018, to further enhance Ireland's cultural and artistic reputation, particularly in the context of the recently launched ten-year plan "Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018-2027" which sets out the Government's objectives for capital investment in Ireland's culture, language and heritage.

This level of investment will transform our cultural and heritage infrastructure right across the country and will support the development of employment opportunities across these sectors.

Details of the funding being made available under this programme and the text of the plan itself are available on my Department's website at <https://www.chg.gov.ie/investing-in-our-culture-language-and-heritage-2018-2027/>.

Arts Funding

283. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which her support for the arts sector continues to result in continued activity and employment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27357/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My reply to Parliamentary Question Number 700 of 23rd January last, in which I set out the real and substantial funding increases across the cultural, heritage and Gaeltacht areas of my Department provided for under budget 2018, refers.

In addition to these measures, on 10th April last I was pleased to launch Investing in Our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018-2027 - a ten year plan setting out the Government's commitment for capital investment of almost €1.2 billion in Ireland's culture, language and heritage.

This level of investment will transform our cultural and heritage infrastructure right across the country and will support the development of employment opportunities across these sectors.

Details of the funding being made available under this programme and the text of the plan itself are available on my Department's website at <https://www.chg.gov.ie/investing-in-our-culture-language-and-heritage-2018-2027/>.

Turf Cutting

284. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she remains satisfied that all issues of concern to traditional turf cutters throughout the country in respect the various bogs affected have been amicably resolved to the satisfaction of all parties; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27358/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Ireland, like all EU Member States, is bound by the requirements of the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive. These Directives aim to ensure the protection of habitats and species which have been selected for conservation within special areas of conservation and special protection areas.

Significant efforts have been made by the State to resolve the issue of the protection of Ireland's raised bog special areas of conservation within the framework of the Habitats Directive. This has included intense and on-going engagement with turf cutting interests, the farming community, non-governmental organisations and with the European Commission, as well as the establishment of a long-term compensation scheme, including relocation where feasible, for affected turf cutters.

The National Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation Management Plan 2017-2022, published in December 2017, sets out how the raised bog special areas of conservation are to be managed, conserved and restored and how the needs of turf cutters are to be addressed, including exploring the options in terms of certain provisions of article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

The Review of Raised Bog Natural Heritage Area Network, published in January 2014, concluded that Ireland could more effectively achieve conservation of threatened raised bog habitat through focused protection and restoration of a reconfigured network. Arising from this review, the Wildlife (Amendment) Bill 2016 has been presented to Dáil Éireann and is proceeding through the necessary stages in the Houses of the Oireachtas. Its purpose is to provide for the implementation of a reconfiguration of the natural heritage area network arising from the 2014 Review.

15,594 annual payments and 994 deliveries of turf have been made in respect of applications received under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme for raised bog special areas of conservation and natural heritage areas. In addition, 1870 once-off incentive payments of €500 have been made.

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Relocation of turf cutters to non-designated bogs is a complex process. Notwithstanding this, progress in relocation has been achieved in a number of cases. In addition, my Department is moving forward in the relocation process for a number of sites.

Final resolution of all issues in relation to the protection of Ireland's protected raised bogs will only be brought about by everyone working together, within the law, with my Department and with the Peatlands Council, which was established for the purpose of ensuring the input from all stakeholders.

Culture Ireland

285. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the degree to which she continues to liaise with local voluntary groups throughout County Kildare and countrywide in respect of various grant aid available for local productions involved in the promotion of the arts through community effort; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27359/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Enabling creativity in every community is a key strand of the Creative Ireland Programme. To facilitate community engagement with creative activities, each of the 31 local authorities has established a Culture Team and has a designated Creative Ireland co-ordinator.

In 2017, each local authority published and implemented local Culture and Creativity Plans which were supported by an allocation of €2m (€1m from my Department and €1m from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government). In total, these plans listed over 750 local cultural projects, events and initiatives taking place nationwide last year which gave us a snapshot of the rich cultural activity taking place in each country. The 2017 plan for Kildare can be accessed through this link: <https://creative.ireland.ie/en/library/kildare>. The Department does not manage the application processes for these funding applications and is not prescriptive as to which creative activity should be prioritised.

Each local authority is now in the process of drawing up more detailed five-year Strategic Creativity Plans which will be published later this year. These strategies will be accompanied by an Activity Plan outlining initiatives being supported by the local authorities in their respective areas. The implementation of these Activity plans will be supported by a sum of €3m (€2m from my own Department and €1m from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government). Each local authority including Kildare County Council will therefore receive approximately €96,000 this year under the Creative Ireland Programme.

In addition, each local authority has been allocated additional funding to host Cruinniú na nÓg, a day of youthful creativity that will be held this weekend coming (23 June 2018) and which is specifically targeted at children and young people. Over 500 free events are happening for Cruinniú na nÓg nationwide. Further details including those events happening in Kildare can be found at <https://creative.ireland.ie/cruinniú/>

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