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 5, inclusive, answered orally.
Questions Nos. 6 and 7 resubmitted.

Taoiseach’s Meetings and Engagements

8. Deputy Brendan Howlin asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his meeting with the European Commission President, Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker. [27718/18]

9. Deputy Eamon Ryan asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his recent meeting with Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker. [28052/18]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 8 and 9 together.

I was pleased to welcome the Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker, to Government Buildings on Thursday 21 June, where we had a very constructive and friendly meeting.

This was President Juncker’s first visit to Dublin in his current role. He was accompanied by Commissioner Hogan and Michel Barnier, the EU’s Chief Brexit Negotiator.

At our meeting we discussed the state of play in the Brexit negotiations in advance of the June European Council.

Mr. Barnier reiterated his assessment that serious divergences remain between the EU and the UK on how to resolve the border issue.

As the EU side has made clear, the Withdrawal Agreement must contain a fully operational backstop so there can be no hard border on this island in the future, whatever circumstances prevail.

For there to be a Withdrawal Agreement – and a period of transition – there has to be full agreement on all issues.

As we both made clear, there is now an urgent need to intensify efforts if we are to conclude a Withdrawal Agreement and have it operational by the time the UK leaves the EU next March.

I, of course, took the opportunity to convey my sincere appreciation to both President Juncker and Michel Barnier for their unwavering support and solidarity throughout the negotiations - as the President reiterated when he spoke in this Chamber. It is clear that EU partners remain absolutely steadfast in their support around the Irish issues.
We also discussed a number of other important EU issues ahead of the June European Council, including migration.

While noting Ireland was less directly affected than other Member States, I made clear our wish to play our part in developing a comprehensive EU approach, based on ensuring strong external borders; solidarity between Member States; and working in partnership with countries of origin, including in Africa, to underpin political and economic development, so that people can enjoy better lives and opportunities in their home countries.

Questions Nos. 10 to 65, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 66 to 75, inclusive, answered orally.

Regional Enterprise Development Fund

76. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation when successful applicants under the 2018 regional enterprise development fund will be announced; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30277/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen):** The Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) is a €60 million competitive fund aimed at supporting significant regional initiatives to build on sectoral strengths and/or to better leverage identified resources to improve enterprise capability. The REDF is funded by my Department and administered by Enterprise Ireland and is being made available over the period 2017-2020 under two competitive calls. The first call was announced in May 2017, with successful applicants announced on 4 December 2017.

21 projects were funded totaling €30.5m in aggregate grant support. All regions secured funding under the first call.

Call Two of the REDF closed on 28 June 2018.

All applications received are now being checked against published eligibility criteria. Eligible applications will then go through a seven-stage assessment process.

This includes: assessment against scheme criteria by EI Regional Executives; simultaneous assessment of value and impact for money, and viability and sustainability (carried out by an independent commercial evaluator); evaluation by two panels; recommendation to the Enterprise Ireland Investment Committee; and review by a Special Advisory Committee.

Finally, REDF applications recommended for funding will be submitted to the Board of Enterprise Ireland. The target date for this is 14th November 2018.

After the Board decision, I will publish the ‘conditional grant’ amounts offered to successful projects.

All applicants considered for funding support must reach a minimum score of 60% to be eligible for funding support.

In order to ensure a balanced regional spread, I have committed to ensuring that each region will benefit by at least €2 million from the overall Fund once the required standard for projects is met under the evaluation criteria.
Questions Nos. 77 and 78 answered orally.

Brexit Issues

79. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the degree to which she continues to monitor business openings and opportunities arising from Brexit with a view to maximisation of employment here post Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30620/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan):** As Minister, I am fully focused on ensuring that we are in a position to make the most of any potential Brexit-related opportunities. I am also fully confident that my Department and the enterprise agencies under my remit are doing everything they can to capitalise on any opportunities that Brexit presents.

In Budget 2018 a further additional €3m in pay funding was provided to the enterprise agencies to support recruitment and assist in their response to the UK’s withdrawal from the European Union. That additional €3 million will support the recruitment of 40-50 staff across the Department and its Agencies to meet the Brexit challenge. This brings the number of new Brexit related staff posts to around 100 in the last two years and demonstrates the Department’s determination to ensure that it, together with its Offices and Agencies, are sufficiently resourced to meet the Brexit challenge.

As per its Brexit-strategy, IDA Ireland has continued to engage with its clients - supported by a targeted marketing campaign - to highlight Ireland’s advantages in a post-Brexit context. The reasons why companies invest in Ireland are well-known: the availability of talent, the ease of doing business, a competitive and transparent taxation regime, positive demographics, a common law system and, critically, Ireland’s continued access to EU markets. This approach has worked well as IDA Ireland has secured a substantial number of Brexit-related investments in 2017 and 2018.

The IDA’s mid-year results for 2018 clearly indicate that we can continue to rely on the selling points that make investing in Ireland so attractive in the first place. In fact, the Agency has indicated that in excess of 40 companies across the Financial Services, Life Sciences, Technology and Engineering sectors have chosen Ireland as a result of Brexit. I can state with certainty that as Brexit negotiations intensify in the time ahead, IDA Ireland will be continuing its efforts to attract mobile investment by highlighting Ireland’s suitability as a location for international business and by constantly engaging with clients across its entire portfolio.

In addition, IDA Ireland continues to work on ensuring that the Agency’s strategy is fit for purpose in light of Brexit. In 2018, the agency has reorganised its European footprint, with the United Kingdom now being treated as a separate territory from the rest of Europe and continental European business being managed from the Frankfurt office.

Enterprise Ireland also provides a range of supports that exist to help companies plan for both the opportunities and risks that Brexit poses. While the outcome of the Brexit negotiations remains uncertain, Enterprise Ireland is actively supporting Irish companies to respond to the challenges and opportunities posed by Brexit and to take the necessary steps to ensure they are more innovative, competitive and market diversified to tackle the challenges ahead.

Budget 2018 also contained some important pro-business measures to help companies compete in the face of ‘Brexit’ including the €300m Brexit Loan Scheme which will provide af-
fordable financing to Irish businesses that are either currently impacted by Brexit or will be in the future. It will be open to all trading SMEs and large firms employing less than 500 people.

**Industrial Disputes**

80. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on an industrial dispute (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30631/18]

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

At the outset, I must emphasise that Ireland’s system of industrial relations is, essentially, voluntary in nature and responsibility for the resolution of industrial disputes between employers and workers, rests 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 and the Labour Court, to support parties in their efforts to resolve their differences. These bodies are independent in the delivery of their quasi-judicial functions, in which I as Minister have no role. This approach has served Ireland well over the years and in a large number of high profile disputes.

This particular dispute was the subject of a Labour Court recommendation last April which urged the parties to engage with each other in order to seek agreement in relation to the matters at issue. Furthermore, the Court recommended 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. In line with the voluntary nature of industrial relations in Ireland, recommendations of the Labour Court made under industrial relations legislation are not binding on the parties.

I understand it is the company’s position that it does not recognise trade unions but has in place an internal mechanism for employee engagement. Under Irish law there is no obligation on employers to recognise trade unions. However, successive Governments have committed to the concept of collective bargaining and to this end, legislation was introduced in 2015 in the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 to strengthen the ability of workers to collectively engage with employers.

The 2015 legislation allows for application to be made to the Labour Court to examine the issue of independence of internal employee engagement mechanisms in instances where it is contested that such mechanism is not genuinely independent of the employer. If the Court finds that the mechanism is not independent it can then proceed to hear the dispute at issue.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise the need for workers and employers to make every effort to reach a resolution in this dispute which presents a significant inconvenience for members of the public. The dispute handling mechanisms of the State are of course willing, where possible, to assist the parties in coming to a resolution. This will ensure a positive outcome for the employees, the company and the customers of the company.

**Enterprise Support Schemes**
81. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the support available to female entrepreneurs to start and scale up small and medium businesses; the details and available funding under the competitive start fund for female entrepreneurs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30457/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** A key focus of the Government’s enterprise strategy, as set out in Enterprise 2025 Renewed, which I published earlier this year, is to ensure we continue to enhance the business environment so that it is conducive to entrepreneurship, start-up and growth of Irish-own enterprises across all strands of the economy and society.

The most recent Global Entrepreneurship Monitor showed that Ireland’s rate of entrepreneurship among women is the 7th highest in Europe. However, men are still twice as likely to be entrepreneurs as women in Ireland.

Female founders have traditionally been underrepresented in start-ups, and that is why my Department and its agencies have a range of initiatives aimed at supporting women to start and scale businesses that provide quality jobs throughout the country.

Enterprise Ireland is committed to supporting cohorts of ambitious, capable founders, and placing them on faster growth trajectories. Research undertaken by Enterprise Ireland in 2012 found that there were a number of key inhibitors to female entrepreneurship rates, and it developed an integrated strategy to address these issues and increase the number of female-founded start-ups in Ireland.

One of the key ways in which Enterprise Ireland supports female entrepreneurship is through its dedicated Competitive Start Funds. The first Competitive Start Fund for Female Entrepreneurs was launched in 2012, and since then there have been 8 dedicated female competitive start funds.

The most recent Competitive Start Fund for female entrepreneurs, which I launched earlier this year, made a total of €1m funding available for up to 20 female-led companies.

The demand is there. Enterprise Ireland received over 100 funding applications for this Fund, and the final selection for funding is currently taking place.

In 2017, 46 per cent of all companies who received CSF investment from Enterprise Ireland were female founded.

Every year Enterprise Ireland holds a Fuelling Ambition Roadshow, which aims to encourage, support and drive the ambition of female entrepreneurs (existing and new). A total of 7 roadshow events were held in 2018, attended by c600 female entrepreneurs, across the country.

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are also actively engaged in encouraging and inspiring an increase in female-led businesses through initiatives such as the annual National Women’s Enterprise Day and the Women in Business Networks. In addition, 61% of participants attending LEO training programmes in 2017 were female with 46% of the LEO mentoring participants female.

Another key Enterprise Ireland supported initiative is the ‘Going for Growth’ programme. Currently in its 10th cycle, the initiative supports female entrepreneurs who have been trading for at least two years and are strongly focused on growth. Feedback shows that participants’ businesses experienced a growth in sales over the 9th cycle of over €20million and employment rose by 17.5%.
We are making progress and I feel confident that we can achieve further increases in the future.

**Household Waste Collection Price Monitoring Group**

82. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission has reported on the operation of the household waste collection market; if this report has been published; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30639/18]

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

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

The study will assess the nature and scale of consumer and operator issues in the household waste collection market and consider if the introduction of an enhanced regulatory regime could efficiently address these issues, in the short and long term. It will include the following elements:

1. Research on Current Issues in the Waste Sector;
2. An Economic Assessment of the Household Waste Collection Market;
3. An Overview of Waste Collection in Other Countries; and
4. Recommendations

To date, I am informed that the CCPC has carried out an extensive series of interviews and meetings with over 20 relevant stakeholders in the waste market including the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and other entities with a policy or a regulatory role (at national or regional level), academics, representative groups and individual household waste collection operators.

In addition, it has also conducted desk based research, issued a request for information from over 40 domestic operators, commissioned consumer research and an external econometric analysis, and engaged with other national competition agencies on how waste markets operate in their jurisdictions. The CCPC has also undertaken a public consultation to collect information on the household waste collection market and to gather the views of stakeholders in a formal capacity.

I understand this exercise is still underway and it is anticipated that the report will be finalised over the summer months. The issue of publication will be considered at that stage.

**Proposed Legislation**

83. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the
position regarding the introduction of legislation to enhance the powers of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board in view of the recommendation in the cost of motor insurance report; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30634/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): On the 27th June 2017, the Government gave approval to the drafting of the Personal Injuries Board (PIAB) (Amendment) Bill along the lines of the General Scheme. The purpose of the Bill is to amend the existing legislation to strengthen PIAB in terms of operational issues to ensure greater compliance with the PIAB process and encourage more claims to be settled through the PIAB model.

The Board facilitates objective, fair and transparent assessments of damages in personal injury cases at a low delivery cost and in timely non-adversarial manner that is a far shorter timeframe than possible through litigation which often takes several years.

According to PIAB data 33,114 new personal injury claims were submitted to PIAB in 2017. PIAB processing costs were 6.2% of awards – this is a fraction of the possible costs claims being handled required litigation. The average time to assess a personal injury claim was 7.3 months compared to several years if litigation is involved.

The average PIAB award in 2017 was €24,879. Award values vary depending on the nature and severity of cases received. This demonstrates that the PIAB model continues to deliver major benefits, by providing a low-cost, quick and fair option in injury compensation.


This is a technical and complex piece of legislation and it required careful consideration during drafting in conjunction with the Office of the Attorney General.

Drafting of the Bill has been finalised by the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel and I will shortly seek Government approval for publication of the Bill.

The PIAB model is a positive one for society as a whole as it delivers compensation more quickly, with lower costs. Therefore, encouraging more claimants to finalise their cases through the PIAB model rather than resorting to litigation should lead to cost savings in the claims environment that will benefit consumers and businesses.

Trade Relations

84. Deputy Michael Moynihan asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the economic nationalism now being practised in the United States of America; and the actions being taken to counteract this policy. [26560/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In support of economic progress and good jobs for our people, Ireland has embraced free trade and is one of the world’s most open, export-based economies, which depends on open access to international markets for sustainable and continued economic growth. This has been an approach shared by many like-minded countries and one which has enabled the EU reach a series of Free
Trade Agreements with partners across the globe to the betterment of the living standards of our citizens.

I am, as is the Irish Government, and our EU partners, disappointed with the current direction of US trade policy, whereby the pursuit of bilateral negotiations has supplanted longstanding commitments to multilateralism which in turn is causing turbulence in the global markets and adding to uncertainty for industry.

The EU Commission, which leads on Trade Policy for the Member States under the Treaties, and working in full consultation with the Member States, has been preparing over the last few months a measured, proportionate, and WTO-compliant response to specific US actions, as well as maintaining dialogue on issues of legitimate concern to both the EU and US. In this regard, the EU is pursuing a specific line of action in relation to the steel and aluminium tariffs imposed by the US. EU Leaders have also endorsed a positive agenda for dialogue on trade issues with the US once the steel and aluminium tariffs are lifted insofar as the Union is concerned. The EU and its Member States are also working with other like-minded countries - such as Japan, Canada and Mexico - to develop an agreed approach to issues of concern. We continue, of course, to keep open the lines of communication with the US Administration and other key “influencers”.

The US has sought to use the threat of tariffs as leverage to obtain trade concessions from the EU and the EU response signifies EU strength and unity by responding, appropriately and proportionately, in the face of such unilateral, non-WTO-compliant, actions. At national level, we continue to monitor potential impacts of the trade measures being taken by the US, as well as those being contemplated. We remain alive to the fact that while certain actions may have limited impact at a macro level, this could possibly mask individual firm level impacts. To this end, my Department and its agencies are keeping the situation under review. Indeed, I convened a meeting of my Enterprise Forum on Brexit and Global Challenges last week to discuss our strategy and hear, first hand, from a variety of representative bodies, their issues and concerns.

Job Creation Targets

85. Deputy Peter Burke asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the steps IDA Ireland is taking to increase job creation in counties Longford and Westmeath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30276/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department and its agencies are working towards ambitious targets to ensure that employment and investment are distributed as evenly as possible across the country. This includes Counties Westmeath and Longford, which the IDA markets as part of the Midlands region.

There are 34 multinational companies based in the Midlands, employing 4,327 people. In Longford and Westmeath there are a total of 3,268 people employed in 22 foreign direct investment (FDI) companies.

I am pleased that there have been a number of recent high profile investments announced by overseas companies in the Midlands region. Earlier this year, Indian-owned Leetha Industries announced that it is to establish a manufacturing and supply operation called Red Seal Cups Ltd. in Ireland. This will create over 100 jobs in Longford over the next three years. The Avery Dennison Corporation is also planning a significant expansion of its Finesse Medical manufacturing facility in the County. Announcements like these are a great vote of confidence in what the Midlands has to offer for FDI clients. The IDA actively engages with its existing
client base to support them in growing their business to retain jobs and expand their existing footprint in the region.

The IDA is involved in a number of initiatives to attract additional FDI to Westmeath and Longford, including a focused digital marketing campaign. This is designed to market the Midlands Region to potential investors by showcasing locations such as Westmeath and Longford. The Agency also maintains regular engagement with the Chief Executives of Longford, Westmeath, Laois and Offaly County Councils to attract further investment to the region.

FDI, of course, represents only one part of our wider efforts to generate economic growth in regional locations. Indigenous enterprise also plays a crucial role in creating employment opportunities. Enterprise Ireland (EI) supports companies in every county of Ireland to start and scale, innovate and remain competitive on international markets.

I am pleased to say that total employment in EI supported companies in Co. Westmeath now stands at 3,741, an increase of 30% since 2012. Total employment in EI supported companies in Co. Longford now stands at 2,970, an increase of 43.5% since 2012. These numbers clearly reflect the valuable contribution of EI client companies to our economy, particularly from a regional perspective.

We have made progress in creating opportunities in Longford and Westmeath but we are determined to achieve more. We are working hard, across Government, to further unlock the economic potential of the region. 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 Midlands region.

**Trade Agreements**

86. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation when the Mercosur trade agreement will come before Dáil Éireann for ratification. [23725/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Common Commercial Policy is an exclusive competence of the European Union under the EU Treaties. Accordingly, the European Commission acts as lead negotiator on behalf of all EU countries regarding trade agreements with non-EU countries. Member States, in Council, approve negotiating directives before negotiations begin, are kept informed of developments as the negotiations proceed and have final approval at Council.

The EU is currently negotiating a trade agreement with the four founding members of Mercosur - Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. If concluded, an EU-Mercosur Free Trade Agreement would be the EU’s largest trade deal to date, four times the size of the trade agreement with Japan. These negotiations are potentially at a crucial stage with the next formal round taking place over the 9th to the 13th July in Brussels. Were a deal to be concluded between the EU and Mercosur, the relevant text would proceed to so-called “legal scrubbing”, and translation, a process which can take between several months and up to two years to complete.

Insofar as ratification is concerned, some EU trade agreements are ‘EU-only’ meaning that all the policy areas they cover fall under the sole responsibility of the EU institutions. Other agreements may be presented as ‘mixed’ where they have areas of shared responsibility between the EU and Member States. Ratification requirements differ between the two categories. Only at the conclusion of negotiations and when the Commission presents an Agreement to Council can an agreement be determined definitely as being ‘EU-only’ or ‘mixed’. The ratification process regarding individual trade agreements must be taken on a case-by-case basis depending
on the issues comprehended in the final agreement. Where appropriate, my Department seeks legal advice on the appropriate ratification process to follow in each case.

Mixed agreements enter into force only once each individual EU Member State has approved it in line with its own national procedures. As this process may take several years, the Council can decide to provisionally apply an agreement (‘provisional application’). Provisional Application generally applies to those parts of the agreement over which the EU has exclusive competence. Provisional Application requires the agreement by Council and ratification by the European Parliament.

For any EU/Mercosur Free Trade Agreement, I am not in a position to be definitive about the ratification process that will apply, nor any timeframes, until any Agreement is finalised and its scope and terms have been examined.

**Brexit Issues**

87. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if an analysis on a regional basis has been undertaken of the sectors that will be most adversely impacted by Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30641/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):**

“Building Stronger Business” published late last year sets out the work underway in my Department to prepare for Brexit and highlights the challenges which Brexit will create in the regions.

My Department has undertaken a wide range of studies into the possible impacts of Brexit and a number of these have highlighted the potential regional effects associated with the UK’s departure from the EU.

The Copenhagen Economics study “Ireland and the Impact of Brexit: Strategic Implications for Ireland Arising from Changing EU-UK Trading Relations” published earlier this year identified the most vulnerable sectors in respect of Brexit.

The study found that 5 sectors account for 90% of the possible economic impact. They are agrifood, pharma-chemicals, engineering and machinery, wholesale and retail and air transport. Around 80% of the employment in these sectors is outside the Dublin region. As noted in the study, Brexit will therefore be felt more in rural parts of the country where these sectors dominate, particularly agrifood.

My Department also funded the InterTradeIreland/ ESR study Implications of Brexit for Trade between Ireland and Northern Ireland. The report assesses the particular impacts that the UK’s withdrawal from the EU could have on North-South trade in goods and models how the impact of Brexit could be especially acute in the border region.

Furthermore, my Department jointly with Deloitte, undertook a detailed engagement with 170 regionally-dispersed firms as part of our analysis into “Firm-Level Impacts of Brexit on Most Exposed Sectors”. The study found that firms are likely to be affected differently both across different sectors and within individual sectors. Therefore, the report concludes that firm-level responses are likely to be the most effective means of preparing businesses for Brexit.

The Regional Action Plans for Jobs are central to my Department’s targeted approach to boosting regional employment. While progress has been very good, it is clear that we also have new challenges since the Regional Action Plan for Jobs process started, not least Brexit. In this context I have asked the Implementation Committees in each region to lead a process to Refresh
and Refocus their Plans to 2020 which will focus on building each region’s own competitive advantage, develop areas that are already strong, examine vulnerabilities and take account of the challenges which Brexit presents.

To support the ambition, goals and implementation of the Regional Action Plans for Jobs, the Regional Enterprise Development Fund, worth €60 million, was launched in May 2017. The objective of the Fund is to support the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative projects to strengthen regional enterprise development potential.

**IDA Ireland Site Visits**

88. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the status of regional IDA Ireland site visits in addition to vacant IDA Ireland properties nationwide; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30636/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Government is working to ensure the best possible distribution of foreign direct investment (FDI) across the country. Last year, IDA Ireland delivered 99 regional investments with 45% of new jobs created outside Dublin. The last three years has seen 30,000 new FDI jobs created outside Dublin.

The availability of marketable serviced land and buildings in advance of demand is a key element in the IDA’s ability to compete for mobile FDI. Not only does such a supply of properties help the Agency to secure job-rich investment but it also allows projects to begin at an earlier date by diminishing many difficulties associated with land acquisition, planning and construction. It is therefore an important means by which the IDA can encourage and attract new investors to Ireland, particularly to the regions.

I understand that IDA Ireland owns 30 properties across the country. Of these, 13 are currently occupied by IDA clients with a further 17 properties available for prospective or existing investors.

As regards site visits, they remain an important tool through which investors can be encouraged to invest in regional areas and the IDA always does its utmost to ensure that overseas firms consider all potential locations when visiting Ireland. This is in line with the priority that has been placed on investment outside of our main cities, with the Agency continuing to target an increase in investment of 30% to 40% in every region of the country by the end of its current strategy in 2019.

While site visits can help highlight the benefits of the regions to the IDA’s client companies, we need to remember that the final decision as to where to invest always rests with the firm concerned. It is also the case that some companies will only consider investing in urban areas, for a variety of commercial reasons. It should not be forgotten either that site visit activity does not necessarily reflect investment potential, as at least 70% of all new FDI comes from existing IDA client companies.

Excluding Dublin, there has been a total of 66 site visits across Ireland in the first three months of 2018. The IDA will continue to bring new and existing clients to potential investment locations all over the country in the time ahead.

**Industrial Relations**
89. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if effective legal protection will be given to vulnerable workers by ensuring that they have a right to collective bargaining and trade union representation. [26523/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen):** At the outset, I must emphasise that Ireland’s system of industrial relations is, essentially, voluntary in nature and responsibility for the resolution of industrial disputes between employers and workers, rests 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 and the Labour Court, to support parties in their efforts to resolve their differences. These bodies are independent in the delivery of their quasi-judicial functions, in which I as Minister have no role. This approach has served Ireland well over the years and in a large number of high profile disputes.

Under Irish law there is no obligation on employers to recognise trade unions and there are no plans to bring forward legislation to provide for mandatory trade union recognition.

While Ireland’s system of industrial relations is essentially voluntary in nature, it has been the consistent policy of successive Irish Governments to promote collective bargaining through the laws of this country and through the development of an institutional framework supportive of a voluntary system of industrial relations that is premised upon freedom of contract and freedom of association.

There is an extensive range of statutory provisions designed to back up the voluntary bargaining process. The freedom of association and the right to organise and bargain collectively are also guaranteed in a number of international instruments which the State has ratified and which it is, therefore, bound to uphold under international law.

The most recent legislation to facilitate this is the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 which came into effect on 1 August 2015 and was the result of an in-depth consultation with stakeholders, including employer and worker representatives, and a review of the experience of the operation of the existing legislative framework.

The 2015 Act makes provision, in instances where employers engage in collective bargaining with an ‘internal excepted body’ as opposed to a trade union, for a referral to be made to the Labour Court to establish if internal bargaining bodies are genuinely independent of their employer. If the Court finds that the mechanism is not independent it can then proceed to hear the dispute at issue.

**Brexit Supports**

90. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the level of take-up for the various supports in place to safeguard small and medium-sized enterprises from a hard Brexit scenario; if she is satisfied with the level of awareness and suitability of the various schemes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30628/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** 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.

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. Other supports include:

- The Brexit SME Scorecard, an interactive online platform which can be used by all Irish companies to self-assess their exposure to Brexit under six business pillars. There have been 2328 engagements on the scorecard to date.

- The Act On Programme which provides an independent consultant to companies for a course of two half day to assist them decide on specific actions over a short period to address some of the risks and opportunities from Brexit. To date, 41 Brexit Plans have been completed.

- The €5k Be Prepared Grant that supports the costs of SME clients in preparing a plan to mitigate risks and optimise opportunities arising from Brexit. To date 113 companies have been approved for funding under this initiative. Strong pipelines in place for both initiatives.

- National Brexit Roadshows to increase the awareness of Brexit amongst companies. Six Brexit Action Plan clinics have been completed across all parts of the country. The most recent clinic, June 21st, in Dublin (over 130 companies participated) was the most comprehensive Brexit workshop for companies to date. Four additional clinics are planned across Ireland by year end, incl Galway, Dundalk and Limerick. From the clinics to date, 95% of the attendee surveys have stated an intention to undertake new Brexit actions as a result of the clinics.

Innovation is essential for companies to be competitive internationally and to win market share. Enterprise Ireland is working with its clients to drive innovation activity via a number of supports.

To support these activities, in 2017 Enterprise Ireland:

- Approved 99 R&D projects to clients over €100,000;

- Approved funding for 436 industry innovation projects at Technology Gateways throughout the country; and

- Provided financial support for 1,065 collaborative innovations between industry and higher education institutes across the country.

Enterprise Ireland is actively working with companies with global ambition to internationalise, and in doing so, diversify their global footprint. This is critical for long term business growth. In 2017 Enterprise Ireland:

- Supported clients in winning 1,391 new overseas contracts;

- Supported clients to establish 350 new overseas presences;

- Supported 56 first time exporters outside the UK;

- Ran 878 international buyer visits; and

- Implemented an extensive schedule of trade mission and event focused on global and sectorial opportunities and stimulating demand for Irish products and services. This activity included 57 Ministerial-led Trade Missions to locations such as Canada, Singapore, China, the UAE and Oman.

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are the ‘first-stop-shop’ for providing advice and guidance, financial assistance and ‘soft’ supports in the form of training and mentoring to anyone wishing to start or grow a business.
The suite of LEO Brexit supports available to micro and small businesses through the 31 LEOs nationwide include:

- Access to Enterprise Ireland’s ‘Brexit SME Scorecard’ online tool where micro and smaller businesses can self-diagnose their readiness for Brexit;

- Tailored mentoring to address Brexit related business challenges. The number of persons that have availed of Brexit related mentoring from 1st June 2017 to 31st March 2018 is 708;

- A ‘Technical Assistance for Micro-enterprises’ (TAME) grant designed to support qualifying businesses to diversify into new markets, enabling companies to explore and develop new market opportunities. 289 projects were approved for the TAME grant in 2017;

- Rollout of ‘Lean for Micro’ nationwide which will make small businesses more efficient and competitive;

- Training including on specific Brexit challenges, e.g. financial aspects and capability building in innovation, competitiveness and opportunity diagnosis. The total number of training participants in 2017 was 30,373.

A major initiative which my Department recently introduced for all Brexit impacted firms in the €300 million Brexit Working Capital Loan Scheme, under which accessible finance is made available to businesses at favourable terms. There has been a steady stream of applications under the scheme.

InterTrade Ireland (ITI) has a key role to play in protecting North-South trade in the context of Brexit, as the body is uniquely positioned when it comes to understanding the needs of businesses on both sides of the border, and helping businesses to prepare for the challenges that lie ahead. A key part of ITI’s Brexit work is the provision for SMEs of a Brexit ‘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. These are worth €2,000 to each of the companies. A total of 149 vouchers have been approved to date.

### Brexit Supports

91. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** 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. [30635/18]

**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. My Department and its agencies are working hard to ensure that all potentially impacted firms are taking the necessary steps to mitigate the risks and take advantage of potential opportunities resulting from Brexit.

My Department is engaged in helping SMEs prepare to withstand all Brexit scenarios, including a hard Brexit scenario. Encouraging companies to take action to identify their individual areas of exposure and to take positive steps to address them will build strong resilient businesses that can prosper in the face of difficult economic circumstances.

A major initiative that my Department is advancing is the €300 million Brexit Loan Scheme, under which accessible finance is made available to businesses at favourable terms. There has been a steady stream of applications under this scheme.
Work on the development of a Business Finance Advisory Hub continues, to strengthen financial management and strategic planning of Irish SMEs. It will assist businesses to make more informed financial decisions, building on existing supports available from bodies such as Enterprise Ireland (EI) and Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs).

I am confident that the agencies under my remit have the supports available to enable companies to both consolidate market share within the UK, and become more resilient by broadening their exports to other international markets.

EI has an extensive range of supports to encourage clients to become more competitive, innovative and to diversify export markets, 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. 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 SME clients 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 five Brexit Advisory Clinics over the past few months in Portlaoise, Mayo, Cavan, Cork and last month 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. More Clinics are due to take place throughout the year.

- 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.

- Strategic Consultancy Grant: This grant helps client companies to hire a strategic consultant for a set period to assist the company to develop and implement significant strategic initiatives.

In addition, EI is implementing extensive trade mission and event schedules focussed on further developing in-market expertise and networks, new sectorial 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.

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- A ‘Technical Assistance for Micro-enterprises’ grant designed to support qualifying businesses to diversify into new markets, enabling companies to explore and develop new market opportunities;

- Rollout of ‘Lean for Micro’ nationwide which will make small businesses more efficient and competitive;

- Tailored mentoring to address Brexit related business challenges;

- Targeted training on specific Brexit challenges, including financial aspects and capability building in innovation, competitiveness and opportunity diagnosis; and
- Continued information, advice and guidance across all 31 LEOs and regionally.

The additional Brexit supports on offer through the LEOs are focused on capability building, market diversification, driving increased competitiveness, and promoting innovation so that LEO client companies can better cope with the challenges arising on foot of Brexit and to explore any opportunities presented.

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.

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

Protected Disclosures in the Public Interest

92. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her attention has been drawn to concerns regarding section 7 of SI No. 188 of 2018, which amended the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 without a Dáil Éireann debate; her plans to bring this before Dáil Éireann for debate and scrutiny; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30604/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The EU Directive on the protection of undisclosed know-how and business information (trade secrets) against their unlawful acquisition, use and disclosure was transposed by way of S.I. 188 of 2018, European Union (Protection of Trade Secrets) Regulations 2018. These Regulations were made by me on the 8th June under, and in accordance with, the European Communities Act 1972 and were subsequently laid before the Oireachtas on 13th June.

During the transposition process the implications of the Directive for the Protection Disclosures Act 2014 was brought to my Department’s attention. Legal advice was sought and received to the effect the Directive imposes a requirement for a subjective public interest test and that the transposing legislation should amend the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 by adding a requirement that a “protected disclosure” coming within Article 5 (b) of the Directive i.e. a disclosure involving revealing misconduct, wrongdoing or illegal activity, must be made for the purpose of protecting the public interest. Accordingly S.I. 188 of 2018 contains such an amendment so that Ireland achieves a full transposition of the Directive.

Foreign Direct Investment

93. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the work being undertaken to ascertain the way in which foreign direct investment may be
affected by the Trump Administration’s trade and tax policies; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30630/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Ireland and the US have a significant bilateral relationship based on the same values and interests that has proved indispensable for the prosperity of both sides of the Atlantic. Ireland remains fully committed to a continued strong partnership with the US both bilaterally and through EU/US engagement across so many fronts.

The current direction of US Trade Policy, whereby the pursuit of bilateral negotiations has supplanted longstanding commitments to multilateralism and the rules-based approach to trade overseen at the WTO, is concerning. Our concerns, shared by our EU partners, is that a global, rules-based, approach to trade and the employment it supports, has delivered for our country and while there are many trade irritants that require addressing, these should be tackled on a global, multilateral, basis, with countries and trading blocs working collaboratively.

Insofar as impacts for Ireland from the current US trade actions are concerned, an initial assessment shows a limited impact to date at national level from them or the EU counterbalancing measures. However, as this could possibly mask individual firm level impacts, my Department and its agencies will keep the situation under review and engage with industry to identify specific issues arising.

As regards, U.S. tax policies, changes in the U.S. tax system could, of course, have an impact on Ireland given the significant volume of U.S. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Ireland. However, the IDA believes that FDI opportunities for Ireland will continue. Ireland’s corporation tax regime will continue to be competitive while also offering long-term certainty to international business. It is clear that Ireland’s consistency, stability and predictability in relation to tax policy as well as our competitive corporate tax rate remain a virtue in this dynamic tax policy environment. As always, however, Government remains alert and responsive to any changes in the US or global tax environment and we are committed to full participation in any international discussions or reviews of global tax issues, while remaining clear that tax policy remains a national competence.

It is clear, however, that Ireland’s access to the EU market is, and will remain, a key factor in attracting FDI from the US and elsewhere. Global business, from the US or elsewhere, will always want to have operations in the EU, and Ireland will remain very competitive and attractive as an EU location to invest in and do business from. I might also note that the Irish/US FDI relationship is two-way and recent research shows that some 100,000 jobs in the US are in Irish FDI companies in areas such as hi-tech, construction and agri to name just some sectors.

Enterprise Ireland Data

94. Deputy Martin Heydon asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of Enterprise Ireland supported jobs in County Kildare; the steps it is taking to increase this number; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30502/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department, through its enterprise agencies, is committed to supporting businesses to grow, innovate and perform strongly in global markets.

I am delighted to say that 2017 was a particularly good year for job numbers and job creation in agency supported companies. In Co. Kildare, 9,134 people were employed in Enterprise Ireland supported companies, representing an increase of 5% on 2016.
Underpinning Enterprise Ireland’s 2017 employment results are a range of activities and supports to help companies in Kildare to innovate and remain competitive in international markets, now and into the future. In the period 2015 - 2017 Enterprise Ireland paid €11.7million to client companies in Kildare to support companies to be innovative, improve competitiveness and to diversify their global footprint.

Enterprise Ireland is working with established client companies in Kildare through teams of sectorial focused development advisors. Using a company led diagnostic approach, the agency can tailor a support package to the company’s growth potential based on their ambition, capability and need.

In addition to direct client support, Enterprise Ireland has funded the establishment of a national network of business innovation centres and specialist bio-incubation facilities across the Higher Education Sector including the Innovation Centre located at Maynooth University. These internationally recognised facilities are important drivers of regional development, with the majority of companies located at these facilities remaining in their region after they have completed their incubation period.

Enterprise Ireland’s New Frontiers Development Programme, the national entrepreneur development programme for early-stage startups, is run in partnership with 14 Institutes of Technology throughout the country. New Frontiers Midlands & Mid-East Entrepreneurial Programme is run at Athlone Institute of Technology in partnership with Maynooth University and supported 13 entrepreneurs in 2017.

In late 2017, under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund, over €11m was approved for projects in the Eastern and Midlands region including funding to the County Kildare Community Network Company CLG.

The Technology Centre Programme is a joint initiative between Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland allowing Irish companies and multinationals to work together in these centres including the Innovation Value Institute (IVI) Technology Centre at Maynooth University. These centres are resourced by highly qualified researchers associated with research institutions who are empowered to undertake market focused strategic R&D for the benefit of industry.

Enterprise Ireland funding has supported the establishment of Community Enterprise Centres in every county throughout the country, including three in Allenwood, Clane and Athy. These centres provide space in a supportive environment for budding entrepreneurs and serve to help the development of entrepreneurship locally.

Brexit presents a significant challenge for Irish companies and Enterprise Ireland is seeking to build resilience within client companies to deal with any kind of Brexit. The launch and development of a Brexit SME Scorecard, an interactive online platform which can be used by all Irish companies to self-assess their exposure to Brexit under six business pillars. There have been 2328 engagements on the scorecard to date, with 78 Scorecards engaged with in Kildare.

The Mid East Regional Action Plan for Jobs is a key policy response for supporting employment growth in the Kildare, Meath and Wicklow.

Some 22,800 jobs have been created in the Mid East region since the initiative was launched in January 2015 while the unemployment rate in the Mid East region has fallen since then and now stands at 5.4% according to the CSO (Q1 2018).

Furthermore, Live Register numbers continue to fall in County Kildare, down from 19,368 in July 2012 to 9,427 in May 2018, a decrease of almost 10,000. 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 am aware that further efforts are needed to ensure that jobs continue to be created in Kildare and in doing so, ensure that employment creation is sustainable. To this end, the I will ensure that Enterprise Ireland will continue to work with companies in Kildare and across the region to promote job creation.

Regional Enterprise Development Fund

95. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if consideration will be given to make the Regional Enterprise Development Fund a rolling fund that can accept applications from local authorities all year round in view of the work involved in these applications and the scale of the projects; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30539/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) is designed to support the ambition, goals, and implementation of the Regional Action Plan for Jobs.

The REDF is currently being delivered through two competitive calls with an overall allocation of €60m. €30.45m was approved under call one, and the balance will be available for projects submitted for call two, which closed on the 28th June.

At the launch of the second call under the REDF in April 2018 in Farmleigh House, I announced that this Fund will operate on a rolling basis in the coming years as part of Project Ireland 2040. This commitment has been made in order to assist and provide some certainty for applicants in the planning and preparation of proposals. It also encourages unsuccessful applicants to improve their submissions and reapply in a subsequent round.

Each call has a launch date, followed by briefing sessions across each region outlining the requirements of the scheme and application process. The call close takes place 10 to 12 weeks after the launch date.

This is a competitive process, in which each project is assessed against a defined set of criteria. The amount of funding approved is up to €5m per project, and, in order to ensure value for money and economic impact and benefit to Ireland, each project goes through a 7-stage assessment process before results are announced.

The competitive call process gives the assessors a clear opportunity to rank the relative merit of the projects, and ensure that the best applications are recommended for support within the financial limitations. This process benefits applicants in that they have a defined process and timelines, feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their application and an opportunity to reapply in future. It also gives the assessment panel an opportunity to assess, rank and rate these projects relative to one another and select the best for support.

Operating a rolling-fund application process open all year round can be useful, where applicants can be funded once they reach a defined milestone(s), but the retention of external panel members to assess this process on a continuous basis is not feasible or practical.

This process has been defined to be the best solution to deliver this REDF funding which is transparent and above board. It also has the advantage of providing feedback to unsuccessful applicants and assistance outside the competition period to submit stronger applications for subsequent calls.
96. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation when she plans to legislate to ensure that all Irish artists receive royalties from all online platforms that profit from the playing of their music. [27192/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen):** I appreciate and understand the concerns of Irish artists in the modern digital age. My Department actively supports placing Irish artists in a more beneficial position to ensure that they can gain the most remuneration possible for their music. New business models are currently emerging to help musicians to license their works to online platforms and ultimately it is a commercial matter for rights holders to negotiate the use of their works on any platform or media. However, I agree that there should be a regulatory framework to help them not just in Ireland, but at an EU-wide level.

On 14 September 2016, the EU Commission published a package of copyright reform proposals as part of its Digital Single Market strategy. This included a Directive on copyright in the Digital Single Market (hereinafter the “Copyright Directive”). The intention of the Directive is to craft modern copyright legislation suitable for all European citizens. Among the Directive’s many proposals is a provision aimed at addressing the “value gap”, whereby rights holders are receiving less remuneration despite the increased usage of their works (Article 13).

Officials of my Department have been thoroughly engaged in negotiations since publication of this proposal and have been successful in achieving a number of amendments to address the concerns of our stakeholders. The Copyright Directive has been discussed by EU Ambassadors and the Presidency has gained approval for a mandate to commence negotiations with the European Parliament.

Negotiations on the Copyright Directive have been exhaustive and, while I appreciate the concerns that have been raised, I fully support the intention of this proposal which is vitally important to both the DSM and the digital economy. Our focus has always been on achieving the best balance for the competing interests of all stakeholders, including digital economy actors, rights holders, and citizens. To that end, there has been extensive engagement with stakeholders across the various issues in Ireland, Brussels, and with other EU Member States, including at Ministerial level.

My Department will continue to engage positively with the negotiations on the proposal going forward to ensure that Ireland can benefit from its many merits, particularly with regard to the value gap, as soon as possible.

**Household Waste Collection Price Monitoring Group**

97. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation when the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission will publish its report on the operation of the household waste collection market; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30627/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** On 4 July 2017, a motion was passed by Dáil Éireann which called on the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment to ask the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) to report on the operation of the household waste collection market.
Following a formal request on 25 September from the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, the then Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, in accordance with section 10(4) of the Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2014, requested the CCPC to carry out a study on the operation of the household waste collection market.

I understand this exercise is still underway and it is anticipated that the report will be finalised over the summer months. The issue of publication will be considered at that stage.

**EU Directives**

98. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she is satisfied that a sufficient window for public consultation was allowed in the run-up to the transposition of the EU trade secrets directive; and if further public consultation or review will be undertaken following the coming into force of SI No. 188 of 2018. [30358/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan): My Department engaged in two public consultations on the Trade Secrets Directive; in 2014 on the Commission’s initial proposal and subsequently in 2017 post adoption of the Directive and in the lead up to the commencement of work on its transposition. Both consultations were available on my Department’s website and were also directly addressed to stakeholders including the Department’s enterprise agencies, business representative bodies, the legal profession and other relevant Government Departments. Both consultations elicited few responses.

I have no plans for a further consultation on this Directive or the implementing SI. However under the Directive the European Union Intellectual Property Office is required to prepare an initial report on the litigation trends regarding the unlawful acquisition, use or disclosure of trade secrets pursuant to the Directive by 9 June 2021. By 9 June 2022 the Commission is required to draw up an intermediate report on the application of the Directive for submission to the European Parliament and the Council. By 9 June 2026 the Commission is required to carry out an evaluation of the impact of the Directive and report on same to the European Parliament and Council.

**Brexit Supports**

99. Deputy Lisa Chambers asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the contingencies and supports in place to protect Irish businesses from a hard Brexit scenario; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30642/18]

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. My Department and its agencies are working hard to ensure that all potentially impacted firms are taking the necessary steps to mitigate the risks and take advantage of potential opportunities resulting from Brexit.

My Department is engaged in helping SMEs prepare to withstand all Brexit scenarios, including a hard Brexit scenario. Encouraging companies to take action to identify their individual areas of exposure and to take positive steps to address them will build strong resilient businesses that can prosper in the face of difficult economic circumstances.

A major initiative that my Department is advancing is the €300 million Brexit Loan Scheme,
under which accessible finance is made available to businesses at favourable terms. There has been a steady stream of applications under this scheme.

Work on the development of a Business Finance Advisory Hub continues, to strengthen financial management and strategic planning of Irish SMEs. It will assist businesses to make more informed financial decisions, building on existing supports available from bodies such as Enterprise Ireland (EI) and Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs).

I am confident that the agencies under my remit have the supports available to enable companies to both consolidate market share within the UK, and become more resilient by broadening their exports to other international markets.

EI has an extensive range of supports to encourage clients to become more competitive, innovative and to diversify export markets, 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. 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 SME clients 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 five Brexit Advisory Clinics over the past few months in Portlaoise, Mayo, Cavan, Cork and last month 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. More Clinics are due to take place throughout the year.

- 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.

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In addition, EI is implementing extensive trade mission and event schedules focussed on further developing in-market expertise and networks, new sectorial 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.

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- A ‘Technical Assistance for Micro-enterprises’ grant designed to support qualifying businesses to diversify into new markets, enabling companies to explore and develop new market opportunities;

- Rollout of ‘Lean for Micro’ nationwide which will make small businesses more efficient and competitive;

- Tailored mentoring to address Brexit related business challenges;
- Targeted training on specific Brexit challenges, including financial aspects and capability building in innovation, competitiveness and opportunity diagnosis; and

- Continued information, advice and guidance across all 31 LEOs and regionally.

The additional Brexit supports on offer through the LEOs are focused on capability building, market diversification, driving increased competitiveness, and promoting innovation so that LEO client companies can better cope with the challenges arising on foot of Brexit and to explore any opportunities presented.

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.

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

Trade Promotion

100. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the supports for Irish businesses seeking to establish export links with Syria; and the supports offered to Irish businesses seeking to establish export links with Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. [30357/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Enterprise Ireland (EI) is actively working with companies with global ambition to internationalise, and in doing so, diversify their global footprint. This is critical for promoting economic resilience and long-term business growth.

EI supports Irish companies that export to the Gulf States through its office network in Dubai and Abu Dhabi (UAE), Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) and Doha (Qatar). In addition, EI employ Pathfinders in other Gulf States where it has no physical presence. EI assist suitable clients to avail of opportunities in Gulf States by working with each client one-on-one; arranging trade missions, company market visits, and in-country networking events; and by providing information and trade mission supports, as well as information and Gulf State related networking events in Ireland. EI also brings corporate buyers from the Gulf States to Ireland annually, to meet Irish producers.

Over the past 12 months, EI has organised trade missions and networking events with the participation of Irish government ministers in Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, Kuwait and Qatar, with further events scheduled in 2018. In addition to its own export activities, Enterprise Ireland cooperates closely with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Embassy network, Bord Bia, Tourism Ireland, IDA and the Department of Justice as part of Team Ireland to deepen and widen Irish trade links with the Middle East and the Gulf region.
EI also ran an international trade event to the annual ‘Arab Health’ Exhibition in Dubai in January of this year, which was led by the Minister of State for Mental Health and Older People, Jim Daly T.D. Arab Health is the largest healthcare exhibition and conference in the Middle East and North Africa region. The trade visit focused on maximising business opportunities for the 20 EI clients exhibiting and participating. The Gulf Food Manufacturing Exhibition in Dubai will take place later this year, where Enterprise Ireland will support exhibiting clients.

Currently, EI’s Middle East and North Africa office network does not actively support Irish companies seeking to do business directly with Syria, due to the ongoing security situation. Any future change in EI trade promotion activities on behalf of Irish companies in Syria will be primarily dependent on the security situation in Syria. However, Enterprise Ireland will keep the situation under continuous review.

**Project Ireland 2040 Funding**

101. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the status of the proposed €500 million disruptive technologies innovation fund which was included in Project Ireland 2040; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30442/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The National Development Plan (NDP) under Project Ireland 2040 confirms the establishment of a €500 million Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF) to be implemented through my Department and its agencies, working with other Government Departments and agencies. This is one of four funds in the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and was launched at the Project Ireland 2040 Funds Announcement.

The Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund is an exciting step forward in the innovation landscape in Ireland. The combination of existing research strengths and this targeted funding mechanism will help to deliver jobs, exports and other economic impacts for Ireland. This will help achieve the National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) set out in Project Ireland 2040, in particular National Strategic Outcome 5 (A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills). Ultimately, the projects funded under the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund will create the jobs of the future.

The Fund will have a resource allocation of €500 million over the period 2018-2027 consisting of an initial Exchequer allocation of €180 million to 2022. It will be competitive and see investment in the research, development and deployment of disruptive technologies and applications on a commercial basis. Importantly it will drive collaboration between Ireland’s world-class research base and industry as well as facilitating enterprises to compete directly for funding in support of the development and adoption of these technologies.

On the 29th of June, the Expressions of Interest phase of this competitive process was launched in Drogheda. The Expressions of Interest phase will run until 17th August 2018. It is envisaged that the first tranche of successful projects will be confirmed by November 2018.

The type of projects that will receive funding will be:

- Collaborative enterprise-driven partnerships that will develop, deploy and commercialise disruptive technologies to transform business;

- Impactful projects seeking at least €1 million in funding over 3 years and involving enterprises and research partners;
- Projects involving SME participation;
- Focussed on “industrial research”.

An Expressions of Interest form and a Reference Document for applicants are available on my Department’s website and I encourage potential applicants to familiarise themselves with the detail to ascertain their eligibility and to apply. My Department and agencies (Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Science Foundation Ireland) will engage in communications with potential applicants through July and August 2018.

**Project Ireland 2040**

102. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her priorities as part of Project Ireland 2040; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30443/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** As the Deputy will be aware, Project Ireland 2040 seeks to achieve ten National Strategic Outcomes, around the overarching themes of well-being, equality and opportunity. The National Development Plan 2018-2027 commits a total of almost €116 billion to underpin the implementation of the National Strategic Outcomes identified in Project Ireland 2040.

Aligned with Enterprise 2025 Renewed, our aim in Ireland 2040 is to achieve sustainable full employment, to bring unemployment rates in all regions down to within 1 percentage point of the national average and to progress greater convergence in productivity in the regions. This requires a competitive, innovative and resilient enterprise base, which is essential to provide the jobs and employment opportunities for people to live and prosper in all regions.

The priorities I and my Department will be focusing on include:

- Further expansion of Advanced Manufacturing Supports linking centres and capacity across all regions.
- The €500m Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund which I recently launched, that will allow Ireland become a leader in future technologies, through funding projects on a competitive basis.
- Strengthening Science Foundation Ireland Research Centres and Enterprise Ireland Technology Centres in higher education facilities across all regions.
- The upgrading of the Tyndall National Institute in Cork.
- Facilitating Institutes of Technologies in creating new regional ‘Technology and Innovation Poles’.
- A New Space Technologies Programme, to the benefit of firms in the regions
- New cycles of the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions, benefitting higher education in all regions.
- New Regional Sectorial Clusters to scale and internationalise enterprise in all regions.
- Providing the appropriate types of firm level supports in the context of Brexit to enable business transformation, building firm resilience and strengthening firm competitiveness.
- Expanding the Enterprise Ireland budget for research and development.

- Expanding IDA Regional Property Programme to attract investment to regions, with a particular focus on the border region.

- The creation of a National Design Centre.

- Seed and Venture Capital Funding to support regional start-ups and growth eHubs for entrepreneurship and start-ups in every county.

- Participation in the EU High Performance Computing Programme.

- Increases in the number of researchers trained under my Department’s research, development and innovation (RD&I) programmes.

To further strengthen rural economies and communities, under the Regional Action Plan for Jobs (RAPJ) process, the focus on enterprise development and employment generation in the regions has intensified through a collaborative approach involving both public and private sector stakeholders in the regions. The RAPJ is also supported through competitive calls for enterprise initiatives under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund, with €30m to be allocated in 2018. This will continue to be rolled out in the first five years of the Plan delivered through Enterprise Ireland.

Further, my Department and the enterprise development agencies are engaging with the three Regional Authorities on the development of their Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) which are an important next step in implementing the Ireland 2040 plan. These will for the first time put regional planning on a statutory basis, and will play an important role in directing investments towards realising the full potential of our regions as dynamic places to live and work.

**Trade Union Recognition**

103. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if legislation is planned to provide for union recognition in view of a dispute at a company (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26607/18]

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

At the outset, I must emphasise that Ireland’s system of industrial relations is, essentially, voluntary in nature and responsibility for the resolution of industrial disputes between employers and workers, rests 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 and the Labour Court, to support parties in their efforts to resolve their differences. These bodies are independent in the delivery of their quasi-judicial functions, in which I as Minister have no role. This approach has served Ireland well over the years and in a large number of high profile disputes.

I understand it is the company’s position that it does not recognize trade unions but has in place an internal mechanism for employee engagement. Under Irish law there is no obligation on employers to recognize trade unions and there are no plans to bring forward legislation to
provide for mandatory trade union recognition. However, it has been the consistent policy of successive Irish Governments to support a voluntarist system of industrial relations with a robust statutory framework supportive of collective bargaining.

The most recent legislation to facilitate this is the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 which came into effect on 1 August 2015 and was the result of an in-depth consultation with stakeholders, including employer and worker representatives, and a review of the experience of the operation of the existing legislative framework.

The 2015 Act makes provision, in instances where employers engage in collective bargaining with an ‘internal excepted body’ as opposed to a trade union, for a referral to be made to the Labour Court to establish if internal bargaining bodies are genuinely independent of their employer. If the Court finds that the mechanism is not independent it can then proceed to hear the dispute at issue.

I would like to stress the merit of both parties working closely and with the dispute handling mechanisms of the State to make every effort to reach a resolution on the issues in dispute to achieve a positive outcome for the employees, the company and the customers of the company.

**Research and Development Funding**

104. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on whether Ireland will attain the Innovation 2020 research and development intensity target of 2.5% of GNP; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30633/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan):** In 2011 and as part of the Europe 2020 Strategy to support growth that is smart, sustainable and inclusive, the Government committed to raise gross investment in Research and Development to 2.5% of GNP by 2020. This commitment was reiterated in Innovation 2020 in 2015.

Expenditure on Innovation, Research & Development consists of both public and private expenditure. Gross investment in R&D was €3.2 billion in 2016. This is an increase of over half a billion euro since 2011. The estimated expenditure on R&D by Government Departments in 2017 is €768 million. This represents an increase of almost €40 million over 2016 and is the highest level of public expenditure on R&D since 2012.

A very significant part of our innovation policy has been to align public investment efforts in a manner that leverages R&D activity in the enterprise sectors. While private spending on R&D slowed during the financial crisis, it has been increasing steadily since 2011. Business Expenditure on RandD rose to €2.3 billion in 2016 from €1.7 billion in 2011, an increase of over 35%.

Despite the fact that overall expenditure in R&D has increased every year since committing to Europe 2020 targets, reaching the 2.5% of GNP intensity rate target presents a very significant challenge. In 2016 our GNP intensity level stood at 1.43%, down from 1.91% in 2012. Even when using GNI* as a complementary indicator (GNI* removes globalisation impacts on the Irish economy), the R&D intensity rate is estimated at 1.72% for 2016.

This is in part due to the strength of our economic performance and subsequent increases in GNP growth rates year on year over the last number of years. Our challenge is to increase the level of investment in R&D to keep pace with GNP growth rates, in the context of significant demands on the public purse.
Notwithstanding the level of the R&D intensity rate, I am pleased to note that Ireland performs well in international comparison tables. In the European Innovation Scoreboard published by the European Commission in June, Ireland gained one place to be ranked 9th in the EU for innovation performance.

In aggregate terms, Ireland is one of the best innovation output performers, making it one of the most efficient performers overall in terms of outputs relative to investment.

However, it is clear that significant investment in R&D is a key characteristic of the top four Innovation Leaders in the EU (Sweden, Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands). The Government must continue to prioritise investment in R&D in order to realise its ambition of becoming a Global Innovation Leader.

My Department is commencing an interim review of Innovation 2020 this year and this will give us the opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved under Innovation 2020 since December 2015 and will inform the development of its successor.

**Tax Treaties**

105. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the work being undertaken to ascertain the way in which employment may be affected by an EU digital tax; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30629/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen):** The EU Commission published proposals in March 2018 in relation to digital taxation which are currently being debated. The OECD has also published an interim report on the Digital economy which acknowledges the lack of consensus in the area of taxations. The OECD states that further analysis is required in order to achieve an agreed evidence backed solution focused on the alignment of taxing rights with the location of real substantive value creating activity. Suffice to say that, as it stands, there is no clarity on what approach will be taken.

It is therefore not possible to determine the impact on employment. It is likely that any changes to how digital businesses are taxed will impact Ireland’s corporation tax receipts as the changes would likely see greater taxing rights in larger countries. The Summer Economic Statement published sets out that the Government will be prudent in its approach in ‘setting aside some of the historically high levels of Corporation Tax for the purpose of creating the Rainy Day Fund’.

Regardless of the final outcome, it must be borne in mind that Ireland’s corporation tax regime will continue to be competitive while also offering long-term certainty to international business. Crucially, our regime is underpinned by substance. Enterprise 2025 Renewed reaffirms our focus on export-led growth that is underpinned by innovation, talent and investments in place-making. We cannot predict the future, but we are taking action to deepen resilience across our enterprise base. Our policies place an emphasis on strengthening the productivity performance and potential of our Irish owned enterprises. We will continue as a country to be anticipatory and adaptive to global challenges.

The continued competitiveness of our corporation tax regime, whilst important, is only one element of Ireland’s value proposition for FDI. Business location decisions are informed by a range of factors. Access to the EU market is, and will remain, a key factor in attracting FDI. Other key factors involved in attracting and maintaining FDI here include:

- Talent: we have a talented workforce that is hardworking, flexible and adaptable to change
and a first-class education system that helps nurture the future talent required

- Innovation: we have developed leading edge capabilities in R&D, have a supportive regime for innovation and continuously work with enterprises to gain more investment in high value added research, development and innovation activities.

- We have a proven track record of delivery for enterprise and it is easy to do business here.

- We are English speaking yet can service over 140 languages from Ireland which greatly assists ICT and Financial Services companies in particular.

- Through Project Ireland 2040, the National Planning Framework and National Development Plan, we will focus coordinated investments to ensure that we offer a range of compelling, dynamic and competitive locations for investment throughout Ireland.

My officials and I, as well as the IDA, remain in regular contact with companies and with colleagues across Government as this area of international taxation evolves.

I will remain alert and responsive to any changes with regards to the taxation of the digital economy or indeed the overall global tax environment, working with colleagues across Government to ensure that Ireland can react and adapt when required.

Background to Digital Tax developments

In March 2018, the EU Commission published two proposed Directives. The first one, a Digital Services Tax (DST), proposes a ‘temporary’ solution of a 3% levy on turnover from certain digital service activities. The thresholds for application is for a global turnover of €750m and EU turnover of at least €50m. The second, “comprehensive solution”, requires an overhaul of international taxation, establishing the concept of a “digital permanent establishment”, allowing countries taxing rights over the digital business carried out by a company in that country, even where the company has no physical presence in the country.

Prior to the publication of the Commission’s proposals, the OECD had released their interim Report on the Digital Economy, which acknowledges the lack of consensus in the area and that further analysis is required in order to achieve an agreed evidence backed solution focussed on the alignment of taxing rights with the location of real substantive value creating activity.

The Commission proposals are now being debated and it would seem that there is now a widespread acceptance among Member States that the value of these EU discussions is primarily to give impetus to the OECD debate. This is illustrated by the recently issued joint statement from the Finance Ministers of Sweden, Denmark and Finland calling for the EU to abandon plans for a digital tax based on turnover and to support reform of digital taxation at OECD.

While a number of Member States remain committed to the interim proposal of a Digital Services Tax on turnover, it should be recalled that the OECD’s Task Force on the Digital Economy found that there is no consensus on the merit or need for such short-term measures which it is widely acknowledged can be economically damaging.

Asylum Seeker Employment

106. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the role her Department has played in providing opportunities for asylum seekers to work here; if the information available to her, her Department and the agencies under her remit has contributed to decisions on the way in which asylum seekers can access employment and help to
Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Policy responsibility for asylum seekers rests with my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality, Minister Flanagan.

The Supreme Court judgement in NVH v MJE of 30 May 2017 declared that an absolute ban on the right to work for international protection applicants is contrary to Article 40.1 of the Constitution. Under section 16(3)(b) of the International Protection Act 2015, an applicant was prohibited from accessing or seeking to access the labour market while their application is being determined. The Government approved the recommendations of the inter-Departmental Working Group (IDG) chaired by the Department of Justice and Equality (DJE), established to examine the implications of the judgement and decided to opt into the EU (recast) Reception Directive to give effect to the Supreme Court Judgement.

Officials from Department participated proactively and constructively in the implementation group set up to give effect to the Government Decision. My Department’s role was in relation to issues around access to the labour market.

Taking into account the State’s continuing economic recovery and emerging labour market shortages in certain sectors, applicants that come within the terms of the Directive are being granted broad access to the labour market, in line with people ordinarily resident in the State.

Arrangements agreed under the opt-in process were announced on the 27th June 2018. International Protection Applicants may apply to the Minister for Justice and Equality for a labour market permission, which covers both employment and self-employment, if they haven’t received their first instance decision within 9 months. The Labour Market Access Unit (LMAU) of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS), on behalf of the Minister, will process applications. The permission will be granted to eligible applicants for six months and will be renewable until there is a final decision on their protection application.

My officials will continue to work closely with officials of the Minister for Justice and Equality to assist with the implementation of the provisions of the Directive.

IDA Ireland Site Visits

107. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the most recent occasion on which the IDA visited counties Cavan and Monaghan; the number of new jobs that have been created by the IDA in the past 12 months; the steps it is taking to attract companies to the counties; the success it has had with the strategy for the counties; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30264/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As Minister for Business, Enterprise and innovation, and as an elected representative from Cavan-Monaghan, this topic is one that is close to my heart. Regional development is a key priority of mine and I am focused on increasing investment in every county in Ireland. The IDA shares this objective and I am pleased that its results for 2017 show that 45% all jobs created last year were for locations outside Dublin. Every region in Ireland, including the Border Region, posted net gains in jobs last year and there are now over 122,000 people employed across 649 firms in IDA client companies outside of Dublin.

Employment numbers for 2018 will not be available until my Department’s Annual Employment Survey is carried out in November 2018. In the last year IDA client companies con-
ducted two site visits to County Cavan and one site visit to County Monaghan. Site visit activity, however, does not necessarily reflect investment potential, as at least 70% of all new FDI comes from existing IDA client companies.

I want to stress that IDA Ireland is working hard to promote Counties Cavan and Monaghan to potential investors. 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, it is focusing on sectors including agri-food, manufacturing, tourism, internationally traded services and cleantech. The IDA also regularly engages with key stakeholders on the ground in Cavan and Monaghan, including with local authorities, public bodies, the education sector and companies from both its own client base but also from the indigenous sector. IDA Ireland also owns lands in both Cavan and Monaghan that are being actively marketed to its clients.

It is important to emphasise that foreign direct investment only forms one part of investment in regional locations. Indigenous enterprise is responsible for a significant portion of employment growth, especially outside Dublin. My Department and all its agencies, including Enterprise Ireland and the LEOs, work together constantly and collaboratively to ensure that jobs and investment are spread as fairly as possible across this country.

The success of this Government’s strategy for regional job creation is reflected in Combilift’s new €50 million Research and Development and Testing Centre in County Monaghan. This new investment will create 200 jobs and is an example of a home-grown Monaghan success story. The positive impact that Combilift has on the county, the border region and Ireland cannot be underestimated.

I am pleased to say that Enterprise Ireland supported companies employed 10,817 people in Cavan and Monaghan in 2017. Companies supported by the LEOs in Cavan and Monaghan employ a total of 2304 people, representing a net increase of 239 over the previous year. I think that these numbers clearly reflect the growing domestic industries which are so important to both counties.

We recognise that there is room for improvement in Cavan and Monaghan and we are working hard, across Government, to further unlock the economic potential of the region. The Enterprise Agencies under my remit will continue to engage with their clients, and with one another, to create jobs and source new investment for the region.

Trade Relations

108. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the contingency planning which has been undertaken in respect of the recent actions of the US Administration in seeking to undermine WTO rules and imposing tariffs on EU imports; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30986/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Irish Government, along with the rest of the EU Member States, is deeply disappointed with the current direction of US trade policy. We – all 28 EU Member States and the EU Commission – are clear that these tariffs are not justifiable on national security grounds. We fully subscribe to the EU position that these tariffs are unjustified and in conflict with WTO rules.

The EU Commission, which leads on Trade Policy for the Member States under the Treaties, and working in full consultation with the Member States, has prepared a measured, proportionate, and WTO-compatible response, which Ireland has fully supported. These measures
include the launching of proceedings by the EU against the US at the WTO, the introduction of rebalancing tariff measures by the EU and the possible imposition of provisional safeguard measures comprising import quotas or tariffs to shield EU producers from a sudden influx of steel or aluminium into the EU market which would ordinarily have been destined for the US market.

EU leaders have also endorsed a positive agenda for dialogue on trade issues with the US, once the steel and aluminium tariffs against the EU are lifted. Ireland is of the view that the EU should not negotiate under threat, and that any talks must be preceded by a permanent exemption. The EU and its Member States are also working with other like-minded countries – such as Japan, Canada, and Mexico – to develop an agreed approach to issues of concern. We continue, of course, to keep open the lines of communication with the US Administration and other key ‘influencers’.

The US has sought to use the threat of tariffs as leverage to obtain trade concessions from the EU. The EU’s united approach that we are willing and able to respond when necessary in the face of such unilateral non-WTO-compliant actions is vital. We believe the US Administration is resolute on these issues at this time and, therefore, we believe the EU must remain as resolute and stay united. The alternative is to accept such action in breach of WTO rules as the EU understands them. Over the past number of months, the EU has engaged with the US at all possible levels, and with other partners, to find a solution to the problem of overcapacity in the steel sector. Indeed, I met with Secretary Ross in Washington to discuss these and related matters in May.

At a national level, we continue to monitor potential impacts of the trade measures being taken by the US, as well as those being contemplated. We remain alive to the fact that while certain actions may have limited impact at macro level, this could possibly mask individual firm level impacts. To this end, my Department and its agencies are keeping the situation under review. Indeed, I convened a meeting of my Enterprise Forum on Brexit and Global Challenges last week to discuss our strategy and hear, first hand, from a variety of representative bodies, their issues and concerns.

Taoiseach’s Meetings and Engagements

109. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he met the Mayor of New York when he visited the city. [30537/18]

112. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his visit to New York on 1 July 2018; the persons who travelled with him; and the meetings he attended. [30076/18]

120. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his recent trip to the United States of America and the meetings he had there. [30692/18]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 109, 112 and 120 together.

I travelled to New York on Sunday 1 July to take part in a series of events marking the launch of Ireland’s election campaign for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2021-2022 term.

I was joined at a number of these events by the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Deputy Coveney, Minister of State Kehoe, Minister of State Cannon, and the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces, Mark Mellett.
I was accompanied by a small delegation from my Department which included my Chief of Staff, an Assistant Secretary General, the Assistant Government Press Secretary, my Private Secretary, and a Security Officer from An Garda Síochána.

Since joining the UN in 1955, Ireland has made a sustained contribution to the international community’s efforts to tackle important global challenges like peace and security, human rights, international development, climate change and sustainable development.

We have always sought to be an active and fair member of the international community and we have a responsibility to actively engage with the UN.

Ireland’s candidature for the UN Security Council will deepen our UN engagement. It is central to our international agenda and underpinned by our strategy to double the scope and impact of Ireland’s global footprint by 2025.

The Government is committed to conducting a vigorous campaign over the next two years, before the election in June 2020.

This will involve intensive engagement with all Member States at UNHQ in New York and in their capitals, to convince them of Ireland’s value as a candidate and what we bring to the UN. The campaign will be premised on three key themes: Empathy, Partnership and Independence, and will be led in the first instance by Ireland’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Geraldine Byrne Nason.

On Sunday evening, as part of their support for Ireland’s campaign, U2 hosted international diplomats based at the UN at their concert in Madison Square Garden. The Irish Government delegation was also in attendance.

On Monday morning, I participated in a ceremony to pay tribute to the 88 members of the Defence Forces who have lost their lives during the 60 years of Ireland’s participation on UN peacekeeping operations.

Later that day, I also met with a group of UN African Permanent Representatives to discuss the Ireland-Africa relationship and the need to work together on building greater peace and stability on the continent and developing more economic opportunities.

The official launch event took place on the North Lawn of UN Headquarters on Monday evening. The Tánaiste and I were joined by former President Mary Robinson and U2’s Bono for the event which was attended by over 400 UN diplomats and was a wonderful celebration of Irish food, music, heritage and culture.

While in New York I also participated in a number of other events.

I attended a networking lunch hosted by Ireland’s Consul General in New York with some young Irish people working in the city who are contacts of the Consulate. In extending invitations, the Consulate sought to ensure representation of young Irish and Irish-Americans from a diverse range of sectors, including media, finance, tech and the arts, as well as gender balance.

Before returning home on Tuesday, I visited the New York Stock Exchange where I attended a breakfast meeting with a group of business leaders, investors and entrepreneurs supported by IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland and had the opportunity to ring the opening bell.

I did not meet with the Mayor of New York on my recent visit.

Cabinet Committee Meetings
110. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach when Cabinet committee A (Economy) last met. [30538/18]

**The Taoiseach:** The most recent meeting of Cabinet Committee A took place on Monday, 9 July 2018. A date for the next meeting is currently been discussed.

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**Papal Visit**

111. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach the estimated cost to the State of the upcoming visit of Pope Francis in view of the fact that it is a private rather than a State visit. [30033/18]

**The Taoiseach:** While this is not a formal state visit it will be a major event for Ireland, with a high degree of public participation and a high international profile. The involvement of civil authorities and various agencies in the visit and related costs will be as appropriate for an official visit by a Head of State, similar to previous high-profile visits to Ireland. This will include security, public safety, protocol and co-ordination.

The majority of the costs for the visit will be borne by the Office of Public Works.

*Question No. 112 answered with Question No. 109.*

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**Data Protection**

113. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the training his Department and agencies under its aegis will receive on GDPR legislation; and when it will be completed. [30077/18]

**The Taoiseach:** The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform as the Contracting Authority has issued a request for tenders in relation to the award of a contract for the provision of service to deliver training for Data Protection Officers in the civil service and bodies across the public sector. It is understood that the tenders submitted have been assessed and that the winning tenderer will be notified shortly. My Department’s Data Protection Officer (DPO) will attend that training.

The DPO and a number of other staff have already attended training courses on the GDPR. In addition, the DPO has briefed the various Divisions in my Department on the GDPR and an information note was issued to all staff when the GDPR was coming into effect in May. Training on the GDPR will be extended to more staff in the autumn and it is intended that training will be completed before the end of the year.

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**Constitutional Convention Agenda**

114. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Taoiseach the Departments, legal experts and groups that made presentations to the Constitutional Convention in the context of its consideration of Article 41.2; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30150/18]

**The Taoiseach:** The Convention on the Constitution considered amending the clause on the role of women in the home at its second plenary meeting of 16-17 February 2013.

Over the course of two days, the Convention considered submissions made by members of the public and heard presentations from a wide range of academics, political scientists, legal experts and advocacy groups. It also held a panel discussion with a number of interest groups...
and academics.

The outcome of the Convention’s deliberations at the plenary meeting and its recommendations on the issue are set out in its Second Report, as presented to the Houses of the Oireachtas and published in 2013. Details of the plenary meeting schedule and the names of those who gave presentations can be found in the Report. The Report is available on the Convention website at this link.

The Deputy will note that the selection of bodies to present was a matter for the Convention to decide upon as per the Convention’s Rules and Procedures, and in accordance with the terms of the Resolution of the Houses of the Oireachtas of July, 2012.

Constitutional Reform

115. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach if the need for a new Constitution to reflect the values of Ireland today will be addressed; and the process for developing same. [30413/18]

The Taoiseach: There are no plans for a new Constitution. As stated in the Programme for Government “achieving political and constitutional reform will be the responsibility of every member elected to Dáil Éireann. Reform will require constant pursuit throughout the lifetime of the next parliament”.

Ministerial Travel

116. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the cost of travel expenses for him and those that travel with him since his appointment. [30518/18]

The cost of foreign and domestic travel expenses for me and those who travelled with me on official business since my appointment is as follows:

- June 2017 - December 2017 - €118,245.32
- January 2018 – end June 2018 - €108,894.43

The figures above include, but are not limited to, expenditure on items such as flights, hotel accommodation, rail tickets, bus and taxi fares, ground transport and subsistence payments. The 2018 figures to date are provisional and may be subject to revision once credit notes/refunds are processed in a small number of cases.

Not all invoices relating to travel undertaken in the first half of 2018 have been received.

I have not made any claims for subsistence allowance while on official travel abroad or within Ireland since my appointment as Taoiseach.

As Taoiseach, I regularly travel to participate in formal and informal meetings of the European Council, in Brussels and elsewhere. Particularly in the context of Brexit, I also place a high importance on engaging actively with fellow Heads of State and Government, both within the EU and more widely, to ensure that Ireland’s interests and concerns are fully appreciated and understood.

In keeping with the Government’s Global Ireland 2025 strategy, I also use international visits to promote Ireland’s trade, culture, investment and enterprise interests, as well as to engage with Irish communities and to hear at first hand their experiences and concerns.
On my visits I am accompanied by a small delegation, comprising senior officials/advisers and members of my private office, according to the particular requirements of the programme. The Minister of State for European Affairs also accompanies me to meetings of the European Council and on other European engagements as appropriate, however her travel expenses are met by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Detailed information on foreign travel costs for myself, my Advisers and senior officials, as well as costs related to the Government Chief Whip and Ministers of State are published on a monthly basis on my Department’s website, once finalised.

Freedom of Information Requests

117. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the number of FOI requests his Department has received since January 2018; the number of refusals; and the number that have been appealed and that are ongoing. [30576/18]

**The Taoiseach:** My Department received 299 Freedom of Information requests from the start of this year to the end of June. Of these, 187 requests were granted or part granted, 20 requests were refused and no records were held in relation to 38 requests. 10 requests were withdrawn or handled outside FOI, 1 request was transferred and 43 requests were ongoing at the end of June.

There were 12 requests for internal reviews of decisions made by my Department and no appeals have been made to the Office of the Information Commissioner.

Vacancies on State Boards

118. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the number of vacancies on State boards under the remit of his Department. [30593/18]

**The Taoiseach:** There are no vacancies on state boards under the remit of my Department.

Taoiseach’s Meetings and Engagements

119. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his recent meeting with the British Prime Minister. [30691/18]

**The Taoiseach:** I had a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister May on the margins of the EU Council in Brussels on June 28.

We discussed the current political situation in Northern Ireland where I emphasised my Government’s full commitment to the Good Friday Agreement and we re-affirmed the determination of both Governments to secure the effective operation of all its institutions.

In line with this, we agreed that a meeting of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference will take place in London on 25 July in accordance with the Good Friday Agreement and which will be co-chaired by the Tánaiste and Minister David Lidington.

We also discussed Brexit and I told Prime Minister May very clearly that there is not much time left if we are to conclude a Withdrawal Agreement and have it operational by the time the UK leaves.
The UK gave clear commitments and guarantees in December and again in March, and we need to see detailed, workable proposals from them to deliver on these commitments. I told the Prime Minister that the EU27 agreed that, if we don’t get agreement on a backstop or on the other outstanding elements, it won’t be possible to finalise the Withdrawal Agreement as a whole, including the transition arrangements.

I have always said that I hope the future relationship between the EU and the UK will be as close and comprehensive as possible, and that it will remove any need for a hard border.

But it will not, in any way, remove the need for a legally robust backstop to apply unless and until better arrangements enter into force, ensuring that there will never be a hard border on this island, whatever circumstances prevail.

While I am hopeful that we will achieve a very close, comprehensive and ambitious future relationship with the UK, the government is of course continuing to plan for the full range of scenarios.

I also spoke with PM May by phone on Saturday 7 July when she briefed me on the outcome of her Cabinet Meeting in Chequers the previous day. I told her I looked forward to seeing greater detail on their proposals which we would discuss with the Barnier Task Force and the other Member States.

*Question No. 120 answered with Question No. 109.*

**Cabinet Committee Meetings**

121. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Taoiseach when Cabinet committee E (Health) last met. [30693/18]

*The Taoiseach:* Cabinet Committee E (Health) last met on 11 April 2018. A date for the next meeting is currently being discussed. In addition to meetings of the Cabinet Committee, Senior Officials meet on a regular basis to advance particular issues.

**Departmental Staff Recruitment**

122. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Taoiseach the number of public sector jobs offered as internal competitions or restricted to existing civil service or public service staff in his Department in 2017 and to date in 2018. [31556/18]

*The Taoiseach:* In common with all other government departments, staff in my Department are mainly recruited through the Public Appointments Service (PAS) through open and inter-departmental competitions.

In 2017, one officer in my Department was promoted by way of an internal competition. By comparison, thirty-six officers were appointed to my Department in 2017 by way of PAS competitions, of which twenty-nine were by way of open competitions (including two appointments at Assistant Secretary level).

To date in 2018, three officers in my Department have been promoted by way of an internal competition. Again, by comparison, twenty officers have been appointed to my Department to date in 2018 by way of PAS competitions, of which eleven were by way of open competitions.
Vacancies are also filled through mobility schemes (e.g. Senior Public Service) and secondments from other Government Departments and the public service.

**Departmental Staff Recruitment**

123. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the detail of the recruitment process of the new Maor in the Curragh, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30043/18]  

124. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the detail of the recruitment process for the new lands management team in the Curragh plains; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30044/18]  

125. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of persons that have already been recruited to the new lands management team in the Curragh; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30045/18]  

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 123 to 125, inclusive, together.

The position of the Maor of the Curragh is held by a Civilian Employee engaged by my Department. In accordance with agreed procedures under industrial relations mechanisms for the filling of such posts, the vacant position of Maor of the Curragh was advertised amongst serving eligible civilian staff in the Defence Forces Training Centre in November 2017. Following a selection process the post was filled in April 2018 by the promotion of a serving employee.

In addition to filling the position of Maor, it is intended to fill the lands management positions by way of a competitive process later in the year.

It is also intended to undertake a procurement process in the coming months for a new environmental maintenance contract.

**Legislative Measures**

126. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if his Department has identified laws which are dependent on or in place as a consequence of Article 41.2 of the Constitution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30097/18]  

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** There are no laws relating to the work of my Department which would appear to be relevant in the context of the Deputy’s question.

**Naval Service Data**

127. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of days on patrol for Naval Service vessels off Cork Harbour in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30381/18]  

128. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of Naval Service vessels patrolling seas around the coast outside Cork harbour for each week to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30382/18]
129. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if problems are being encountered sending Naval Service vessels out to sea to patrol due to a shortage of trained personnel; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30383/18]

130. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if Reserve Defence Force members are being asked to take part in Naval Service patrols at short notice due to the fact that there is a shortage of trained personnel; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30384/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 127 to 130, inclusive, together.

While the primary day-to-day tasking of the Naval Service in Ireland is to provide a fishery protection service in accordance with the State’s fishery protection legislation and our obligations as a member of the European Union, when on patrol Naval Service vessels are multi-tasked in the sense that they also undertake general surveillance, security and other duties.

The Naval Service conducts routine maritime surveillance patrols throughout Ireland’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Irish Naval vessels have also been deployed to the Mediterranean since 2015. For operational & security reasons, it would not be appropriate to disclose precise matters affecting Naval Service patrols. The total number of days on patrol in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to end May 2018 is set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of days on patrol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018 (up to 31st May)</td>
<td>725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1204</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to the number of personnel in the Naval Service, I would note that the current establishment for the Naval Service is 1,094. As of 31 May 2018 the effective strength of the Naval Service is 1,047. The current establishment of the Naval Service Reserve is 200. As of 31 May the effective strength of the Naval Service Reserve is 115.

The Naval Service Reserve trains its members to supplement and aid the work of the Naval Service in carrying out its wide variety of roles. As part of their training, Naval reservists receive instruction in sail training, navigation, marine communications, weapons training, fire fighting and sea survival. Subject to the availability of seagoing berths, Naval reservists also receive annual training on board Naval Service ships when on patrol, especially during summer months.

The Naval Service Reserve has carried out 29 training days on-board Naval Service Ships in 2018 to date. I understand that there are currently two Naval Service Reserve personnel on-board one of the Naval ships, with more planned to take part in training in the coming weeks. The presence of Naval Service Reserve personnel contributes positively to the overall operational capability of the ship and this situation benefits both the Naval Service and the Naval Service Reserve. I wish to place on record my great admiration for the members of the Naval Service Reserve who provide valuable support to the Naval Service both at sea and on land.

**Ministerial Travel**

131. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the cost of travel expenses for him and those that travel with him since his appointment; and if he will make a
Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): In the period since 30 June, 2017, the total costs incurred by myself and the staff of my office, specifically my advisors and Private Secretary, on travel within Ireland are as follows -

30 June-31 December 2017 €12,269.07
01 January-30 June 2018 €16,638.29

Costs incurred in respect of foreign travel by myself, my advisors and Private Secretary are as follows:

30 June-31 December 2017 €20,636.34
01 January-31 March 2018 €6,343.96

Figures for expenditure on foreign travel for the period 01 April-30 June 2018 are not yet available.

Other officials occasionally provide support to me as Minister when I travel to events either here in Ireland or abroad. However, those officials will often have wider business reasons for any travel they undertake.

Project Ireland 2040

132. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of times he has met his officials regarding Project Ireland 2040 since its launch; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30549/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Project Ireland 2040 is the Government’s overarching policy initiative to make Ireland a better country for all of us, a country that reflects the best of who we are and what we aspire to be. The National Development Plan 2018 – 2027, a key part of Project Ireland 2040, recognises that Defence provides part of the societal bedrock which allows society to function and thus contributes to national well-being across political, social, economic and environmental elements. The increased investment in Defence under the Plan will provide a foundation of support in respect of other key sectors and will allow the Defence Organisation to undertake a programme of sustained equipment replacement and infrastructural development as identified and prioritised in the Defence White Paper.

I am in daily contact with individual Management Board members and officials on a range of issues, including Project Ireland 2040, as part of the on-going business of the Department.

Freedom of Information Requests

133. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of FOI requests his Department has received since January 2018; the number of refusals; the number that have been appealed and that are ongoing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30566/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): As of the 5 July, my Department had received 81 FOI requests, of which 23 were refused. There have been no
appeals of decisions in relation to requests to date in 2018.

Vacancies on State Boards

134. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of vacancies on State boards under the remit of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30583/18]

   Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The only State Board under the aegis of my Department 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.

   There are currently no vacancies on the Board.

Air Corps Recruitment

135. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if a general service recruitment campaign for the Air Corps will occur later in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30869/18]

   Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I am informed by the military authorities that Airmen/Airwomen are not usually inducted directly into the Air Corps (AC), as historically most personnel in these posts transfer across from the Army.

   It is planned to induct 28 Apprentices into the Air Corps this September (2018) and, to maximise training resources, augment the apprentice class with General Service recruits. The General Service recruits will be selected from other formations, ideally within geographical proximity to Baldonnel Aerodrome. The General Service recruits will train with the apprentices for recruit training and then complete private three star training separately. In the recent past, some of these General Service Recruits were subsequently assigned to the Air Corps as Airmen/Airwomen.

Departmental Staff Recruitment

136. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of public sector jobs offered as internal competitions or restricted to existing Civil Service or public service staff in his Department in 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31544/18]

   Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Civil Service vacancies in my Department are filled on the basis of centrally agreed sequences. In this context, in 2017 a total of 6 Civil Service posts were filled following internal competitions, while in 2018 to date, 8 such posts have been filled.
In addition, my Department employs some 450 civilian employees in various military installations across the country. In 2017, 16 civilian employee positions were filled on foot of internal competition and 9 such posts have been filled to date in 2018.

Legislative Measures

137. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his Department has identified laws which are dependent on or in place as a consequence of Article 41.2 of the Constitution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30101/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department has not identified any legislation it has brought forward which is dependent on or in place as a consequence of Article 41.2 of the Constitution.

Irish Aid

138. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the way in which Irish Aid election observers are selected; if this system will be more open, transparent and accountable; if there are criteria in place for such selections; if unsuccessful applicants can be given the names of those ultimately selected; his views on the way in which selections were made in selecting election observers for the upcoming EU election observation mission to Zimbabwe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30152/18]

**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 and administers a roster of individuals to participate in election observation missions, organised in the main by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union (EU). I refer the Deputy to the responses to previous Parliamentary Questions on this matter, Question 167 of 4 July 2018, Questions 167 and 172 of 25 October 2017 Questions 357 and 358 of 13 December 2016, Question 243 of 2 November 2016 and Questions 335, 336 and 337 of 14 June 2016.

The criteria for selection for observation missions were set out in the Information Note for Applicants accompanying the call for applications to join the Election Observation Roster established in 2013. This is unchanged, both in selection criteria and methodology.

For each election observation mission to which Ireland proposes to deploy observers, all roster members are invited to express their interest in the mission with a view to ensuring the widest possible participation. A short-list is drawn up based on the specific criteria set out by the EU or OSCE, including relevant local and regional experience, language proficiency, gender and length of time since serving on a mission. In many cases, the EU and OSCE also invite Member States to nominate new observers or observers with limited experience. However, the final decision rests with the inviting body, usually the OSCE or the European Union.

The recent call for Election Observers to participate in the upcoming EU EOM to Zimbabwe attracted a high volume of applications with a total of twenty four Short-Term and eight Long-Term Observer applications. Four Long-Term Observers (LTOs) and four Short-Term Observers (STOs) were nominated from which the EU EOM selected two LTOs, one LTO reserves and two STOs, reflecting the highly competitive nature of selection.
Roster members are individually notified of the outcome of the selection and in the case of EU Missions, the EU made the actual final selection. There are important concerns about the release of personal data in terms of legislation and security to third parties. Circulating such information about individual observers would require the consent of observers and doing so without their consent may be in breach of EU General Data Protection Regulation.

**Passport Services**

139. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the target turnaround time for passports across all services; the average turnaround time across all services for passports for May, June, July and August in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30279/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The turnaround timeframe for a passport application will depend on the channel through which the application was submitted. The table below summarises the target turnaround times for the Passport Service’s main application channels. Turnaround times for individual missions outside Ireland and the UK are omitted as these will vary for each individual mission and are dependent on local postal services. The Passport Service has maintained consistent targets for the full duration of the timeframe in question. Turnaround times are among a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) by which the Passport Service measures its success in delivering a modern and responsive public service.

Table 1: Target turnaround times:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Passport Application</th>
<th>Target Turnaround Times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online passport application service</td>
<td>10 working days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Post Passport Express renewal application</td>
<td>15 working days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Post Passport Express first time application &amp; application to replace lost/stolen/damaged passport</td>
<td>20 working days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland Passport Express renewal applications</td>
<td>15 working days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland Passport Express first time application &amp; application to replace lost/stolen/damaged passport</td>
<td>20 working days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Passport Office renewal application</td>
<td>20 working days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Passport Office first time application &amp; application to replace lost/stolen/damaged passport</td>
<td>30 working days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following tables summarise the average actual turnaround times for each application channel for the months May to August for the years requested. Please note that the online passport application service was launched in March 2017 and so this channel does not appear for the 2015 and 2016 summaries.
Table 2 – Monthly average actual turnaround times May to August 2015:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Passport Application</th>
<th>Turnaround time (working days)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Post Passport Express renewal application</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Post Passport Express first time application &amp; application to replace lost/stolen/damaged passport</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland Passport Express renewal applications</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland Passport Express first time application &amp; application to replace lost/stolen/damaged passport</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Passport Office renewal application</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Passport Office first time application &amp; application to replace lost/stolen/damaged passport</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 – Monthly average actual turnaround times May to August 2016:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Passport Application</th>
<th>Turnaround time (working days)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Post Passport Express renewal application</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Post Passport Express first time application &amp; application to replace lost/stolen/damaged passport</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland Passport Express renewal applications</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland Passport Express first time application &amp; application to replace lost/stolen/damaged passport</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Passport Office renewal application</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Passport Office first time application &amp; application to replace lost/stolen/damaged passport</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 – Monthly average actual turnaround times May to August 2017:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Passport Application</th>
<th>Turnaround time (working days)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online passport application service</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Post Passport Express renewal application</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Post Passport Express first time application &amp; application to replace lost/stolen/damaged passport</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland Passport Express renewal applications</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland Passport Express first time application &amp; application to replace lost/stolen/damaged passport</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Passport Office renewal application</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Passport Office first time application &amp; application to replace lost/stolen/damaged passport</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 – Monthly average actual turnaround times May to June 2018:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Passport Application</th>
<th>Turnaround time (working days)</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online passport application service</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Post Passport Express renewal application</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Post Passport Express first time application &amp; application to replace lost/stolen/damaged passport</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland Passport Express renewal applications</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland Passport Express first time application &amp; application to replace lost/stolen/damaged passport</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Passport Office renewal application</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Passport Office first time application &amp; application to replace lost/stolen/damaged passport</td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Passport Services

140. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if issuing reminders for renewal of passports has been considered in the passport service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30280/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Passport Service currently has a system for reminding passport holders that their passport is due for renewal. Passport holders must first enter their passport details on https://www.eforms.gov.ie/en/reminder/passport/ and they will be sent a reminder email three months prior to the expiry date of the passport. The Passport Service includes a notification highlighting this service with every new passport issued. The notification is attached to the protective laminate enclosed with the passport. I would urge all Deputies to encourage citizens to register for this free passport renewal reminder email service provided by my Department. I am grateful to Deputies for their continued assistance in advising constituents to submit their application in good time before their planned travel date and to consult the Passport Service’s webpage on my Department’s website before applying.

Passport Services

141. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to open an additional passport office in view of the increase in demand as a result of the Brexit referendum; the locations that have been considered for such an office; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30281/18]
Questions - Written Answers

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Passport Service offers a range of convenient channels for submission of passport applications by Irish citizens. An online passport application service was launched in March 2017 and offers the convenience of an online application system 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for Irish citizens anywhere in the world, without the need for application forms, printed photos or witnesses. At present, the online passport application service accommodates adult passport renewal applications and passport card applications. It is planned to extend the online application facility to other categories of renewal by the end of 2018. People who cannot or do not wish to apply online have the option of applying through their local post office. The vast majority of applications received by the Passport Service from applicants residing in the island of Ireland are submitted through Passport Express and Northern Ireland Passport Express. Northern Ireland Passport Express allows applicants living in Northern Ireland to apply for their passport through more than 70 post offices. Applicants residing in Great Britain can post their applications directly to the Cork Passport Office. Bearing in mind the availability of both the online and postal application channels, very few citizens living in the island of Ireland are required to travel a significant distance in order to apply for their passport. In the relatively small number of cases where citizens need to travel very urgently and do not have a valid passport, the Passport Offices in Dublin and Cork offer an appointment service.

Given the variety of options available, I am satisfied that the current needs of passport applicants are being met without the need for the establishment of a further passport office.

Advice and guidance on the above channels and other useful information on passports is available on the Department’s website at www.dfa.ie/passport.

Passport Services

142. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of additional staff that have been hired in 2018 on a temporary basis in the passport service; the number of permanent staff that have requested parental leave for May to September 2018, inclusive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30282/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Passport Service monitors the volume of applications on an ongoing basis to ensure that staff resources are available to meet demand. In order to respond to anticipated application increases and to seasonal demands, the Passport Service has recruited 214 Temporary Clerical Officers (TCOs) so far this year. These TCOs have been appointed to the Passport Offices in Dublin and Cork and are working together with permanent staff to process passport applications and to deal with the high number of enquiries being made through the Passport Service’s various customer service channels. Additional measures taken by the Passport Service to address seasonal demand include the use of targeted overtime for all Passport Offices and the redeployment of experienced staff from across the Department to processing applications and responding to customer queries. Furthermore, the number of Full Time Equivalent staff permanently employed by my Department and assigned to the Passport Service has increased this year. Over 30 additional permanent staff have been assigned to the Passport Offices in Dublin and Cork since the beginning of the year.

A total of 18 staff members in the Passport Service made requests for parental leave in 2018 for the months May to September. Parental Leave provides unpaid time off work to care for a child or make arrangements for the child’s welfare. The duration of leave periods can vary from hours to months. Staff must submit their parental leave requests 6 months in advance of their leave date.
Ministerial Travel

143. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the cost of travel expenses for him and those that travel with him since his appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30512/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Since my appointment as Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade in June 2017, the total cost of travel for myself and those that travel with me was €129,317. As the Deputy will appreciate, by nature of my Department’s responsibilities, I am obliged to undertake a significant amount of official travel overseas.

My Department complies with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform guidelines on official travel. The central aim of the Departmental travel policy is to minimise official travel costs and to achieve value for money for expenditure necessarily incurred, consistent with the effective discharge of official duties.

Project Ireland 2040

144. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of times he has met his officials regarding Project Ireland 2040 since its launch; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30553/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department has a modest capital allocation under Project Ireland 2040/National Development Plan 2018-2027. A total allocation of €70 million has been included under the National Development Plan 2018-2027, across the Department’s two Votes: Vote 27 - International Co-operation and Vote 28 - Foreign Affairs and Trade, for the years 2018-2022 as follows:

- **2018** - €13 million
- **2019** - €17 million
- **2020** - €13 million
- **2021** - €13 million
- **2022** - €14 million

The National Development Plan does not include capital allocations beyond 2022, so the allocations for subsequent years will be decided in due course as part of the annual budgetary processes.

As set out in the National Development Plan 2018-2027, the Department’s strategic capital investment priorities for the period will be as follows:

- Further announcements as part of the Doubling Our Global Footprint Initiative;
- The Passport Reform Programme;
- Investment in ICT infrastructure, and
- Investment in the State’s Global Property Portfolio, including the development of Ireland Houses with the State Agencies and the relevant Embassy in strategic locations.
Decisions on spending will be consistent with value for money principles, will provide clear benefits for the State and will depend on a range of other factors, including staff, office and accommodation needs.

As the Department’s allocations under Project Ireland 2040/National Development Plan 2018-2027, were already earmarked for the key Departmental priorities identified above it has not been necessary for me to have any dedicated meetings with my officials on this. I will, of course, be engaging shortly with my officials on this and other areas of Departmental expenditure as the 2019 Estimates process gets under way.

**Freedom of Information Requests**

145. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of FOI requests his Department has received since January 2018; the number of refusals; the number that have been appealed and that are ongoing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30570/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** A breakdown of the Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received by my Department since January 2018 is set out in the following table. To date 192 requests have been received, twenty-one requests have been refused, six requests for internal reviews of decisions have been sought and one appeal for a review of a FOI decision of my Department is under consideration by the Office of the Information Commissioner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freedom of Information requests</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of FOI requests granted</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of FOI requests part-granted</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of FOI requests refused</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of FOI requests withdrawn</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of FOI requests withdrawn and handled outside of the Act</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of FOI requests currently being processed/on hold</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of FOI requests transferred to other FOI bodies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vacancies on State Boards**

146. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of vacancies on State boards under the remit of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30587/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** There are no state boards under the aegis of my Department.

**Middle East Issues**

147. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the steps being taken at EU and international level to protect the Palestinian Bedouin com-
munity, in particular, to prevent the forcible transfer of this community; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30752/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Palestinian Bedouin communities settled around Jerusalem have been at risk of forcible transfer for a number of years, particularly as illegal Israeli settlements in the area continue to expand. The area is inhabited by members of the Jahalin tribe, which was expelled from its home in the Negev to the West Bank in the 1950s. One village in particular, that of Khan Al Ahmar, home to some 181 Palestinian Bedouin, 95% of whom are Palestinian refugees, has been under threat of demolition for many years.

The communities are located in a particularly sensitive part of Area C in the West Bank, an area which is critical for the viability of a future Palestinian state. Any attempt to develop the land for illegal settlements is therefore a threat to the Two State solution. There is no doubt that the removal of the Bedouin community to another site, to which they have not agreed, is illegal under international law.

These plans have been subject to a number of legal proceedings. Many in the international community, including Ireland, have raised our concerns on numerous occasions with the Israeli authorities. As a result of international pressure and legal actions plans for the demolition had been delayed. However, following an Israeli Supreme Court ruling in May 2018, the Israeli authorities were given permission by that court to proceed with the demolition.

The UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process has said that the proposed demolition in Khan Al Ahmar is contrary to international law and has called on Israel to halt the demolitions.

I have made two public statements in relation to Khan al Ahmar specifically, on 31 May and most recently on 4 July, calling on the Israeli authorities to halt the demolitions of Palestinian property and the removal of Palestinian communities. I also condemned the demolitions and the forced evictions of the neighbouring Palestinian community of Abu Nuwar. The Irish Representative in Ramallah has visited Khan al Ahmar on a number of occasions, along with other European Missions, as a show of support for the villagers. Ireland has also pressed strongly for EU action on this, and the EU has issued statements in Brussels and at local level calling on the Israeli authorities to reverse the decisions.

Following Palestinian petitions last Thursday, the Israeli High Court has issued a temporary restraining order freezing the demolition of Khan Al Ahmar. The Court has ordered the Israeli authorities to respond to the Palestinian claims by 11 July before making a decision whether to accept or reject the petition.

I again call upon the Israeli authorities to halt the demolitions of Palestinian property and the removal of Palestinian communities. I will continue to raise this issue in my interactions with the Israeli authorities.

Syrian Conflict

148. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the conflict in Syria; the EU’s preferred outcome for the country post-conflict; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30753/18]

157. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to a recent report regarding the ongoing situation in Syria (de-
Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the recent unilateral breach of the months’ long de-escalation agreement that had prevailed in Daraa and surrounding opposition held areas in southern Syria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30884/18]

159. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has made known Ireland’s views to Russia on a bilateral basis regarding that country’s use of and support for lethal force against unarmed civilians in Syria, including conducting airstrikes on hospitals and other healthcare facilities and camps for displaced persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30885/18]

161. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the illegal confiscation of property from exiled Syrians (details supplied); and if he will raise this confiscation at EU level. [30888/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 148, 157 to 159, inclusive, and 161 together.

The Syria conflict, which is now in its eighth year, has cost the lives of well over 400,000 people. Over 13 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria, including 1.5 million people trapped in hard-to-reach and besieged areas. Over 6 million people are displaced internally, and a further 5.6 million have fled to neighbouring countries and the wider region. The Assad regime and its allies have repeatedly targeted civilians, through deliberate attacks, including chemical attacks, on civilian infrastructure such as homes, hospitals and schools, the use of “starve or surrender” techniques and the denial of humanitarian assistance, and forced displacement in the interest of demographic engineering.

I am particularly concerned by the recent escalation of violence in the south west, including air strikes by the regime and its allies, which forced over 300,000 civilians from their homes and destroyed critical infrastructure including several health facilities. I am aware of the report to which Deputy Shortall refers which highlights some of the shocking attacks that have taken place in Daraa province in recent weeks. I welcome the truce announced on Friday, but I am concerned by reports that it has already been breached. I take this opportunity to call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, the respect of the de-escalation agreement and full humanitarian access to all Syrians in need.

I have frequently called on all regional actors, and all those involved in the Syria conflict, to show restraint and avoid any escalation, which could further undermine regional stability, as well as adding to the suffering of civilians. I have also called on all parties with influence on the Syrian regime to exert that influence to ensure that civilians are protected, and to encourage the Syrian Government to engage fully with the UN-led peace process.

It is clear that Russia’s support for the Assad regime has prolonged the suffering of the Syrian people. Russia has also repeatedly vetoed UN Security Council resolutions on Syria, which has seriously undermined the protection of Syrian civilians. Ireland’s has communicated its concerns directly to the Russian authorities on numerous occasions. In October 2017, I met with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Titov. I relayed Ireland’s condemnation of the ongoing attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, and the use of chemical weapons. I called on Russia to ensure civilians are protected, and to exert its influence on other parties to the conflict to do the same. These messages have also been relayed to the Russian Ambassador on numerous occasions at Ministerial and official level.
I am aware of the issue related to property rights to which Deputy Shortall refers. Ireland recently co-sponsored a resolution at the UN Human Rights Council that “deplores the existence and application of national legislation, in particular ‘Syrian Law Number 10/2018’, which would have a significant detrimental impact on freedom of movement and the right of Syrians displaced by the conflict to return to their homes in a safe, voluntary and dignified manner when the situation on the ground allows it, and calls for their repeal”.

Ireland and the EU believe that there can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict. The human suffering caused by the Syrian conflict can only be brought to an end by reaching a sustainable political solution. Ireland and the EU fully support UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura in his efforts to lead political negotiations to end the conflict based on the 2012 Geneva Communique and UN Security Council resolution 2254. The EU provides direct assistance to the UN-led Geneva peace talks and has launched, in coordination with the UN, an initiative to develop political dialogue with key actors from the region to identify common ground.

Ireland and the EU also provide political and financial support to a broad range of measures which aim to ensure full legal accountability for all war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria. This includes the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism established by the UN General Assembly to assist in the investigation and prosecution of persons responsible for the most serious crimes under international law committed in Syria, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria established by the UN Human Rights Council, and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact Finding Mission and Joint Investigative Mission with the UN. Last month, Ireland co-sponsored the decision adopted by the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention introducing an attribution mechanism to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks in Syria and elsewhere. In addition, Ireland has consistently supported EU sanctions targeting the regime and its supporters, and will continue to do so as long as the situation on the ground justifies these measures.

The EU and its Member States constitute the largest single donor to the humanitarian response to the Syria crisis and have to date mobilised more than €10.6 billion for humanitarian, stabilisation and resilience assistance inside Syria and in neighbouring countries. The EU hosted two international donors’ conferences for Syria in April 2017 and April 2018 at which pledges totalling over €9 billion were made.

Since 2012, Ireland has provided over €110 million in humanitarian assistance to the humanitarian response to the Syria crisis, making this Ireland’s largest contribution to a single crisis in recent years. In 2017 alone, Ireland provided almost €25.5 million to the humanitarian response. At the 2018 Brussels Donor conference, Ireland pledged to contribute a further €25 million in 2018 and almost €22 million of this has been disbursed so far. Through its annual contributions to the EU Institutions, Ireland also supports the EU’s humanitarian response in Syria.

Election Monitoring Missions

149. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if all members of election monitoring panels are informed of the make-up of each election monitoring delegation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30793/18]

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. Accordingly, my Department maintains a roster of potential participants in election monitoring missions. The aim is to ensure that, in response to requests for Irish participation in international missions observing elections and certain referenda, there is a pool of adequately experienced people who could contribute effectively to such missions on either a short or long term basis. Irish observers participate primarily in missions organised by the European Union (EU) and also those organised by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

If a Roster Member applies to participate in an Election Observation Mission (EOM), they are individually notified if they are nominated for that EOM. In the case of EU EOMs, the Commission will notify the nominated Roster Member as to whether they are selected to participate on the EOM. This information is not circulated to the full Roster as there are important concerns about the release of personal data in terms of legislation and security to third parties. Circulating such information about individual observers would require the consent of observers and doing so without their consent may be in breach of EU General Data Protection Regulation.

Human Rights

150. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the position regarding the situation in Myanmar; the efforts being made to address the humanitarian crisis and human rights violations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30809/18]

151. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the efforts being made by the EU and the international community to ensure that international and national humanitarian staff and organisations have full unimpeded access to affected populations in Myanmar; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30810/18]

152. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the efforts being made to ensure that those guilty of human rights violations in Myanmar are brought to justice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30811/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 150 to 152, inclusive, together.

Since the most recent escalation of violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar, in August 2017, approximately 700,000 members of the Rohingya community have fled across the border to Bangladesh where they now reside in precarious conditions in refugee camps. Conditions are likely to deteriorate over the coming months as the monsoon season progresses.

This exodus of refugees has been accompanied by credible claims of serious human rights violations by the Myanmar Security Forces. These include reports of widespread killing of civilians, sexual and gender based violence, arbitrary arrests, and the burning of Rohingya villages.

Efforts by the international community to address this crisis have focused on responding to the humanitarian crisis, promoting a political solution and pressing for accountability for crimes and other violations of human rights abuses that have occurred.

While efforts aimed at achieving accountability and a political solution to the crisis are vitally important, there is an immediate need for a coherent humanitarian response to the extremely difficult conditions faced by the huge numbers of displaced members of the Rohingya community now mainly in Bangladesh. To this end, Ireland has actively supported the international humanitarian response to the refugee crisis and we provided direct funding of €1 million
in 2017 with an additional €1 million allocated for 2018. Our support has focused on food, shelter, water and sanitation. Through the Irish Aid Rapid Response facility, we have provided 37 tonnes of hygiene, sanitation and shelter kits and deployed experts in water and sanitation and humanitarian coordination on the ground. In addition, as the 6th largest donor to the UN-administered Central Emergency Response Fund, Ireland’s estimated contribution through UN pooled funding amounted to a further €1 million to deliver life-saving support.

In Northern Rakhine, Ireland provided funding to the Red Cross at the end of 2017 to provide cash transfers to 10,000 households and food and non-food items to 20,000 households; first health and assisted childbirth services; access to sanitation for 5,000 households; and reunification of separated families in Rakhine State.

Elsewhere in Myanmar, over the course of 2017-18, Ireland is providing over €3.5 million to humanitarian and development NGOs, primarily to Trócaire for its work on gender equality, resource rights and humanitarian assistance to conflict affected communities.

Humanitarian access in Northern Rakhine has been extremely limited since the start of this crisis. Only the Red Cross Movement and to a lesser extent the World Food Programme have access. As a result it has not been possible to provide adequate lifesaving assistance to the estimated 100,000-150,000 Rohingya that remain in Rakhine, or to other affected persons in that region.

Ireland has strongly and consistently pressed for humanitarian access to Myanmar and has added its voice to that of the international community in pushing for this crucial first step in addressing the humanitarian crisis. I repeat that call here and for the full implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. The report of the Commission urges the Government of Myanmar to ensure full and unimpeded humanitarian access – for both national and international staff – at all times and to all communities in Rakhine State.

An intensive political response by the international community continues to be pursued and on 6 June, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been agreed between the Myanmar government, the UN High Commission for Refugees and the UN Development Programme, to establish a framework for cooperation between the parties aimed at creating conducive conditions for the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable repatriation of these refugees from Bangladesh to their places of origin. The MoU also aims to help create improved and resilient livelihoods for all communities living in Rakhine State.

Ireland continues to actively engage with our international partners in supporting these efforts through bilateral contacts in Myanmar and via participation in the EU and UN responses including at the recent 38th Session of the Human Rights Council.

Ireland has consistently called for an independent and impartial investigation into the serious and credible allegations of human rights violations by the Myanmar security forces. In that regard, we have strongly supported the extension of the mandates of the UN Fact Finding Mission and UN Special Rapporteur to Myanmar Yanghee Lee, and have asked the Government of Myanmar to cooperate with them and allow them access to the country. Their work in investigating allegations, recording victim testimony and gathering other evidence, so that it can be preserved for further criminal proceedings, is crucial to ensuring full accountability.

Ireland has also actively engaged in the formation of the EU’s position including in the most recent EU Foreign Affairs Council’s Council Conclusions on Myanmar, which were adopted on 26 February last. These conclusions condemn the human rights violations in Myanmar, support the mandates of the Fact Finding Mission and Special Rapporteur and provide for targeted restrictive measures against senior military officers of the Myanmar armed forces responsible
for these acts. Targeted sanctions have since been put in place.

My Department will continue to liaise closely with EU and other international partners to press for progress in resolving this crisis including through our Embassies in Thailand and in Hanoi who are closely monitoring the situation.

**UN Security Council**

153. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of staff who have been designated to work on Ireland’s bid for a seat at the UN Security Council; if staff have been seconded from other Departments or outside agencies to work on the bid; if so, the number seconded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30812/18]

154. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the budget allocated for Ireland’s bid to win a seat on the UN Security Council; the breakdown of the budget allocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30813/18]

155. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if other events have been planned for Ireland’s bid to win a seat on the UN Security Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30814/18]

156. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the cost of Ireland’s campaign for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council; the reason the campaign has not focused on Ireland’s history and policy of neutrality in international affairs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30848/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 153 to 156, inclusive, together.

Ireland is seeking election to a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for the 2021-2022 term. Our candidature was first announced in 2005 and the campaign has been building since then under successive Governments.

The official launch of Ireland’s candidature took place at UN headquarters in New York on 2 July, marking the beginning of an intensive period of lobbying which will continue until the election in June 2020. I, along with all my Cabinet colleagues, will be intensifying efforts to make Ireland’s case. This political engagement is being supported by my Department’s diplomatic personnel.

The campaign is being coordinated at official level by a core team of staff in the UN Policy Unit, within the Political Division of my Department. This team currently consists of 6 staff members. While the UN Policy Unit has a number of other areas of responsibility, the UN Security Council candidature is central to its work. One secondment is currently envisaged to assist with the implementation of the Global Ireland initiative and this will include support to the Security Council campaign among other tasks.

In addition to Dublin based staff, Ireland’s Mission to the UN in New York is also fully engaged on the election effort. I would also stress that the campaign is a whole of Department, and whole of Government, undertaking. Thus messaging and activities relevant to Ireland’s candidature are being integrated into the work of all sections and offices of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as well as that of other Government departments.
Up to this point Ireland’s UN Security Council campaign has been managed within existing resources by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. As we move forward there will be a need for additional resources to promote Ireland’s candidature as we seek to secure support from UN Member States.

Over the coming two years until the election in June 2020, Ireland will seek to build awareness of our achievements and experience globally. This will be realised through the use of Ireland’s diplomatic network, engagement on substantive policy issues at the UN, and the organisation of events on a range of themes which will highlight Ireland’s track record globally and our principled commitment to the value of multilateralism.

Ireland’s traditional policy of military neutrality goes hand in hand with our promotion of international peace and security, including our obligations as members of the United Nations. This aspect of our history and track record as a UN Member State is one which has resonated across the membership of the UN since we joined in 1955 and we continue to highlight it. The themes of empathy, partnership and independence are intended to capture Ireland’s lived experience and outlook, giving primacy to cooperation, agreement and reasonable compromise.

Questions Nos. 157 to 159, inclusive, answered with Question No. 148.

Syrian Conflict

160. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will request Jordan and Israel to urgently provide safe haven to civilians fleeing military attack; his views on the creation of UN managed humanitarian corridors to facilitate the evacuation of civilians; if unilateral funding will be provided immediately for the creation of camps for potentially 750,000 persons fleeing the attacks; and if he will request that adequate EU funding is provided for same in the longer term. [30887/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I am deeply concerned about the recent upsurge in violence in south-western Syria, which has led to the displacement of over 300,000 people. This is a further deterioration of the terrible situation inside Syria, where over 13 million people require humanitarian assistance. An additional 5.6 million Syrians have fled to neighbouring countries and the wider region. Ireland recognises that countries in the region have more than played their part. Jordan as an example, is the second-largest refugee hosting country in the world when compared to the size of its population.

The safety and protection of civilians inside Syria is an utmost priority and I call on all parties to respect their obligations under International Humanitarian Law. I welcome the truce announced on Friday, but I am concerned by reports that it has already been breached. I reiterate my call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and respect for the de-escalation agreement.

Crucially, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access must be facilitated. UN agencies and partners are providing support to the Syrian Arab Red Crescent to respond to the urgent needs of the displaced. This includes health, water and sanitation, food, shelter and other core relief items as well as ensuring the protection of civilians. In addition, UN convoys, in cooperation with the Government of Jordan, have in recent days transported assistance for the tens of thousands of Syrians near the Jordanian border. These efforts must be sustained and increased.

Ireland has provided over €110 million towards the Syria crisis since 2012. Our humanitarian assistance responds to those in need inside Syria as well as Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in neighbouring countries. During a recent visit to a refugee camp in Jordan, where I witnessed first-hand the impact of Ireland’s humanitarian assistance, I announced a
At the recent meeting of EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Development on June 25th I discussed with my EU counterparts the issue of Syrian refugees from south-western Syria and possible solutions. Last April, the EU hosted the Brussels II Conference for Syria and the Region, which included a focus on sustaining and increasing humanitarian assistance to all those affected by the crisis in Syria, including Syrian refugees and vulnerable communities in neighbouring countries. The EU and its Member States contributed €4.8 billion out of the total €6.2 billion pledged until 2020, to support both immediate assistance and longer term response.

Ireland will continue to advocate for sustained European response to this crisis. Ultimately, only a political solution to the conflict will end the suffering of the Syrian people.

*Question No. 161 answered with Question No. 148.*

**Departmental Staff Recruitment**

162. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of public sector jobs offered as internal competitions or restricted to existing civil service or public service staff in his Department in 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31549/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Officers join the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade through standard recruitment practices i.e., through competitions run under licence directly by this Department or by the Public Appointments Service, or through transfer/redeployment from another government Department under standard transfer/redeployment arrangements.

The Department follows centrally agreed sequencing arrangements for recruitment and promotion, between internal, interdepartmental and open panels established through competitions.

In 2017 and to date in 2018, 89 officers accepted roles in my Department having successfully competed in internal or interdepartmental competitions for promotion.

All other officers who accepted positions in the timeframe concerned were appointed from open competitions.

**Financial Services Regulation**

163. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of appeals lodged at the Irish Financial Services appeals tribunal; the number that were accepted as appealable; the number of hearings held; the number of Central Bank decisions or findings successfully appealed in each year since the tribunal was established in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30023/18]

164. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the cost each year and to date in 2018 of the Irish Financial Services appeals tribunal; the cost to the Central Bank incurred through legal fees related to the tribunal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30024/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 163
and 164 together.

It was not possible to compile the information sought in the time available and, therefore, I will make arrangements to provide the information in line with Standing Orders.

Help-To-Buy Scheme

165. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Finance his plans to extend the help-to-buy scheme beyond its end date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30047/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Section 477C of the Taxes consolidation Act 1997 (Help-to-Buy Incentive) includes a sunset clause for the incentive coming into effect at the end of 2019.

As the Deputy will be aware, my Department has recently commissioned an independent Cost-Benefit Analysis of the incentive. The analysis is currently underway and is due to be completed in advance of Budget 2019. The findings of the analysis will, amongst other factors, inform any decisions on the future of the incentive.

Insurance Costs

166. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance when the next quarterly update is being published by the cost of insurance working group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30052/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware from a recent response to a PQ, it had been planned that the next quarterly Progress Update would be released before the end of July. Work is ongoing but it is still envisaged that this report will be completed by the close of the month. Having said that, it may be August before it is ready for publication on the Department of Finance website.

The update, which will be the sixth such quarterly report from the Cost of Insurance Working Group, will provide details on the implementation of all of the recommendations from both the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance and the Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance. However, a particular focus will be placed upon the 14 actions across the two Reports – seven from each – with Q2 2018 deadlines.

Property Tax Exemptions

167. Deputy John McGuinness asked the Minister for Finance if an exemption to the household charge will be examined to help support family carers. [30068/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Section 156 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 converted any arrears of Household Charge (HHC) that were still outstanding on 1 July 2013 to a Local Property Tax (LPT) liability of €200 per property, and made Revenue responsible for collecting the increased amounts. Prior to 1 July 2013, collection of the original €100 HHC was the responsibility of the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) on behalf of the Local Authorities.

With regards to the Local Property Tax, the Government decided that a liability to the LPT...
should apply to all owners of residential properties with a limited number of exemptions. As a matter of Government policy, and in order to keep the rate of the tax low, the Government agreed that reliefs should be targeted at owner occupiers where there is inability to pay the tax.

Accordingly, the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012, as amended, provides for the possibility of deferring the charge to LPT in certain circumstances to assist individuals who may have difficulty paying the tax. To qualify for a deferral, the residential property must be occupied as a sole or main residence. The gross income thresholds for a full deferral are €15,000 for a single person and €25,000 for a couple, whether married persons, civil partners or qualifying cohabitants. A person may claim a deferral if their gross income will not, “as can reasonably be foreseen at the liability date” exceed these thresholds in that year.

A deferral of up to 50% of the LPT liability will be possible where the gross income of the liable person does not exceed €25,000 for a single person or €35,000 for married persons/civil partners/cohabitants. The full and partial deferral thresholds may be increased in the case of properties occupied as a sole or main residence and subject to a mortgage. In such cases, the gross income thresholds may be increased by 80% of the mortgage interest payments.

Where a liable person does not qualify for, or does not wish to avail of, a deferral, phased payment of LPT can be used to assist with budgeting. The Government is aware of the difficulties facing many individuals and families, and for this reason a wide variety of methods for payment of the LPT are available from which liable persons can choose the method most suited to their individual circumstances. The LPT can be paid by way of phased payments rather than in a single payment; it can also be paid by direct debit; or through payment service providers such as An Post TaxPay, Payzone and Omnivend.

I have initiated a review of the LPT which is looking in particular at the impact on LPT liabilities of property price developments. It includes an examination of the outstanding recommendations of the 2015 Thornhill review of the Local Property Tax. It is expected that the review will be completed at the end of August and that the review report will provide a number of policy choices for consideration. The review will be informed by the desirability of achieving relative stability, both over the short and longer terms, in LPT payments of liable persons. It also included a consultation process to enable all interested parties and individuals to submit their views on the future of the LPT.

**Legislative Measures**

168. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Finance if his Department has identified laws which are dependent on or in place as a consequence of Article 41.2 of the Constitution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30100/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As the Deputy is probably aware of, a constitutional referendum has been proposed to amend or repeal Article 41.2 of the Constitution. In this context, the Department of Finance is engaged in an ongoing review of legislation for which it is responsible in order to identify any such laws which are dependant on Article 41.2. To date, no such laws have been identified.

**Nama Staff Data**

169. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated number of NAMA staff who will transfer into Home Building Finance Ireland; the anticipated date of their
transfer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30299/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Home Building Finance Ireland Bill 2018 provides that the staff of HBFI will be provided by the NTMA on a secondment basis. This model has been successfully used in the past in establishing other entities such as the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI).

In order to ensure that the entity is established in the most efficient manner possible it is envisaged that the NTMA shall first draw upon any relevant resources, services and experience that are already available within NAMA when appointing staff to HBFI. NAMA has amassed considerable expertise in this area through the implementation of its existing residential funding programme and this will be a key asset for HBFI.

Ultimately, it will be a matter for the Board of HBFI to determine the precise staffing levels required which will be commensurate with the level of demand for lending from developers. As a result it is not possible to estimate the number of NAMA staff that may ultimately transfer to HBFI at this time. The transfer of any NAMA staff will depend on HBFI’s requirements and the availability of appropriate resources in NAMA at that point in time.

**NAMA Operations**

170. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance the spending commitments or paying down of debt which has been entered into with regard to the profits arising from the winding down of NAMA; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30301/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I wish to advise the Deputy that it is expected that NAMA will substantially complete its work by 2020. The Agency announced in October 2017 that it had redeemed all of its €30.2bn in Senior Debt which was guaranteed by the State and since April 2018 it has commenced the redemption of its €1.6bn in subordinated debt. However, notwithstanding the successful achievement of repaying the State’s contingent liability, three years ahead of schedule, there is still a significant body of work yet to be completed by NAMA.

Subject to current market conditions prevailing NAMA projects a surplus in the region of €3.5bn to be returned to the State once it completes it work. The realisation of this surplus depends on the redemption of NAMA’s remaining subordinated debt by March 2020 and completion of its Dublin Docklands SDZ and residential funding programmes.

As per section 60(2) of the NAMA Act 2009, NAMA may use surplus funds to redeem and cancel its senior and subordinated debt. Surplus funds may only be returned to the Central Fund once NAMA’s debt has been redeemed in full in 2020.

Any NAMA surplus paid, while Exchequer positive, will not impact the general government balance, in line with EUROSTAT rules. It will be a decision for the Government as to how any surplus returned by NAMA will be utilised within the framework of the fiscal rules. However, the intention has always been to use such receipts from the resolution of the financial sector crisis to pay down our national debt and reduce our debt servicing costs.

**Tax Code**

171. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 188 of 29 May 2018, if the loan was not given to an employee or former em-
ployee at a preferential interest rate, then for the purposes of a write-down or debt forgiveness, the Revenue Commissioners will not seek to apply section 122 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30329/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by Revenue that to assess the implications of Section 122(3) of the Taxes Consolidation Act (TCA) (Section 122(3) TCA) for any employee or former employee the full portfolio of loans provided to the individual must be examined.

As stated in the reply to Parliamentary Question No. 188 of 29 May 2018, if there are a number of loans, including preferential loans, then, regardless of the order of the write off, the amount written off has to be first set against the amount of any preferential loan(s) outstanding and any tax liability arising on the preferential loan(s), so treated as written off first, has to be paid in accordance with section 122(3) TCA.

Once the tax liability in respect of any preferential loans has been accounted for any non-preferential loans advanced may be fully or partially written-off without incurring a tax liability provided the employer can show to the satisfaction of Revenue that the outcome of the write-off would be the same for the employee or ex-employee as it would be for a non-employee customer of the bank.

Where an employee takes out a “non-preferential” loan, and the employee has no other loans from the employer, the only provision of the preferential loan rules which applies is the provision relating to the release or write-off of a loan (namely, section 112(3) TCA 1997). Any release or write-off of such a non-preferential loan will give rise to a tax liability unless the employer can show to the satisfaction of Revenue that the outcome of the write-off would be the same for the employee as it would be for a non-employee customer of the bank.

Where an ex-employee takes out a loan, after leaving employment with his or her employer, and the loan is written off or released in whole or part, the release or write-off will not give rise to a tax liability provided the ex-employee has no preferential loans with the employer.

Tax Data

172. Deputy Brendan Ryan asked the Minister for Finance the taxes withheld in respect of a person (details supplied) through the RTC or C35 system for sub-contractors in each of the tax years 2005 to 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30452/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that according to their records the following amounts of Relevant Contacts Tax (RCT) were deducted from relevant payments made to the person concerned for the tax years 2005 to 2009:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tax Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>€17,501.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>€26,372.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>€3,158.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>€3,605.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>€997.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no record of RCT deductions in respect of the person concerned for the tax years 2010 to 2012 inclusive.
I am also advised that the person concerned has failed to submit income tax returns for the tax years 2006 to 2009 and 2011 to 2014 inclusive. It should be noted in that context that, in accordance with section 865 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, any claim for a repayment of tax in relation to any tax year from 2003 onwards must be made within 4 years after the end of the tax year to which the claim relates. Thus, Revenue are legally precluded from making a repayment at a time at which a claim for the repayment would not be allowed, i.e. after 4 years from the end of the year to which the repayment claim relates.

Ministerial Travel

173. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of travel expenses for him and those who travel with him since his appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30511/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The cost of official domestic and overseas travel, including the cost of accompanying officials, since my appointment as Minister for Finance in June 2017 is €25,863.13. The Deputy may note that €11,744 of this cost relates to accompanying officials. The remainder pertains to me and is in respect of flights, accommodation, car hire and other expenses.

It should be noted that costs associated with one of my political advisors that I have appointed since coming to office in June 2017 is charged to the Department of Finance.

Freedom of Information Requests

174. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Finance the number of FOI requests his Department has received since January 2018; the number of refusals; the number that have been appealed and that are ongoing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30569/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** In response to the Deputy, as of Thursday 5 July 2018, a total of 206 FOI requests have been received by the Department of Finance, 21 of which are currently in process.

The Department has refused 38 FOI requests in 2018 to date.

The Department has received four appeals for Internal Review to date, with all cases fully concluded. There was one appeal to the Office of the Information Commissioner, which was subsequently withdrawn by the requestor.

The Department of Finance publishes a Quarterly FOI Disclosure Log on a quarterly basis since January 2015 on the Department’s website; this log details the requestor category, the request itself and the final decision.

Vacancies on State Boards

175. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Finance the number of vacancies on State boards under the remit of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30586/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** There are seven state boards under the
remit of my Department. There are no vacancies on five of these boards. These are the Credit Union Restructuring Board, the Financial Services and Pension Ombudsman, the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council, the National Asset Management Agency and the National Treasury Management Agency.

I am advised that the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland has one vacancy.

There are two possible vacancies on the Central Bank Commission. Section 18CA(1)(b) of the Central Bank Act 1942, as amended, allows “at least six, but no more than eight, other members appointed by the Minister”, and currently there are six ministerial appointees.

**Tax Appeals Commission**

176. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance the number of requests received from the Tax Appeals Commission for permission to hire additional staff in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018; if each request for additional staff was approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30864/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Tax Appeals Commission (TAC) was established in March 2016 as part of the reform of the tax appeals system introduced under the Finance (Tax Appeals) Act 2015. The Commission was set up as an independent body with its own vote and Accounting Officer and is a body under the aegis of the Department of Finance.

Significant additional resources have been applied to the TAC since its inception with the staffing levels more than doubling over its first two years of operation. Where additional resources have been sought to date, my Department have engaged with each request received. Indeed the budget for the TAC has almost quadrupled between 2014 and 2018 despite the fact that in 2016 and 2017 the TAC did not spend its full budget allocation.

The following information relates to staffing requests received from the TAC.

In June 2016 the TAC proposed the re-engagement of two former Commissioners on a temporary basis. This was followed in July 2016 by a request to recruit two additional temporary clerical staff. The re-engagement of the former Commissioners was not considered to be in keeping with the mandate of openness and transparency, so in July 2016 sanction was instead given for the appointment of 5 temporary Appeal Commissioners, to be appointed by a competitive process, and 2 full-time clerical staff.

An amended request was received from the TAC in August 2016 for 4 clerical staff (to include the 2 clerical staff sanctioned in July), and this was sanctioned in August 2016.

In February 2017, following the return to D/Finance of an experienced Principal Officer on secondment to assist with the set-up of the TAC, the TAC requested the secondment of another experienced Principal Officer from my Department. The position was filled by the appointment of a Principal Officer on secondment from the Department of Finance in May 2017.

In August 2017 a request was made by the TAC for 2 additional tax qualified staff at Assistant Principal level to act as case managers and this request was sanctioned. In parallel to commencing the recruitment process via the Public Appointments Service (PAS) the TAC requested that my Department consider filling some of these positions by sending further staff to the TAC on secondment. This was not possible as my Department has a limited number of staff with the requisite qualifications/skills and experience and is also dealing with staffing challenges caused
by an annual turnover rate of over 23% (including resignations, retirements and staff that have moved to other Departments through promotions etc.). My officials offered assistance with the process of recruitment via PAS, including the provision of interview board members if required. The assistance of my Department’s HR manager to provide advice and guidance has also been offered to the TAC, but the TAC to date have not availed of this offer.

The TAC’s 2018 Estimates were submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) in September 2017, noting that the required additional staffing from January 2018 would be 2 Assistant Principal case managers (the 2 case managers requested in August for which recruitment had commenced), 1 Assistant Principal, 1 Higher Executive Officer and 1 temporary Clerical Officer.

This request was sanctioned, and my Department facilitated the transfer of an experienced Higher Executive Officer on secondment to the TAC in October 2017. I understand that the 2 Assistant Principal case managers were appointed in January 2018.

In February 2018, the Accounting Officer of the Commission submitted a request to my Department for significant additional resources to meet the increased caseload of the Commission, including an additional 10 administrative staff. The addition of these resources would involve an effective doubling of the Commission’s budget for 2018 from €1.626 million to an estimated €3.226 million which includes extra resources for ICT and new office space.

Due to the substantial increase in public resources now being sought by the TAC, my officials requested further information to support the resource request to ensure that the proposed balance of administrative staff and the existing Commissioners would be effective in addressing that workload. The TAC informed my Department in early March of this year that it had commenced commissioning a review of its resources and operations. I am awaiting receipt of this report and, in the meantime, I have commissioned an independent reviewer with significant experience of civil service bodies and operations to assess the current position and advise how best to address the TAC’s resource needs. This review has been expedited in order that resourcing decisions, based on a sound business case for the resolution of the current backlog, can be made as soon as possible.

Ministerial Meetings

177. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to have a bilateral meeting with his Canadian counterpart, Mr. Bill Morneau; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30865/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I have no bilateral meeting currently scheduled with Minister Morneau. I last met with Minister Morneau in January 2018.

Insurance Costs

178. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the recommendations from the working group on insurance; the measures implemented to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30879/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As the Deputy is aware, the Cost of Insurance Working Group undertook an examination of the factors contributing to the cost of insurance in order to identify what short, medium and long-term measures could be introduced
to help reduce the cost of insurance for consumers and businesses.

The initial focus of the Working Group was the issue of rising motor insurance premiums and the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance was published in January 2017, containing 33 recommendations with 71 associated actions.

In its second phase, the Working Group examined the cost of business insurance, in particular employer liability insurance and public liability insurance. This work culminated in the publication in January 2018 of the Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance, with 15 recommendations and 29 associated actions to be carried out.

Both of the primary Reports contain an Action Plan, setting out the agreed timelines for implementation, and also a commitment that the Working Group will prepare quarterly updates on its progress. The Working Group has published five such updates, most recently on 11 May last.

This quarterly update shows that of the 50 separate relevant deadlines within the Action Plan of the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance set up to the end of Q1 2018, one relates to an action no longer being proceeded with; of the remaining 49 deadlines, 40 have been met. Substantial work has also been undertaken in respect of the nine action points categorised as “ongoing”.

In relation to the eight actions from the Report on Employer and Public Liability Insurance due for completion in Q1 2018, all eight were completed on time.

It is envisaged that the next quarterly Progress Update will be completed by the end of July and will be ready for publication on the Department of Finance website shortly after. This update will provide details on the implementation of all of the recommendations from both primary Reports. However, a particular focus will be placed upon the 14 actions across the two Reports – seven from each – with Q2 2018 deadlines.

Banking Sector

179. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Finance if banks here are compliant with Article 2(2) of the European Union (Payment Accounts) Regulations 2016 (details supplied). [30898/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Payment Accounts Directive, transposed in September 2016 by the European Union (Payment Accounts) Regulations 2016, contains the right to open a payment account with basic features. This right extends to an asylum seeker, and also to a person who has not been granted a residence permit but whose expulsion is not possible for legal or practical reasons.

Regulation 16 of the European Union (Payment Accounts) Regulations 2016 permits a credit institution to refuse to open an account on one of two grounds. Those grounds are set out in the legislation but essentially are that the applicant already holds a payment account or that refusal is necessary to comply with money laundering and terrorist financing legislation. The Central Bank is the designated competent authority for the purposes of the Payment Accounts Directive.

If an applicant is refused an account he or she can submit a complaint against that decision to the credit institution. A consumer who has a complaint that is not resolved by the credit institution’s internal complaints mechanism may make a complaint to the independent Financial
Services and Pensions Ombudsman.

Gambling Sector

180. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a media report (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30910/18]

181. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance his views on an article in the media (details supplied); if he is satisfied that all relevant agencies including the Revenue Commissioners, An Garda Síochána and local authorities are properly regulating this growing sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30911/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 180 and 181 together.

I am aware of the media reports referred to by the Deputy but I have no comment to make in so far as these reports refer to the business affairs of private individuals.

Any gaming machine which is made available for play in a public place, must have a valid Excise licence which is issued by Revenue and known as a ‘Gaming Machine Licence’. A Gaming Machine Licence can only be issued by Revenue to a person who holds a ‘Gaming Licence’ under the Gaming and Lotteries Act 1956 for each premises where gaming is taking place. A ‘Gaming Licence’ can only be issued by Revenue on production by the applicant of a certificate granted by the District Court under the Gaming and Lotteries Act 1956 which authorises the issue of a Gaming Licence for the premises in question.

In addition, Revenue also requires payment of the relevant excise licence fee and compliance with tax clearance requirements before a Gaming Machine Licence (for each machine) or a Gaming Licence (for premises) can be issued.

I am advised that in 2017 Revenue started a national compliance project on the gaming and amusement machine sector, which is designed to identify and tackle non-compliance with tax and excise licensing obligations. This project is ongoing across all regions and to date site visits have been carried out by Revenue officials to 285 separate premises. A range of follow-up actions are being pursued with respect to the tax and licensing issues identified, including seizure of unlicensed gaming machines where necessary.

I am also advised that legislative proposals are being developed at present for the gambling sector by my colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality. To support this process, the Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality has recently chaired a Gambling Regulation Working Group which has met on 5 occasions since January 2018, with the final meeting taking place last month. All relevant Government Departments, an Garda Síochána and the Revenue Commissioners have taken part in the Working Group. I understand that a report for Government is now being prepared by the Minister of State on foot of the group’s discussions.

Corporation Tax Regime

182. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to address Ireland’s poor international reputation regarding profit shifting by corporate tax incentives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30984/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Ireland has a competitive corporation
tax rate, an attractive and stable tax regime and a strong commitment to transparency. Ireland’s tax regime is designed to encourage the location of real, substantive and high-value adding investment in this country. We have a competitive tax regime that is fully in line with international standards for fair tax competition as agreed at the EU and the OECD.

The best way for Ireland to address any reputational issues on tax is to continue to support international tax reform efforts and to continue to implement the various recommendations that we have agreed at EU and OECD level.

I recognise the importance of ensuring effective taxation of multinational companies and the need for internationally agreed solutions to counter aggressive tax planning, base erosion and profit shifting. Ireland has fully engaged with international efforts to counter aggressive tax planning to date, through both the OECD’s Base Erosion and Profit Shifting and the subsequent coordinated action at EU level leading to the agreement of the two Anti-Tax Avoidance Directives.

We continue to play our part in this ongoing work. It is widely acknowledged that difficulties in the international tax system mainly arise from asymmetries between the taxation systems of different countries. Only by acting together can we ensure that companies are taxed appropriately.

I should also add that my officials are currently finalising a roadmap setting out a clear programme of action in relation to Ireland’s Corporation Tax regime for the coming years having regard to developments at EU, OECD and the wider international level. This Roadmap follows on from the independent review of Ireland’s Corporation Tax Code conducted by Mr. Seamus Coffey, and will set out a comprehensive schedule of actions under way to action the Coffey recommendations, implement the remaining OECD BEPS recommendations and transpose the EU Anti-Tax Avoidance Directives. This Roadmap will be published in the coming weeks.

**Motor Insurance Costs**

183. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether the working group on car insurance has been a fruitful exercise; his plans to address the difficulties being faced by many motorists that are still being offered extortionate premiums; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30985/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** It is acknowledged that pricing in the motor insurance sector has been subject to a lot of volatility in recent years and, indeed, the problem of rising motor insurance premiums was the main impetus for the establishment of the Cost of Insurance Working Group. Its Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance was published in January 2017. The Report makes 33 recommendations with 71 associated actions to be carried out in agreed timeframes, set out within an Action Plan.

Work is ongoing on the implementation of the recommendations by the relevant Government Departments and Agencies and there is a commitment within the Report that the Working Group will prepare quarterly updates on its progress. The fifth such update was published on 11 May and shows that of the 50 separate relevant deadlines within the Action Plan of the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance set up to the end of Q1 2018, one relates to an action no longer being proceeded with; of the remaining 49 deadlines, 40 have been met. Substantial work has also been undertaken in respect of the nine action points categorised as “ongoing”.

The Working Group will continue to focus on putting into place the measures proposed in the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance, in parallel with those from the Report on the Cost
of Employer and Public Liability Insurance. It is envisaged that the full implementation of all the recommendations from both Reports cumulatively, with the appropriate levels of commitment and cooperation from all relevant stakeholders, should achieve the objectives of delivering fairer premiums for consumers and a more stable and competitive motor insurance market.

I believe however that it is important to acknowledge that the average cost of motor insurance has been consistently falling since the middle of 2016, with the most recent CSO data (for May 2018) indicating that private motor insurance premiums have decreased by 19% since peaking in July 2016. While it is accepted that premiums are still at a very high level for many people, such statistics indicate at the very least a greater degree of stability in the market on an overall basis. I believe that the endeavours of the Working Group have contributed to this positive trend in pricing, as well as putting in motion much needed reform in other related areas, such as data transparency, the interaction between insurance companies and consumers, and the personal injuries claims environment. While there is still much work to be done, I consider that the Cost of Insurance Working Group project has already proven to be a worthwhile and fruitful exercise overall. In addition, I am of the view that its work must continue to be a priority for Government and would urge all relevant Departments to continue prioritising the implementation of the recommendations of the Reports.

Finally, I would recommend drivers who are seeking or renewing insurance to consult the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission website, which has a highly informative section regarding the purchase of car insurance generally. One of the key tips listed to help cut costs is to “shop around” and “always get quotes from several insurance providers when you need to get or renew insurance”.

**Departmental Staff Recruitment**

184. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the number of public sector jobs offered as internal competitions or restricted to existing Civil Service or public service staff in his Department in 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31547/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I wish to inform the Deputy that periodically vacancies arise in the Department of Finance that are filled by way of Internal, Interdepartmental and Open Competitions.

In 2017 there were 9 internal competitions and to date in 2018 there were 7. Some of these competitions involve the successful candidate being seconded to another Department or to the European Commission. In other cases the competitions are for specialist roles in the Department i.e. Press Officer or Special Adviser to the Minister of State.

The Department of Finance also fills vacancies in the Department through Interdepartmental and Open Competitions run by the Public Appointments Service (PAS). In 2017 62 new entrants were recruited through PAS. These new entrants were at Clerical Officer, Executive Officer, Administrative Officer and Assistant Principal level. To date in 2018 38 new entrants were recruited through PAS. These new entrants were at Clerical Officer, Executive Officer, Higher Executive Officer, Administrative Officer, Assistant Principal and Principal Officer level.

**Cycling Facilities Provision**

185. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform
further to Parliamentary Question No. 241 of 15 May 2018, if he has received the independent report to examine the proposed changeover of the cycle trails and footpaths along Chesterfield Avenue in the Phoenix Park; the date on which works will commence on the changeover; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30041/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): It is expected that the report referred to will be available by the end of this month.

The Office of Public Works will then give due consideration to the recommendations contained therein.

**Election Expenditure**

186. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the full cost of each presidential, Dáil Éireann, local, European Parliament and Seanad Éireann election and by-election since February 2011, in tabular form. [30291/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The approximate costings of each Presidential, Dáil Éireann, Local, European Parliament and Seanad Éireann election and Bye-Election since February 2011 to 2016 are set out in the following table with the exception of the 2015 Carlow Kilkenny Bye Election* which was held with the 2015 Referendums Marriage Equality and Age of Eligibility to Office of President. It is not, therefore, possible to give an accurate cost of that Bye Election as there would have been an extensive sharing of staff and facilities for the different polls taken.

With respect to the most recent 2 Seanad Bye Elections in April of this year (held together) the final certified accounts after an election would not normally be available until around six months after the holding of the election poll. It is estimated that up to €0.015m could be spent taking into account some costs would have increased over time and savings from the sharing of people and facilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month/Year</th>
<th>Election Event</th>
<th>Approx Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 2011</td>
<td>Dáil Éireann</td>
<td>€29.1m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2011</td>
<td>Seanad Éireann</td>
<td>€2.7m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2011</td>
<td>Presidential, (plus 2 Referendums: Judges Remuneration, Houses of the Oireachtas Inquiries) and Dublin West By-Election</td>
<td>€30.1m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2013</td>
<td>Meath East Bye Election</td>
<td>€0.473m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2014</td>
<td>European &amp; Local Elections (includes 2 By-Elections: Dublin West &amp; Longford W. Meath)</td>
<td>€24.6m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2014</td>
<td>Dublin South West and Leitrim/Roscommon By-Elections</td>
<td>€1.1m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2014</td>
<td>Seanad (Panel Member) By-Election</td>
<td>€0.007m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Referendum Expenditure

187. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the full cost of each referendum held since February 2011, in tabular form. [30292/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The approximate costings for all Referendums since 2011 to 2015 are set out in the table below with the exception of the Referendum held in 2011* which was not held on its own but combined and accounted for with the Presidential Election and the Dublin West Bye Election. It is not, therefore, possible to give an accurate cost of that Referendum as there would have been an extensive sharing of staff and facilities for the different polls taken.

With respect to the most recent Referendum on the Thirty-sixth Amendment of the Constitution Bill 2018 (8 Amendment) the final certified accounts after an election would not normally be available until around six months after the holding of the election poll. No expenditure has been returned to date.

While no two election events would be the same and some costs would have increased in the meantime the 2012 Referendum cost could be taken as indicative of a stand alone Referendum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month/Year</th>
<th>Referendum</th>
<th>Approx Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 2011</td>
<td>Judges’ Remuneration, Houses of the Oireachtas Inquiries</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2012</td>
<td>Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union</td>
<td>€14.8m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2012</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>€12.8m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2013</td>
<td>Abolition of Seanad Éireann, Court of Appeal</td>
<td>€14.4m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2015</td>
<td>Marriage Equality and Age of Eligibility to Office of President</td>
<td>€14.8m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2018</td>
<td>Thirty-sixth Amendment of the Constitution Bill 2018 (Repeal of the 8th Amendment)</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Forensic Science Ireland Laboratory

188. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform
when work on the forensic laboratories at Backweston will commence; the expected duration of
the works; when the facility will be available for occupation; if this is being supervised by the
OPW; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30306/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The delivery
of the new Forensic Science Laboratory at the Backweston campus is being managed by the
Office of Public Works (OPW).

The Deputy should be aware that enabling works for Forensic Science Ireland that com-

menced in October 2017, have now been completed.

However, due to recent changes in international forensic laboratory standards, the merging
of the Garda Technical Bureau with Forensic Science Ireland and changes to staff numbers, it
was necessary to add further material to the tender documentation. Forensic Science Ireland
(FSI) and the OPW design team are currently examining the issues involved which relate pri-

marily to laboratory interior finishes and mechanical and electrical adjustments.

Once this examination has been completed, the OPW will review all tender documentation
and intends to re-issue a complete set of documents in Q4 2018. As this process is still ongoing
it is not possible at this stage to give exact timeframes for the procurement process for contrac-
tors. When the construction contract for the main building is placed, the estimated construction
period is 24 months followed by a validation and test period prior to occupation.

Drainage Schemes

189. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform
if a matter (details supplied) will be addressed regarding the draining of a river; and if he will
make a statement on the matter. [30138/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin
Boxer Moran): The Office of Public Works (OPW) is responsible for the maintenance of Arter-
ial Drainage Schemes and catchment drainage schemes designated under the Arterial Drainage
Acts of 1945 and 1995. The channel referred to by the Deputy does not form part of an Arter-
ial Drainage Scheme. Therefore, the OPW has no responsibilities for the maintenance of the
channel.

Local flooding issues are a matter, in the first instance, for each local authority to investi-
gate and address. For areas not covered by the Arterial Drainage Maintenance Programme, the
OPW operates a Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme. It is open to
all Local Authorities to submit a funding application under the Scheme. This administrative
Scheme’s eligibility criteria, including a requirement that any measures are cost beneficial, are

Any application received is considered in accordance with the scheme eligibility criteria,
and having regard to the overall availability of resources for flood risk management.

Ministerial Travel

190. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the cost
of travel expenses for him and those that travel with him since his appointment; and if he will
make a statement on the matter. [30516/18]
Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The cost of official domestic and overseas travel, including the cost of accompanying officials, since my appointment as Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in May 2016 is €76,329.89. The Deputy should note that €39,100 of this cost relates to accompanying officials.

In light of the Government’s commitment to limit the cost of Ministerial cars from the fleet of An Garda Síochána, the overall figure also includes monthly mileage payments which assist with the costs associated with the use of my own car for official purposes. It should be noted that there is cost saving in respect of mileage due my appointment across two Departments.

It should be further noted that costs associated with three of the four political advisors that I have appointed since coming to office in May 2016 are costed to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (the fourth advisor is costed to the Department of Finance).

Project Ireland 2040 Implementation

191. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of times he has met his officials regarding Project Ireland 2040 since its launch; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30557/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am in constant contact with my Officials in relation to all of the matters that fall into my remit.

In respect of Project Ireland 2040, Government has agreed arrangements to oversee its implementation and the delivery of the National Development Plan. This reflects the fact that Government has now identified the strategic path to be taken, and the focus has now moved to implementation.

As I announced last March, I have established a high level Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board, supported by an Infrastructure Projects and Programmes Office, to take on this role on behalf of the Government. The Delivery Board consists of the Secretaries General of the main capital spending Departments, and is jointly chaired by the Secretary General of my Department and the Secretary General of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. The Board will report to Government through the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure.

The Delivery Board will monitor and oversee implementation structures and performance across the various sectors to ensure a co-ordinated and collaborative whole-of-Government approach to NDP and NPF delivery. Measures being taken in this regard include:

- The Infrastructure Projects and Programmes Office is being established in my Department to coordinate reporting on the NDP and drive reforms in relation to areas such as project appraisal and selection;

- The Major Capital Projects Tracker, published in September 2017, is being updated and further developed to provide more comprehensive information on the cost and delivery of the various infrastructure projects and programmes identified in the NDP;

- A Construction Sector Group is being established to ensure regular and open dialogue between Government and the construction sector in relation to issues that may impact on the successful delivery of the NDP on a value-for-money basis for the State.

The Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board has already met twice, in May and June of this year, and is due to meet again in July.
192. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of FOI requests his Department has received since January 2018; the number of refusals; the number that have been appealed and that are ongoing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30574/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Details of the FOI requests received by my Department from 1 January 2018 to 6 July 2018 are outlined in the table below.

Appeals on FOI decisions issued by my Department can be made by seeking an Internal Review of the matter. The appeal will involve a complete reconsideration of the matter by a more senior member of staff of the Department and a decision will be communicated within three weeks. My Department received five requests for an Internal Review in the period in question, none of which are outstanding.

An appeal of an Internal Review decision can be applied for by writing to the Office of the Information Commissioner (OIC). To date, my Department has not received notification from the OIC of any external reviews for the period in question.

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<tr>
<th>2018 Month</th>
<th>FOI Granted</th>
<th>FOI Part Granted</th>
<th>FOI Refused</th>
<th>FOI Withdrawn</th>
<th>Handled outside of FOI</th>
<th>FOI In Progress</th>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>88</td>
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**Vacancies on State Boards**

193. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of vacancies on State boards under the remit of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30591/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** In response to the Deputy’s question on vacancies on State Boards under the aegis of my Department, I can confirm that I make appointments to the Board of the Public Appointments Service, which currently has no vacancies at Board level. The details of the membership of the Board of the Public Appointments Service are available on the PAS website.

More generally, as the Deputy will be aware, details of the current membership and Board vacancies of all State Boards are published on [www.stateboards.ie](http://www.stateboards.ie)

**Coastal Erosion**
194. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if financial assistance will be provided to Fingal County Council to tackle the rate of coastal erosion that is occurring at a location (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30661/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am familiar with the problem of coastal erosion at Portrane and I have visited the area and have received a briefing from Fingal County Council (FCC). It is a matter for local authorities, in the first instance, to assess and address problems of coastal erosion in their areas. The Office of Public Works (OPW) is engaging with FCC to assist it in finding the appropriate long term solution to the problems at Portrane.

On 1 June 2018 a meeting took place between FCC and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), with OPW in attendance, to update all bodies on the current situation at Portrane and to examine the optimum way forward to deal with this serious problem.

I am advised that RPS, who are the engineering consultants engaged by FCC in this matter, have submitted to the local authority details of interim measures and proposals for their implementation. These proposals are being considered by the relevant agencies with a view to their earliest possible implementation.

In addition a potential permanent coastal protection option has been identified but further assessment of this is required. If a viable solution is identified the local authority may undertake works using their own resources or, if necessary, apply for funding to the OPW or other central Government Departments where appropriate.

I would acknowledge the work and contribution which the local community have made in highlighting and seeking solutions to the problem at Portrane.

**Departmental Strategies**

195. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the progress in the preparation of a national coastal erosion strategy or plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30662/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Office of Public Works (OPW) does not have responsibility for the preparation of a national coastal erosion strategy or plan. The OPW’s prime responsibility in this area is the management of flood risk.

To assist Local Authorities, meet their statutory obligations in relation to coastal erosion, the OPW has undertaken a national assessment of coastal erosion (including erosion rates) under the Irish Coastal Protection Strategy Study (ICPSS) and the results of this study have been published on the OPW website. This Study enables Local Authorities to meet their responsibility to develop appropriate plans and strategies for the sustainable management of the coastline in their counties.

The Local Authorities may carry out coastal erosion works using their own resources. Where coastal erosion could give rise to a coastal flood risk, the OPW operates the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme, under which applications for funding from Local Authorities are considered for measures costing up to €750,000 in each instance. In that context, funding for coastal erosion risk management studies may also be applied for under this
scheme. Funding of up to 90% of the cost is available for projects which meet the eligibility criteria including a requirement that the proposed measures are cost beneficial.

The OPW guidelines for coastal erosion risk management measures and funding applications under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme, are available on the OPW website www.opw.ie

**Public Sector Staff Remuneration**

196. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to reimburse public servants in temporary acting-up roles who paid the pension related deduction at their full salary rate but were paying or receiving pension contributions at their substantive rate; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act 2003 provides that fixed term workers are afforded no less favourable treatment than their comparable permanent counterparts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30671/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** PRD liability is calculated on all remuneration whether pensionable or not pensionable in accordance with Section 2(3) of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009 (as amended). Section 7 of the Act further provides that a deduction under Section 2 is not a pension contribution for the purposes of the Pensions Act 1990.

Remuneration as defined in the Act includes allowances which are never pensionable, e.g. overtime, or which are only pensionable if held at time of retirement, e.g. higher-duty allowance, acting-up allowance, shift allowances. An allowance which is not held in the 3 years prior to retirement, or under the “best 3 in 10 years” prior to retirement, is not included in the final pensionable remuneration. There is no provision to refund PRD on such remuneration.

It should be noted that the above liability is applied regardless of whether the individual is a permanent or a fixed-term worker. There is no difference in the treatment of either category of staff.

**National Monuments**

197. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the OPW’s plans regarding Dunsoghly Castle, Dublin 11; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30672/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Dunsoghly Castle is a National Monument in State ownership and is maintained by the Office of Public Works. Discussions are ongoing in respect of the surrounding lands in relation to securing additional space for the purposes of carrying out necessary conservation and safety works to the Castle which would be an essential prerequisite for any future visitor development. Currently, a response is awaited in respect of certain legal issues to progress that.

The development of visitor facilities at the Castle is not a priority for the OPW and the Office has no plans currently in that respect. However, it is my understanding that interest in addressing this need has in the past been expressed locally and that the conservation and safety works proposed by the OPW will facilitate the progression of this local development in the future.
Flood Relief Schemes Funding

198. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when flood alleviation funding will be made available for three flood prevention works in Ballybay, Inniskeen and Monaghan, County Monaghan; when work will commence; if planning has been commenced, completed or approved for the works; when the works will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30881/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme was the largest ever flood risk study carried out in the State and covered 300 areas believed to be at significant flood risk. The CFRAM programme culminated with the launch on 3rd May, 2018 of 29 flood risk management plans which propose 118 new outline flood relief projects on top of the 42 major projects already completed and the 33 major schemes within the existing capital works programme of the Office of Public Works (OPW). All of these projects are to be funded under the Government’s 10 year flood risk investment programme of almost €1 billion under the National Development Plan 2018 – 2027.

As it is not possible to progress all 118 proposed new schemes at once, funding of €257 million for an initial phase of 50 flood relief projects throughout the country was also announced which would be progressed to detailed design and construction, including the five largest schemes identified in the Plans and 31 small or minor projects under €1 million which will be progressed directly by local authorities. Aside from the 5 largest schemes and the 31 small or minor projects, the remaining projects in the initial phase of implementation were selected on the basis of those projects which would provide the greatest benefit in terms of the greatest number of properties protected on a regionally balanced basis.

The proposed schemes for Ballybay, Inniskeen and Monaghan town are not in the first tranche of projects to be progressed but the OPW and the local authority will work closely to ensure that they will be commenced as soon as possible within the 10 year timeframe for the programme of investment.

A proposed flood relief scheme at Ballybay has been identified by the CFRAM programme to be progressed at an estimated cost of €3.6 million. This proposed scheme consists of a series of flood embankments and walls and will protect 71 properties when completed.

A proposed flood relief scheme at Inniskeen has been identified by the CFRAM programme to be progressed at an estimated cost of €2.0 million. This proposed scheme consists of a series of flood embankments and walls and will also include the raising of a road where space is restricted for walls or embankments. The scheme will protect 14 properties when completed.

A proposed flood relief scheme at Monaghan Town has been identified by the CFRAM programme to be progressed at a projected cost of €12.5 million. This proposed scheme consists of a series of flood embankments and walls with measures also included to protect properties in the Milltown Area. The scheme will protect 47 properties when completed.

Once consultants are appointed to progress the schemes, consultation with statutory and non-statutory bodies as well as the general public takes place at the appropriate stages to ensure that all parties have the opportunity to input into the development of the schemes.

**Departmental Staff Recruitment**
199. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of public sector jobs offered as internal competitions or restricted to existing Civil Service or public service staff in 2017 and to date in 2018 (details supplied); the number in each starting salary bracket at intervals of €10,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30882/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, I have overarching responsibility for employment in the Civil Service. Other Ministers are responsible for employment in other sectors such as local authorities, HSE etc.

As the Deputy will be aware, Government Departments and Offices have been working under delegated sanction arrangements for their recruitment and staffing issues since 2015. Under these arrangements, which are in place for most central Government Departments and Offices, there are multi-annual pay ceilings agreed and set. Thereafter, decisions about recruitment and promotion and overall grade composition up to an including Principal Officer level are devolved.

As the Deputy will be aware, in general, selection competitions within the Civil Service take place by way of;

- competitions confined to particular Departments (Internal promotion) or
- from competitions open to candidates from all Departments (Interdepartmental promotion) or
- from open competitions to all eligible candidates including members of the public

Interdepartmental competitions are organised on behalf of the Civil Service by the Public Appointments Service (PAS), which is an independent statutory body. They have supplied the following information on the number of staff assigned from interdepartmental competitions for 2017 and 2018. Salary Information requested by the Deputy is not available. However, all salary scale circulars are available on my Department’s website.

**Assignments from Interdepartmental Competitions 2017-2018**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Assigned in 2017</th>
<th>Assigned in 2018</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal Officer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>AP2016</td>
<td>62</td>
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<tr>
<td>AP2017</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>82</td>
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<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>EO2016</td>
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Internal competitions are a matter for individual Departments and Offices and replies to that part of this Parliamentary Question are being supplied directly by them. The information in respect of internal competitions in my own Department is set out in the following table.
**Assignments from DPER Confined Competitions 2017-2018**

<table>
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<th>Grade</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal Officer Higher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All starting pay on promotion calculations following a confined competition are calculated on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with the relevant circular. The current salary scales can be found in Circular 22/2017.

**Garda Accommodation**

200. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if requests from the Department of Justice and Equality to refurbish, renovate or make repairs to a habitable standard official Garda residences for the purposes of providing accommodation have been reviewed; if so, when; the location and the number of requests made; and the number that were expedited in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018. [30935/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I can confirm that the Office of Public Works, (OPW) has dealt with approximately 100 maintenance requests in relation to official Garda residences in the years in question.

It was not possible to compile all the details requested in the timeframe for this response. The information requested will be furnished directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

**State Visits**

201. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the estimated cost to the State of the upcoming visit of Pope Francis in view of the fact that it is a private rather than a State visit. [31559/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Office of Public Works and the Department of An Taoiseach are in ongoing discussions regarding the visit of Pope Francis. Intensive planning of all the many elements of the Papal visit is continuing and evolving daily. For that reason and with further contracts yet to be agreed it is not possible to estimate accurately the cost involved.

**School Transport Eligibility**

202. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if extending the remit of the family support allocated to a family (details supplied) in County Dublin to address the difficulties encountered in accessing additional supports which are necessary will be considered. [30112/18]

210. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has
been drawn to the difficulties encountered by a person (details supplied) in County Dublin in accessing supports to school transport; and if the supports will be allocated. [30130/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 202 and 210 together.

School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

Currently over 116,000 children, including over 12,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in over 4,500 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually at a total cost of almost €190 million in 2017.

The purpose of my Department’s School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school.

Children are generally eligible for school transport if they satisfy the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school having regard to language and ethos.

Should the Deputy wish to provide more detailed information on the family in question my Department will request a report from Bus Éireann regarding their eligibility for school transport and the availability of school transport services.

The terms of the School Transport Scheme are applied equitably on a national basis.

**Third Level Admissions Data**

203. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of students that have registered to study pre-medicine at medical schools here for the academic year 2018-2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30415/18]

230. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of Irish, EU and non-EU students that have registered for pre-med courses in UCD for the 2018-2019 academic year, in tabular form; the applicable fees for each category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30428/18]

231. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of Irish, EU and non-EU students that have registered for pre-med courses in medical schools here for the 2018-2019 academic year, in tabular form; the applicable fees for each category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30429/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 203, 230 and 231 together.

Information for 2018/19 academic year is not yet available, and pre-med courses are not available in all of the medical schools. I am arranging for the latest information to be collated, and I will arrange for it to be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

**Education and Training Provision**

204. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to
which business and enterprise continues to be appropriately supplied with apprenticeships in line with requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31001/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** Apprenticeship is a demand driven educational and training programme, which aims to develop the skills of an apprentice in order to meet the needs of industry and the labour market. Consequently, the number of apprentices being registered is determined by employers within each sector. My Department is committed to supporting the increased registration of apprentices across all sectors. New apprenticeship registrations have risen from 2,698 in 2014 to 4,843 in 2017, which represents an increase of almost 80%.

As the Deputy is aware, the Government is currently expanding the range of apprenticeships on offer to meet the identified skill needs of industry. Arising from our first call for apprenticeship proposals in 2015 eleven new apprenticeships have been developed in a wide range of sectors, including financial services, engineering, ICT and accounting. Further new apprenticeships will get underway later in 2018.

In addition, arising from last year’s second call for proposals, I recently announced 26 new programmes for further development into national apprenticeships across a wide variety of sectors including construction, engineering, horticulture and agriculture. These new programmes, once developed, will add to and complement the range of apprenticeships currently on offer in developing the skill needs of our economy.

**Schools Building Projects Status**

205. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a new school project (details supplied); the projected timeframe for commencement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30020/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The school to which the Deputy refers is at an advanced stage of the tender process. The Design Team was recently authorised to issue the Letter of Intent to the preferred tenderer. Subject to no issues arising it is anticipated that construction should commence in quarter 4 2018.

**Special Educational Needs Service Provision**

206. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) has been refused a SNA for the 2018-19 academic school year. [30046/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school.

The NCSE allocates SNA support to schools in accordance with the criteria set out in Department Circular 0030/2014, which is available on the Department’s website at www.education.ie, in order that students who have care needs can access SNA support as and when it is needed.

In considering applications for SNA support for individual pupils, the NCSE take account of the pupils’ needs and consider the resources available to the school to identify whether ad-
ditionality is needed or whether the school might reasonably be expected to meet the needs of the pupils from its current level of resources.

SNAs are not allocated to individual children but to schools as a school based resource.

SNA allocations to all schools can change from year to year as children with care needs leave the school, as new children with care needs enrol in a school and as children develop more independent living skills and their care needs diminish over time.

My Department’s policy is to ensure that every child who is assessed as needing SNA support will receive access to such support. In line with this policy, I announced in May 2018 that 800 additional SNAs will be allocated for the beginning of the next school year, with a further 140 expected to be allocated by the end of the year.

By the end of this year, there will be a total of 15,000 Special Needs Assistants working in our schools, a 42% increase on 2011.

The NCSE have advised that they have been in contact with the school regarding an appeal. As this question relates to a particular child, I have referred the question to the NCSE for their direct reply.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

207. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) will receive the July provision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30058/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Purpose of July Provision Programme Grant Scheme is to provide funding towards an extended school year for children with a severe or profound general learning disability or children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Where eligible students cannot be accommodated in a school based programme, funding may be provided towards the provision of 40 hours home based tuition. As home based tuition takes place outside the usual school structure it is important that the educational programme provided generally reflects that which would be provided in a school environment.

It is appropriate therefore that the qualification standard for home based tuition generally reflects that required in a school environment. Accordingly, it is a condition of the scheme that parents/guardians must recruit a tutor who is qualified in the relevant sector, and is registered with the Teaching Council, similar to the requirement for teachers in schools.

Where all efforts have failed to secure the services of a teacher qualified to teach in the sector concerned, the Department may consider the engagement of a person who is registered with the Teaching Council and has a primary degree (minimum Level 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications) in a relevant area.

It is also a requirement of the scheme that all tutors must be vetted prior to commencing the delivery of tuition. Parents are required to satisfy themselves that tutors have been vetted by the Teaching Council of Ireland 2016 via the Teaching Council’s online vetting process.

The terms and conditions of the July Provision Grant Scheme 2018 is set out in the Department’s Information Note on the scheme which was published with the application forms on 11
Parents engage tutors for the provision of home based tuition in a private arrangement. It is the responsibility of the parent to source a tutor at the earliest possible opportunity to allow for applications for registration/vetting to be made by the tutor to the Teaching Council, if necessary.

The application for the July Provision Grant referred to by the Deputy cannot be approved until the Parent sources a tutor that is registered and vetted by the Teaching Council of Ireland.

School Accommodation

208. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if adequate accommodation will be provided to a school (details supplied) for the 2018-2019 school year following the removal of the existing school entrance, vestibule, administration offices, two classrooms and the principal’s office; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30060/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Design Team for the project referred to by the Deputy has explored various accommodation options with the contractor. A preferred solution has been identified in order to mitigate delay and to ensure that the accommodation can be provided in the shortest timeframe possible.

Legislative Measures

209. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department has identified laws which are dependent on or in place as a consequence of Article 41.2 of the Constitution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30098/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** No legislation under the auspices of the Department of Education and Skills has been identified which is dependent on, or in place as a consequence of, Article 41.2 of the Constitution.

*Question No. 210 answered with Question No. 202.*

Home Tuition Scheme Eligibility

211. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there is a process by which a child with a progressive disability can automatically renew their home tuition rather than having to reapply on an annual basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30273/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Deputy will be aware that the purpose of the Home Tuition Scheme is to provide a compensatory educational service for children who, for a number of reasons, are unable to access a school placement.

The scheme operates on a school year basis and is governed by an annual Circular which sets out the purpose, eligibility, criteria and details of the Scheme. The approval periods for home tuition reflect the school year and include breaks at Christmas, Easter and mid-term in the first and second terms and summer holidays.

Under the medical strand of the Scheme eligibility is assessed having regard to, although not
limited to, the following criteria

- The student’s attendance levels during the previous school year.
- A relevant medical report

For children with medical conditions the hours granted are reflective of the time the child has been absent from school.

At the end of each school year the operation of the scheme is reviewed taking into consideration any matters arising during the past year. As such applications must be made on an annual basis.

The Circular and Application forms for 2018/19 school year will be available on my Department’s website in the coming weeks.

**Disabilities Data**

212. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there has been a fall of some 10% in the numbers of vision impaired or blind persons going on to higher education; and if so, the steps he is taking to establish the cause of this decrease and to rectify the situation in view of the 84% unemployment rate among those that are vision impaired or blind. [30311/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The number of students with disabilities in higher education is derived from the number of higher education students in receipt of the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD). The figure for 2016/17 of students that are blind or that have a visual impairment represents a 20% increase from the figure recorded in 2011/12.

The National Access Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019 (NAP) was launched in December 2015, and aims to ensure that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland’s population. Students that are blind or visually impaired are specifically identified as a target group within the NAP. A target of 200 students that are blind or visually impaired participating in higher education has been set for 2019 in the NAP.

While a progress review of the NAP is currently underway which will assess progress towards targets, evidence from the data on the FSD already suggests that this target has been achieved. In 2016-17 there were over 174 students who are blind or visually impaired supported by the FSD and provisional data indicates that over 200 students have been supported by the Fund in the academic year 2017-18.

It is expected that the measures that have been implemented through the Plan, including the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) and work to advance the recommendations of the Review of the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) have assisted in the realisation of this target.

There are other steps taken to improve participation in higher education by students that are blind or that have a visual impairment. The Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) is a third level alternative admissions scheme for school leavers whose disabilities have had a negative impact on their second-level education. DARE offers reduced points places to school leavers with a disability under the age of 23. Students with sensory disabilities, including students
that are blind or visually impaired, are prioritised for reduced point’s places.

Each higher education institution offers a range of post-entry supports to students with disabilities. Supports include a dedicated disability officer, assistive technology, examination accommodations and tailored induction programmes.

**Autism Support Services**

213. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the shortage of ASD unit places in primary schools (details supplied) in Dublin 15; his plans to address the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30321/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department’s policy is to provide for the inclusive education of children with special educational needs, including Autism, in mainstream school settings, unless such a placement would not be in the best interests of the child concerned, or the children with whom they will be educated.

The National Council for Special Education is responsible, through its network of Special Needs Organisers, for the development and delivery and co-ordination of education services to children with Special Educational Needs, including the establishment of special classes.

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

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

In order to access a special class a student must have a report from a relevant professional stating that:

- S/he has a disability in line with the designation of the special class in question and
- S/he has complex learning needs that require the support of a special class setting and the reasons why this is the case.

The NCSE is aware of emerging need in Dublin, from year to year, and where special provision is required it is planned and established to meet that need.

There are 37 special schools and 218 special classes attached to mainstream schools in Dublin. Of these, 18 are ASD early intervention classes, 124 are primary ASD classes and 36 are post primary ASD classes. The number of ASD special classes in Co. Dublin have increased from 66 in 2011/2012 to 178 in 2017/2018.

The NCSE has informed my Department that to date they have sanctioned 17 new Special Classes in Co. Dublin for 2018/19 school year. This process is ongoing. The NCSE is continuing to work with schools, parents, NEPS, health professionals and other staff who are involved in the provision of services for children with special educational needs in Dublin, to ensure that each child has a school placement appropriate to their needs for the 2018/19 school year and beyond.

My Department continues to work with the NCSE to ensure that there is appropriate plan-
ning in place to ensure that all children who require special class placements can access such placements in schools within their communities.

My Department has acknowledged that in recent years the establishment of special class provision in some schools and communities has been challenging.

As part of the process of planning for future provision, a number of measures have been included in the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 to provide certain powers to the NCSE to designate a school placement for a child in circumstances where a child is experiencing difficulties in securing enrolment.

The Bill also proposes powers for the Minister, in certain circumstances, to require a school to open a special class for children with special educational needs. This amendment will give the Minister the power to compel a school to open a special class or classes where the National Council for Special Education has identified a need for such provision within an area.

These proposed measures would further enhance the ability of my Department and the NCSE to plan for special class provision and to address issues in provision that may arise from time to time at local levels.

Guidelines for Boards of Management and Principals of Primary and Post Primary schools contain information on setting up and organising special classes, including information on resources which may be provided to schools to establish special classes are available to download from www.ncse.ie.

**Education and Training Boards**

214. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an agreement to develop a project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30330/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):**
A copy of a business case in relation to the project referred to by the Deputy has been received and is being considered by my Department.

Funding for such centres in the Education and Training Board sector is approved on the basis that they are self-financing and that their financial activities would be separate from the overall ETB finances.

My Department is considering the business case received and any implications that might arise from it and will engage with the body concerned in relation to same.

**School Transport Eligibility**

215. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of extending the medical card waiver to all students eligible for concessionary school transport. [30346/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):**
School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.
Currently over 116,000 children, including over 12,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in over 4,500 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually at a total cost of almost €190 million in 2017.

The purpose of my Department’s School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school. In general, children are eligible for school transport if they meet the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only which is subject to a number of conditions including the availability of spare seats on an existing service and payment of the annual charge.

The annual charge for school transport services is €100 per annum for primary children and €350 for post primary children with a maximum family charge of €220 for primary children only or €650 overall.

Only children who are eligible for school transport and who hold valid medical cards (GMS Scheme) are exempt from paying the annual charge.

Arising from commitments in the Programme for Government, a review of the Concessionary Charges and Rules element of the School Transport Scheme was undertaken. The review was published in December 2016 and made recommendations on both the charges and the rules element of concessionary school transport.

With regard to the charges for concessionary school transport the recommended course of action was to continue with the current position whereby charges remain in place for those in receipt of concessionary places. I agreed with this recommendation on the basis that those applying for concessionary transport are making a conscious decision to do so, understand that they are not eligible for school transport and understand the implications of this choice at the time of application.

Based on current estimates, it is estimated that the cost of extending the medical card waiver to all children who are currently availing of school transport on a concessionary basis would cost in excess of an additional €2m annually.

The terms of the School Transport Schemes are applied equitably on a national basis.

**Schools Building Projects**

216. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps he is taking to secure a permanent building for a school (details supplied) in order to facilitate the demand for places in Educate Together schools; and when the permanent building to be ready; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30354/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In relation to the school referred to by the Deputy, a potential school site has been identified and my Department is engaging with the relevant stakeholders with a view to progressing matters.

Once the site for the school has been secured, the project to deliver the school building can be progressed into the architectural planning process.

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

School Patronage

217. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the availability of non-religious schools in Dublin 9; the capacity and availability in such schools for those that wish to send their children to non-religious schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30396/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that there are two multi-denominational primary schools in the Dublin 9 area. A new 16 classroom school with special needs unit was constructed in 2016 for Glasnevin Educate Together National School. In addition, the construction of a new 16 classroom school with special needs unit for Gracepark Educate Together National School is included in my Department’s 6 Year Construction Programme. This project is currently at planning permission stage and when planning is received, it will proceed to tender. In the meantime, the school is located in temporary accommodation pending the construction of the new permanent school building.

In relation to school admissions, parents can choose which school to apply to and where the school has places available the pupil should be admitted. However, in schools where there are more applicants than places available, a selection process may be necessary. This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants. However, this may result in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice.

Emergency Works Scheme Applications

218. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an emergency works application by a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30398/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department’s Planning and Building Unit received an Emergency Works Scheme (EWS) Application from the school in question in December 2015. The school authority was requested to scale back the works to repairs only to qualify for consideration under the Scheme. A revised application was not received. It is open to the school to submit a new or revised EWS application and this will be given full consideration by my Department.

School Management

219. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason the information for the running of a school (details supplied) has not been forthcoming from his Department; and if a direct contact person that can provide the principal with updates as they arise will be appointed. [30402/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** It is unclear from the question as to the precise nature of the issue being raised by the Deputy.

However, if the Deputy wishes to provide my Department with more detailed information
in relation to the matter, I will consider the issue.

**Schools Building Projects Status**

220. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the action being taken about a permanent building for a school (details supplied) which was originally scheduled for September 2019; the new target date for same; and his views on whether it will be achieved. [30403/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The school building project to provide the permanent accommodation for the school referred to by the Deputy is currently in architectural planning under the Department’s “Rapid” - Design and Build Programme.

A planning permission to provide temporary accommodation for the school on the permanent site is currently under third party appeal to An Bord Pleanála, the date for decision was previously notified as being 27th June 2018 but has now been extended to the 22nd August 2018.

The school has been informed that until the temporary accommodation can be provided it will remain at its current temporary location from the start of the 2018/19 school year.

The design process for the permanent accommodation is well progressed in preparation for the planning application which will be the next key milestone in the progression of the project. The planning application for the permanent accommodation will be lodged as soon as a decision on the An Bord Pleanála appeal is received. The tender process for the building contractor will also be expedited to ensure that the aim of having the permanent accommodation in place for the 2019/20 school year can be achieved.

**School Management**

221. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the number of release days for principals will be increased; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30407/18]

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

**Special Educational Needs Service Provision**

222. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application for a programme by a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30416/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Under the Assistive Technology scheme, as set out in my Department’s Circular 0010/2013, funding is provided to schools towards the cost of computers and specialist equipment, which are required for educational purposes. Equipment is provided under this scheme for children with more complex disabilities who, in order to access the school curriculum, require essential specialist equipment which they do not already have, or which cannot be provided for them through the school’s existing IT provision.

The type of equipment provided under the Assistive Technology scheme is varied, and includes audiological supports for students with hearing impairment, braille equipment for students with visual impairment, and computer equipment with associated modified software for
students with physical or severe communicative disabilities.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of Special Education Needs Officers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from schools for assistive technology support.

Due to obligations under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), a temporary pause was recently applied to the processing of Assistive Technology applications. This pause was necessitated by the sensitive nature of personal data submitted by schools along with applications, and the requirement for a Joint Data Controller Agreement between the NCSE and my Department.

The Joint Data Controller Agreement has now been finalised however, and the Assistive Technology application process is now in operation again.

An application for Assistive Technology in respect of the child referred to by the Deputy has been submitted by the school to the NCSE. On receipt of the SENO’s recommendation to my Department, the application will be reviewed, and the school will be advised in writing of the decision on same.

### School Staff

223. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of teaching principals in County Kildare; and the schools that have teaching principals. [30420/18]

224. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of teaching principals in County Laois; and the schools that have teaching principals. [30421/18]

225. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of teaching principals in County Offaly; and the schools that have teaching principals. [30422/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 223 to 225, inclusive, together.

The Irish education system has certain characteristics that have influenced the evolution of the Principal’s role. The distribution of the population necessitates a relatively large number of small primary schools. In the case of Principals in smaller schools, while management and administrations duties may be smaller in scale than those of larger schools, they must be undertaken in addition to their full-time teaching duties.

The enrolment required for administrative principal in ordinary schools, gael scoileanna and schools in the Gaeltacht is 176 pupils, or 113 if operating a specialist autism unit.

Schools that have less than this enrolment have teaching principals. 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...
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 longstanding 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).

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”.

Circular 63/2017 was issued by the Department in September 2017 which deals and sets out a leadership and management framework for posts in recognised primary schools.

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.

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.

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.

Attached is the breakdown of the number of teaching principals in primary schools in Kildare, Laois and Offaly, as requested.

**Number of schools with teaching principals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Number of teaching principals in 2017/18 school year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offaly</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laois</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**School Staff**

226. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of school principals that have stepped down over the past five years in County Kildare; and the number that were teaching principals. [30423/18]
227. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of school principals that have stepped down over the past five years in County Laois; and the number that were teaching principals. [30424/18]

228. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of school principals that have stepped down over the past five years in County Offaly; and the number that were teaching principals. [30425/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 226 to 228, inclusive, together.

Principal teachers are employed by the managerial authorities of their schools and the information required for their payment on payrolls operated by my Department is provided by them. The information is provided on standardised forms which are completed by authorised representatives in the school.

A Data Protection Privacy Statement is included on these forms. The Data Statement outlines that the main purpose for which my Department requires the personal data provided is the payment of wages. It is also required for the payment of pension at retirement.

The information is retained on databases to ensure the correct payment of the teaching staff paid by my Department and employed in the schools on an ongoing basis.

The information requested by the Deputy could only be obtained from these databases. Statistics broken down by individual counties is not available.

A statistical analysis of the aggregated data requested for voluntary secondary community and comprehensive schools indicated that less than one per cent of individuals who continued in teaching were paid the allowance in one school year and not in the next. The statistics show that all of these Principals were Administrative Principals.

A statistical analysis of the aggregated data requested for primary schools indicated that 2.8% of individuals who continued in teaching were paid the allowance in one school year and not in the next. The statistics also show that 2.6% of these individuals were teaching Principals.

The reasons for individuals whom continue to teach but no longer receive a Principals allowance is not captured by our databases.

**Digital Strategy for Schools**

229. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the significant cost burden placed on parents of children in digital schools using tablet computers instead of textbooks; the steps he is taking to support parents financially to help meet such costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30427/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The decision to use tablet devices is a matter for the Board of Management of a school. Where the introduction of digital devices is planned, consultation with members of the school community including parents is advised. The cost and other implications must be fully considered by the Boards of Managements before a decision is made. I believe it is important for schools, in conjunction with parents, to retain local autonomy for decisions on the use of tablet devices and how best to manage their integration into classroom practice. In making this decision each school should consider all the available information.
The Professional Development Service for Teachers Technology in Education (PDST-TIE) offers advice to schools and have developed an advice sheet, on the adoption of tablets in schools, on its website which covers areas such as what tablets can offer a school, educational and purchasing considerations, and software.

I am keenly aware of the challenges faced by educators and parents, in relation to costs of digital devices including eBooks, and my Department continues to work to help support schools and families meet these costs. In 2017 a circular letter issued to schools with measures to be adopted to reduce the cost of school uniforms and other costs. This circular also instructed schools to consult with parents and their school community on the issue of ensuring costs are reasonable for parents, and how to avoid costs acting as a barrier. This circular specified that wherever possible, generic rather than branded items should be specified (e.g. uniform, clothing, IT tablets, sports equipment etc.). The issue of costs to parents will also be included in the Guidelines that will issue with the Education (Parent and Student Charter) Bill 2018.

Direct assistance is provided through the School Books Grant Scheme for books including eBooks for children in all recognised primary and post-primary schools. All schools are encouraged to operate such a scheme, under which some €7 million in funding to primary schools in 2017.

In addition, the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020, sets out a plan to embed the use of digital technology in teaching, learning and assessment. The Strategy recognises that schools require investment in their ICT infrastructure. Funding of €210m has been committed to support the implementation of this strategy with €60m issued to schools over the 2016/17 and 2017/18 school years. This will increase to €50m a year over the lifetime of the strategy.

Questions Nos. 230 and 231 answered with Question No. 203.

Ministerial Travel

232. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of travel expenses for him and those that travel with him since his appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30509/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I set out the details as requested by the Deputy.

The figures for 2016 cover the period from my appointment as Minister for Education and Skills in May to the end of December. The figures for 2017 cover the entire year and the figures for 2018 cover the period January to June. Please note that I have not claimed subsistence allowance for any official travel, either at home or abroad.

Table one shows the total value of domestic mileage claims since my appointment in May 2016. Please note that this is not specific to events which I attend.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Minister for Education and Skills’ Home Travel</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Travel - Mileage</td>
<td>€5,002.21</td>
<td>€8,540.73</td>
<td>€5,438.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table two shows the value of claims made by ministerial staff who accompanied me on official domestic business. As above, the 2016 figure covers the period May to December and the
2018 figure covers the period January to June.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Ministerial staff travelling with the Minister for Education and Skills</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Travel - Accommodation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>€1,039.57</td>
<td>€829.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Travel - Mileage</td>
<td>€5,416.07</td>
<td>€4,800.71</td>
<td>€2,250.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Travel - Subsistence Allowance</td>
<td>€911.95</td>
<td>€2,869.11</td>
<td>€2,813.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>€6,328.02</td>
<td>€8,709.39</td>
<td>€5,892.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table three shows the travel cost related to foreign travel. This includes my own costs, and costs of accompanying officials including both ministerial staff and staff from other business units of the Department. It has not been possible to separate my costs from those staff who accompanied me. Please note that the figures for flights do not include the cost of flights which were subsequently refunded by the EU Commission.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Foreign Travel</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation &amp; Subsistence Allowance</td>
<td>€4,608.50</td>
<td>€14,225.66</td>
<td>€9,395.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flights</td>
<td>€7,801.07</td>
<td>€10,172.33</td>
<td>€2,470.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>€12,409.57</td>
<td>€24,397.99</td>
<td>€11,865.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schools Site Acquisitions

233. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a matter (details supplied) regarding a new school building will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30520/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As the Deputy is aware, the school to which she refers is included in my Department’s 6 year construction programme.

Officials in my Department continue to liaise with officials in Fingal County Council in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the identification and acquisition of a suitable location for the school in question and have identified a preferred site option within the relevant school planning areas. Negotiations with the landowner in respect of this proposed acquisition are currently ongoing.

In the interim the school will be accommodated from September 2018 at the former Institute of Horology property, Mill Road, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15 on a temporary basis.

Due to commercial sensitivities relating to site acquisitions generally, the Deputy will appreciate that I am not in a position to provide further details in relation to the permanent site for the school at this time but I can confirm that the school patron is being kept appraised of developments in respect of the site acquisition process.
234. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason parents in Duleek, County Meath are excluded from the patronage competition for a new secondary school in areas (details supplied). [30525/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As the Deputy will be aware, the Government recently announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including a new 600 pupil post-primary school to be established in 2019 to serve the Drogheda and Laytown school planning areas as a regional solution. This announcement follows nationwide, demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

A patronage process is run after it has been decided, based on demographic analysis, that a new school is required. This patronage process is open to all patron bodies and prospective patrons. Parental preferences for each patron, from parents of children who reside in the school planning areas concerned, together with the extent of diversity currently available in these areas, are key to decisions in relation to the outcome of this process.

An Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) has been developed by my Department to provide objective information to all parents which will allow them to make an informed choice about their preferred model of patronage for their child’s education. Parental preferences were previously collected based on direct engagement with patron bodies. The Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) website is currently live for the post-primary schools to be established in 2019.

All new schools established since 2011 to meet demographic demand are required to prioritise enrolments from the designated school planning area(s) which the school was established to serve. Therefore, only parents of eligible children residing in the relevant school planning area(s) can express a preference with regard to the patronage of the new school. This does not preclude schools from enrolling pupils from outside of the designated school planning area, rather it reflects the need to accommodate in the first instance the demographic for which the school was established.

As the Deputy may be aware, there are currently 27 primary schools located in the Drogheda school planning area, including 2 primary schools in Duleek. Parents of children, including children attending a primary school in Duleek, who are due to start post-primary education in the 5 year period 2019 to 2023 and who are resident in the Drogheda school planning area may be eligible to express a preference with regard to the patronage of the new post-primary school. Parents can visit the OPPS website at [https://patronage.education.gov.ie](https://patronage.education.gov.ie) to check their eligibility and to view the relevant school planning area map.

235. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the townlands and district electoral divisions included in each of the school planning areas in which a second-level school patronage competition is under way. [30526/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data in a way that takes account of the signifi-
cant local and regional variations in demographic trends and enrolment projections, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas, of which some 40 are in Dublin.

Using school planning area boundaries within my Department’s Geographic Information System (GIS) allows data within those boundaries, including data for enrolments in schools, child benefit and other relevant data to be added to the mapping information, grouped and analysed. The GIS records the number of primary and post-primary schools within each planning area, the combined enrolments for all of the schools within each area, including total enrolment and enrolment in each class group, together with child benefit data for the 0-4 age group relevant to the area.

In most areas, school planning areas were based on traditional school catchment areas where all primary schools were assigned to a post-primary feeder area (typically a population centre or town), containing one or more post-primary schools. The school planning areas were developed for use with the GIS in 2008 and with the introduction of Small Areas in Census 2011, these areas were amended to align with Census Small Areas. The current school planning areas take account not only of local groupings of schools, but also of natural boundaries, Census Small Areas and other local conditions. These school planning areas are used in the demographic exercise as a basis for the assessment of areas of growth and to inform recommendations on the establishment of any new schools required in that school planning area.

As the school planning areas were aligned with the Census Small Areas and a townland or electoral division can fall into more than one school planning area, the information is not readily available in the format requested by the Deputy.

A patronage process is currently under way in respect of four post-primary schools announced to be established in 2019 for the following school planning areas:

- Laytown and Drogheda (Regional Solution),
- Galway City and Oranmore (Regional Solution),
- Donaghmede_Howth_D13; and
- Wicklow.

A list of the Census Small Areas which are located within each of the above school planning areas are outlined in the following link for the Deputy’s information.

[<a href="/debates%20authoring/webattachments.nsf/0/BACE782171C39CE9802582C60061EC0D/$File/List%20of%20Census%20Small%20Areas%202019%20post-primary%20schools.xlsx?openelement">Tables</a>]

**Schools Building Projects Status**

236. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position with regard to the completion of two new secondary schools in Maynooth. [30527/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As the Deputy maybe aware the delivery of the two schools in question has been devolved to Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB).

Since the liquidation of the contractor, KWETB, its design team and officials from my Department’s Planning and Building Unit have been working closely to ensure that a new contrac-
tor is appointed as quickly as possible to complete both schools. A notice has been published on the eTenders website, with a closing date of 23rd July 2018, seeking expressions of interest from contractors wishing to be considered for the completion of the project. Identification of all outstanding works necessary to complete both schools is also ongoing.

The current works programme indicates a retendering of the project in November 2018 with a view to having a contractor back on site by the end of March 2019 and an expected completion date of June 2020.

My Department is also liaising with KWETB to ensure that both schools have the necessary accommodation to meet pupil needs pending the delivery of their new school buildings.

Departmental Circulars

237. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of departmental circulars issued in respect of primary schools, their staff or management in each of the years 2000 to 2017. [30528/18]

238. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of departmental circulars issued in respect of voluntary post primary schools, their staff or management in total in each of the years 2000 to 2017. [30529/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 237 and 238 together.

In accordance with the various functions and divisions of my Department, numerous departmental sections issue circulars which may relate, to some extent, to matters pertaining to staff or management in schools. For example, in 2017, over 80 circulars issued, a significant proportion of which would have had relevance to school management and staff.

A comprehensive database of Circulars since 2006 is accessible and searchable through the Department’s website www.education.ie.

If the Deputy wishes to provide further detail on any specific issue of interest, my Department will seek to be of assistance.

Departmental Circulars

239. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of departmental circulars issued in respect of post-primary schools, the education and training board, ETB, sector, their staff or management in each of the years 2000 to 2017. [30530/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In accordance with the various functions and divisions of my Department, numerous departmental sections issue circulars which may relate, to some extent, to matters pertaining to staff or management in the post-primary school sector, including ETBs and Community and Comprehensive Schools. For example, in 2017, over 80 circulars issued, a significant proportion of which would have had some relevance to school staff.

A comprehensive database of Circulars since 2006 is accessible and searchable through the Department’s website www.education.ie.
If the Deputy wishes to provide further detail on any specific issue of interest, my Department will seek to be of assistance.

Departmental Circulars

240. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of departmental circulars issued in respect of community and comprehensive schools, their staff or management in each of the years 2000 to 2017. [30531/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In accordance with the various functions and divisions of my Department, numerous departmental sections issue circulars which may relate, to some extent, to matters pertaining to staff or management in the post-primary school sector, including ETBs and Community and Comprehensive Schools. For example, in 2017, over 80 circulars issued, a significant proportion of which would have had some relevance to school staff.

A comprehensive database of Circulars since 2006 is accessible and searchable through the Department’s website www.education.ie.

If the Deputy wishes to provide further detail of any specific issue or interest, my Department will seek to be of assistance.

Project Ireland 2040

241. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of times he has met his officials regarding Project Ireland 2040 since its launch; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30550/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Project Ireland 2040 provides a framework for Ireland’s future social, economic and cultural infrastructure and seeks to ensure that all parts of Ireland can achieve their full potential. It encompasses the National Development Plan for the period 2018-2027, which signals investment envelopes of well over €11 billion for the education sector. This funding will support the school building programme, the Digital Strategy for Schools and capital investment in both the higher education and Further Education and Training (FET) sectors.

The implementation of Project Ireland 2040 is a key priority of my Department. As such, it is discussed at numerous meetings between myself and Department officials, including at monthly meetings of the Management Board, and in regular meetings with officials from the Planning and Building Division.

Freedom of Information Requests

242. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of freedom of information, FOI, requests his Department has received since January 2018; the number of refusals; the number that have been appealed and that are ongoing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30567/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The following table gives full details of the number FOI requests received by my Department since January 2018. The
table includes the number that were appealed, refused, granted, and those that are currently on hand.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Freedom of Information requests - 1 January 2018 – 05 July 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total received (Year to Date)*</th>
<th>Re-requests</th>
<th>Re-quests</th>
<th>Re-quests</th>
<th>Re-quests</th>
<th>Re-quests</th>
<th>Appeal - Internal Review (IR)</th>
<th>Appeal - Office of the Information Commissioner (OIC)</th>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>9</td>
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</tbody>
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Vacancies on State Boards

243. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of vacancies on State boards under the remit of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30584/18]

**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 vacancies, are available on my Department’s website at the following link: https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Agencies/.

The information requested by the Deputy in regard to the number of vacant posts on boards is provided in the following table.

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 Department of Education and Skills - Details of Board vacancies as at July 6th 2018
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Body under the Aegis of the Department</th>
<th>Position Type</th>
<th>Date Term of Office Ceased/Date Vacancy Arose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Authority (HEA)</td>
<td>Vacancy</td>
<td>30/06/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Léargas</td>
<td>Vacancy</td>
<td>07/03/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board (RISF) Caranua</td>
<td>Vacancy</td>
<td>01/02/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board (RISF) Caranua</td>
<td>Vacancy</td>
<td>16/02/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Research Council</td>
<td>Vacancy</td>
<td>18/03/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Research Council</td>
<td>Vacancy</td>
<td>18/03/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Teaching Council</td>
<td>Vacancy</td>
<td>12/06/2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Schools Building Projects Status**

244. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when construction of a new secondary school at Mungret, County Limerick will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30621/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The delivery of a project for the school to which the Deputy refers is being devolved for delivery to the local Education and Training Board (ETB).

To enable this, my Department has issued a Service Level Agreement to the ETB.

The execution of this Service Level Agreement will allow the ETB to procure a Design Team to take the project through the various stages of architectural planning and onwards through the statutory planning requirements and construction.

The timeframe for the construction of the project will not be known until the design stages have been completed and planning permission secured.

**Schools Building Projects Status**

245. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the refurbishment and provision of an extension for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30648/18]

246. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the start date for prefab replacement for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30649/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions
Nos. 245 and 246 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, a project for the school in question is included in my Department’s 6 Year Construction Programme.

I understand that the technical assessment process in respect of the project (to include the extension, refurbishment and prefab replacement) has been completed and the Project Brief is now being finalised. In that context, my Department will be in further contact with the school shortly in relation to the next steps to be taken to initiate the architectural planning process for the project concerned.

**Schools Building Projects Status**

247. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the progress for the delivery of a new school building for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30650/18]

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

Officials in my Department are working closely with officials in the relevant local authority in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the identification and acquisition of a suitable site to facilitate the school building project. A potential site option has been identified and is being progressed.

Once the site has been secured, a project to provide permanent accommodation for the school will be progressed into the architectural planning process.

**Schools Building Projects Status**

248. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding progress on a permanent school building project for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30651/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The major building project referred to by the Deputy is at an advanced stage of architectural planning Stage 2b (Detailed Design), which includes the application for statutory approvals and the preparation of tender documents. All statutory approvals have been secured.

The Design Team is currently completing the Stage 2b submission. Upon receipt and review of this report my Department will revert to the Board of Management with regard to the further progression of the project at that time.

**School Enrolments**

249. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a new secondary school for the Malahide and Portmarnock areas of County Dublin will be enrolling in September 2018; if so, the location of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30652/18]
Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The project for the start-up accommodation for Malahide/Portmarnock Educate Together Secondary School has been devolved to the patron body, Educate Together for delivery.

My Department understands that the patron body has identified a suitable interim location in Drinan for the school and the patron body are currently in negotiations with the owners for a lease of this interim location, it is envisaged this lease will be finalised in the coming days.

My Department is advised by the Patron body that enrolments have been confirmed for 2018/19 and that enrolments are open for 2019/20.

Schools Establishment

250. Deputy Darragh O’Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a new secondary school for the Swords area of County Dublin as announced in November 2015; if he has identified locations for the proposed school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30653/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware, the proposed location for the new post-primary school to which he refers is in Moore-town, Swords.

This school building project is on my Department’s Rapid Design & Build Programme and the project is currently at architectural planning stage.

Schools Establishment

251. Deputy Darragh O’Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a new secondary school for the Malahide and Portmarnock areas of County Dublin as announced in November 2015; if he has identified locations for these proposed schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30654/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, a project to deliver permanent accommodation for the new post primary school to serve Malahide/Portmarnock, as announced in November 2015, is included on my Department’s capital programme.

Officials in my Department are continuing to liaise with officials in Fingal County Council under the Memorandum of Understanding for the acquisition of school sites in order to secure a suitable site to facilitate this project. A suitable site has been identified and engagement in this regard is ongoing with a view to securing a site as expeditiously as possible.

My Department continues to keep Educate Together, as patron of the school, appraised of developments in the site acquisition process.

Schools Established

252. Deputy Darragh O’Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a permanent site for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30655/18]
Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, the project to provide permanent accommodation for the school in question is included on my Department’s Capital Programme.

Officials in my Department continue to liaise with officials in the relevant local authority in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the identification and acquisition of a suitable site for this school. A preferred site option to accommodate the school in question has been identified and engagement with the relevant landowner in this respect is ongoing.

My Department will keep the school patron appraised of progress in this regard.

Schools Establishment

253. Deputy Darragh O’Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a new site for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30656/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The lands at the school referred to by the Deputy were purchased by the St Laurence O’Toole Diocesan Trust, on behalf of the Board of Management for the school.

An initial site adjacent to the school, was procured from Fingal County Council and transferred ownership on 1st June 2017.

The second site was purchased from a private vendor and ownership transferred on 18th October 2017.

My Department received copies of the deeds of transfer in November 2017.

Schools Building Projects Status

254. Deputy Darragh O’Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding progress on a new school building project for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30657/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that a building project for the school to which he refers was included in my Department’s 6 Year Capital Programme.

The delivery of the building project necessitates the acquisition of a suitable site and my Department is liaising with the Patron of the school in the matter.

Schools Building Projects Status

255. Deputy Darragh O’Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the next phase of the school building for a school (details supplied) will commence; the status of the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30658/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that construction of the school referred to by him commenced on the 3rd January 2018.
Subject to no issues arising it is envisaged that construction will take approximately 18 months.

Schools Establishment

256. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a new site for a school (details supplied) as announced in November 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30659/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As the Deputy is aware, a project to provide permanent accommodation for the school in question is included on my Department’s Capital Programme.

Officials in my Department continue to liaise with officials in the relevant local authority in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the acquisition of a suitable site for this school. Discussions with relevant parties regarding the potential acquisition of a preferred site option are currently in progress with a view to advancing matters as expeditiously as possible.

Schools Building Projects

257. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the works to provide a new school building for a school (details supplied) in addition to the associated refurbishment works will commence as a matter of urgent priority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30666/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As the Deputy will be aware, a project for the school in question is included in my Department’s 6 Year Construction Programme.

I understand that the technical assessment process in respect of the project (to include the extension, refurbishment and prefab replacement) has been completed and the Project Brief is now being finalised.

In that context, my Department will be in further contact with the school shortly in relation to the next steps to be taken to initiate the architectural planning process for the project concerned.

Teacher Recruitment

258. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school (details supplied) will be granted an extra teacher it is now entitled to; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30673/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The criteria used for the allocation of teaching posts is published annually on the Department website. The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the previous 30 September. The staffing schedule operates in a clear and transparent manner and treats all similar types of schools equally irrespective of location.
The staffing schedule also includes an appeals mechanism for schools to submit an appeal under certain criteria to an independent Appeals Board.

I understand that the school referred to by the Deputy is projecting an increase of 5 pupils on their current enrolment for the 2018/19 school year. The next meeting of the Primary Staffing Appeals Board will be held in October. If the school is successful in its appeal, it may appoint a teacher in October.

**Free Education Scheme**

259. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30697/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** To answer the Deputy, the majority of primary and voluntary secondary schools in the Free Education Scheme receive capitation grant assistance to provide for secretarial, caretaking and cleaning services. Capitation related grants are issued to the majority of primary and post-primary schools to employ such staff. Within the capitation grant schemes, it is a matter for each individual school to decide how best to apply the grant funding to suit its particular needs.

Where a school uses the capitation grant funding to employ a secretary, such staff are employees of individual schools. In employing an individual, it is up to the school to determine what terms and conditions the individual is employed under. My Department has no plans to develop an alternative scheme for schools to employ secretaries separate to the current system of capitation grant assistance.

Notwithstanding that, in 2015 my Department agreed to engage with the union side in relation to the pay of school secretaries (and caretakers) who are employed using grant funding and to enter an arbitration process. The Arbitrator recommended a cumulative pay increase of 10% between 2016 and 2019 for school secretaries (and caretakers) comprehended by the terms of the arbitration process and that a minimum hourly pay rate of €13 for such staff be phased in over the period 2016 to 2019. Grant funding used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff is also being improved on a phased basis between 2016 and 2019 following the arbitration process. These increases are in order to enable schools implement the arbitration outcome for grant funded secretaries (and caretakers).

In December 2017, my Department published circular letter 0078/2017 for primary schools and circular letter 0079/2017 for voluntary secondary schools, setting out the application of the third phase increases of the Arbitrator’s recommendations. The circulars are available at:


The increases recommended by the Arbitrator are binding and must be applied by all schools who employ staff to whom the Arbitrator’s recommendation applies.

**Residential Institutions Statutory Fund**
260. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount remaining in the Caranua fund; his views on whether the closure of the fund to applicants from 1 August 2018 is appropriate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30699/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** On 29th May of this year, I published the Review of Eligibility of Persons to access the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund (“Caranua”). The Review shows clearly that the monies available to Caranua will be fully spent for the group of former residents whom the fund was originally targeted. It is clear also that the fund is not going to be undersubscribed and should therefore continue to be used for the benefit of those former residents.

Following the publication of the Review Caranua announced that it would cease to accept applications with effect from 1 August next. Caranua is a statutory body which is independent in its decisions on the management and disbursement of the funding which was provided by the religious congregations. Caranua has publicised this cessation date and I would encourage anyone who has yet to submit an application to do so before 1 August. I have asked Caranua to continue to accept applications in cases of hardship or in exceptional circumstances, after the date on which general applications will cease to be accepted. I have also called on Caranua to make every possible effort to engage with survivors and their representatives.

Caranua have already placed advertisements in a number of national and foreign newspapers highlighting the cessation date, have engaged with survivor support groups, as well as other organisations that may work with people who may be eligible to apply for support funding.

Statistics on Caranua’s expenditure are available from their website at [www.caranua.ie](http://www.caranua.ie).

### School Accommodation

261. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the arrangements being made for September 2018 with respect to schools (details supplied) in view of the delay in delivering the new buildings; the process and the expected delivery date for the schools; the steps he will take to include milestone dates towards the delivery of the schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30727/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department is liaising with the Patron to identify the accommodation needs of the schools to which the Deputy refers pending the delivery of their new school buildings. I met with the Principals of the schools recently and I was glad to be able to give them assurances that their needs in this regard will be met.

Since the liquidation of the contractor for the permanent buildings, the Patron and its design team and Department officials have been working closely to ensure that a new contractor is appointed as quickly as possible to complete both schools. A notice has been published on the eTenders website, with a closing date of 23rd July 2018, seeking expressions of interest from contractors wishing to be considered for the completion of the project. Identification of all outstanding works necessary to complete both schools is also on-going.

The current works programme indicates a re-tendering of the project in November 2018 with a view to having a contractor back on site by the end of March 2019 and an expected completion date of June 2020.

### School Funding
262. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to restore the funding levels paid to schools under the capitation grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30739/18]

**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 and I remain committed to achieving this. However, I must be prudent in the context of ongoing budgetary pressures and prioritise where it is not possible to do everything that I would like to do in the education sector in any one year. In the last two budgets, I made provision for 6,000 extra teachers and 3,000 extra SNAs and over 3,000 new middle management posts. These resources were allocated to improve the learning experience right across the sector, with a particular focus on children with special needs.

The Deputy will be aware that 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.

Improvements have been made for the restoration of 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.

The level of funding provided to all schools and the drivers of costs at school level are kept under review by my Department.

**School Services Staff**

263. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress being made to address the discrepancies which exist in the rates of pay and benefits paid to school secretaries and caretakers; the action he is taking to ensure that these workers have pay equality; the efforts being made to end precarious employment in respect of these professions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30740/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** To answer the Deputy, the majority of primary and voluntary secondary schools in the Free Education Scheme receive capitation grant assistance to provide for secretarial, caretaking and cleaning services. Capitation related grants are issued to the majority of primary and post-primary schools to employ such staff. Within the capitation grant schemes, it is a matter for each individual school to decide how best to apply the grant funding to suit its particular needs.

Where a school uses the capitation grant funding to employ a secretary or caretaker, such staff are employees of individual schools. My Department has no plans to develop an alternative scheme for schools to employ school secretaries or caretakers separate to the current system of capitation grant assistance.

Notwithstanding that, in 2015 my Department agreed to engage with the union side in rela-
tion to the pay of school secretaries and caretakers (and cleaners) who are employed using grant funding, and to enter an arbitration process in respect of same. The Arbitrator recommended a cumulative pay increase of 10% between 2016 and 2019 for school secretaries and caretakers comprehended by the terms of the arbitration process and that a minimum hourly pay rate of €13 for such staff be phased in over the period 2016 to 2019. Grant funding used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff is also being improved on a phased basis between 2016 and 2019 following the arbitration process. These increases are in order to enable schools implement the arbitration outcome for grant funded secretaries and caretakers (and cleaners).

In December 2017, my Department published circular letter 0078/2017 for primary schools and circular letter 0079/2017 for voluntary secondary schools, setting out the application of the third phase increases of the Arbitrator’s recommendations. The circulars are available at:


The increases recommended by the Arbitrator are binding and must be applied by all schools who employ staff to whom the Arbitrator’s recommendation applies.

Schools Building Projects Status

264. Deputy Michael Moynihan asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a proposed new primary school in Kanturk, County Cork; when this project will progress to construction stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30755/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The project to which the Deputy refers is being delivered by the Office of Public Works (OPW). The OPW recently finalised work with ESBI on the undergrounding of electrical cables. The OPW tendered these works and have now issued a letter of intent to award a contract to the preferred bidder. The works are expected to commence in the coming weeks and will take six months. On this basis, it is anticipated that the main construction project will commence in quarter one of 2019.

Schools Building Projects Status

265. Deputy Paul Kehoe asked the Minister for Education and Skills if possession of a building (details supplied) scheduled for demolition will be secured; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30775/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department understands that the demolition of the HSE building in question is unlikely to be halted.

The school referred to by the Deputy has recently advised my Department that an alternative area of land which is under the ownership of the HSE may be available. I understand that the school is exploring this directly with the HSE and that they will keep my Department updated with any developments.

School Services Staff

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266. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to change the terms and conditions for school secretaries (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30777/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** To answer the Deputy, the majority of primary and voluntary secondary schools in the Free Education Scheme receive capitation grant assistance to provide for secretarial, caretaking and cleaning services. Capitation related grants are issued to the majority of primary and post-primary schools to employ such staff. Within the capitation grant schemes, it is a matter for each individual school to decide how best to apply the grant funding to suit its particular needs.

Where a school uses the capitation grant funding to employ a secretary, such staff are employees of individual schools. My Department has no plans to develop an alternative scheme for schools to employ school secretaries separate to the current system of capitation grant assistance.

Notwithstanding that, in 2015 my Department agreed to engage with the union side in relation to the pay of school secretaries who are employed using grant funding, and to enter an arbitration process. The Arbitrator recommended a cumulative pay increase of 10% between 2016 and 2019 for school secretaries (and caretakers and cleaners) comprehended by the terms of the arbitration process and that a minimum hourly pay rate of €13 for such staff be phased in over the period 2016 to 2019. Grant funding used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff is also being improved on a phased basis between 2016 and 2019 following the arbitration process. These increases are in order to enable schools implement the arbitration outcome for grant funded secretaries (and caretakers and cleaners).

In December 2017, my Department published circular letter 0078/2017 for primary schools and circular letter 0079/2017 for voluntary secondary schools, setting out the application of the third phase increases of the Arbitrator’s recommendations. The circulars are available at:


The increases recommended by the Arbitrator are binding and must be applied by all schools who employ staff to whom the Arbitrator’s recommendation applies.

**School Transport Eligibility**

267. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) will be allowed to travel in transport provided for their sibling; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30790/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

Currently over 116,000 children, including over 12,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in over 4,500 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually at a total cost of almost €190 million in 2017.
The purpose of the School Transport Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children with special educational needs arising from a diagnosed disability.

Eligibility is determined following consultation with the National Council for Special Education through its network of Special Education Needs Organisers. Applications for transport provision, under the terms of this scheme, should only be completed in circumstances where children are not in a position to avail of standard school transport services.

The Department and Bus Éireann are very conscious of the specialised nature of transport provision for children with special educational needs. This is reflected in the standard of dedicated service provided and the fact that these services are generally planned and timetabled to operate on a door-to-door basis.

In certain cases, the Department also provides funding to schools for the employment of escorts to accompany children whose care and safety needs require this level of support while they travel to and from school.

Bus Éireann is currently processing applications for school transport services for the 2018/19 school year and has advised that an application for school transport has not been made for the child referred to by the Deputy.

The terms of the School Transport Scheme are applied equitably on a national basis.

**Schools Site Acquisitions**

268. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the identification and acquisition of a site for a proposed new school (details supplied) in County Limerick that is due to open in September 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30922/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** A building project for the new post-primary school referred to by the Deputy is included in my Department’s current 6 year construction programme.

As the Deputy is aware, officials from my Department have been working closely with Limerick City and County Council under the Memorandum of Understanding for the acquisition of school sites in order to identify and procure a suitable site for the school.

A number of potential site options were identified, have been short-listed and appraised and negotiations are being progressed.

While a site acquisition process is underway, given the commercial sensitivities associated with land acquisitions generally I am not in a position to comment further at this time. However, the school patron will be informed of the location as soon as it is possible to do so.

**Special Educational Needs Service Provision**

269. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether an organisation (details supplied) is fit to continue as a trustee of a school in view of its failure to do so at a location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30945/18]
271. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps he has taken to address the disparity in educational provision provided by an organisation (details supplied) compared to another school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30947/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 269 and 271 together.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for determining the appropriate staffing levels in relation to the support of pupils with special educational needs in special schools, in accordance with the policies of my Department.

Enhanced pupil teacher and SNA ratios are provided to special schools to support them in dealing with pupils’ educational and care needs.

Since 2012, special schools are staffed on the basis of the pupil population and the disability categorisation of those pupils, as opposed to being based principally on school designation, in accordance with my Department’s Circular 0042/2011.

My Department’s policy in relation to the provision of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) is set out in DES Circular 30/2014, which notes that the extent of SNA support provided to a school will be dependent of the assessed care needs of pupils attending the school.

School staffing schedules are reviewed and updated each year by the NCSE and schools are staffed on the basis of each year’s school enrolments.

My Department is not aware of any disparity in educational provision in relation to educational staffing in the school, which would conclude that the trusteeship of the school is unable to continue to fulfil its function.

The Deputy will be aware that the provision of Health Services, including the provision of therapy services is a matter for the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive.

The deputy will also be aware, however, that I recently announced that a demonstration project to provide in-school and pre-school therapy services will be introduced for the 2018/19 school year.

The purpose of the project is to test a model of tailored therapeutic supports that allows for early intervention in terms of providing speech and language and occupational therapy within ‘educational settings’. This innovative pilot will complement existing HSE funded provision of essential therapy services.

75 schools, including a representative sample of primary, post primary, and special schools will take part in the project. 75 pre-schools will also participate, giving 150 settings.

The project is taking place in Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) 7 Region of South West Dublin, Kildare and West Wicklow and the schools selected will therefore be from this region.

As only one of the schools referred to in the Deputy’s question is in the CHO 7 region, only this school could be considered for inclusion, and be included in the demonstration project. Decisions in relation to the extension of the service to other areas will be taken following a full evaluation of the existing pilot phase.

**Schools Facilities**
270. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps he has taken to prevent an organisation (details supplied) charging for the use of a swimming pool built by a school in 1973; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30946/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In relation to the issue of the charging of fees by schools, the position is that apart from those recognised fee-charging second level schools, recognised primary and post primary schools are precluded from charging school fees.

Voluntary contributions by parents are, however, permissible provided it is made absolutely clear to parents that there is no question of compulsion to pay and that, in making a contribution, they are doing so of their own volition.

The manner in which voluntary contributions are sought and collected is a matter for school management, however their collection should be such as not to create a situation where either parents or pupils could reasonably infer that the contributions take on a compulsory character.

No charge may be made, in respect of instruction in any subject of the school curriculum or for recreation or other activities where all pupils are expected to take part.

However, it is permissible for a school to seek payments in respect of extra-curricular activities, provided such activities are not obligatory and individual pupils can choose whether or not to participate.

Guidelines on the use of School Buildings outside of School Hours were published by my Department in October 2017; these can be viewed on my Department’s website.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide guidance for schools in relation to the use of school buildings outside of school hours and for those schools who are considering putting such arrangements in place.

In general, the management of school premises at local level is a matter for the relevant school authorities, and if a community group is interested in using school facilities contact should be made with the school in the first instance.

*Question No. 271 answered with Question No. 269.*

**Schools Grievance Procedures**

272. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will request the board of management of a school (details supplied) to withdraw its threat of legal action against the parents’ association and to co-operate fully with the association; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30953/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Under the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the Board of Management is the body charged with the direct governance of a school.

Accordingly, any legal proceedings taken by a board of management are a matter for the board in question.

**Schools Building Projects Status**
273. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when work will resume on a pitch (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30957/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The school building for the project referred to by the Deputy was handed over for occupation on 1 September 2017. However, as part of the contract for this project, there remain some outstanding works at the adjacent GAA Club including completion of the all-weather pitch and reinstatement work to the car park. There are also a number of snags to be resolved in the school building including issues relating to the heating system.

The Department has terminated the contract with the building contractor under Clause 12 of the Public Works Contract.

There is a Performance Bond in place for this project and the Design Team is liaising with the Bondsman with the intention of calling on the Bond to cover the costs of finishing out the works.

The design team is currently finalising a detailed scope of works which are outstanding, and the Bondsman will be requested to have the works completed without the need for a public tender process. This is the most expeditious way of completing the works. If the Bondsman is not prepared to complete the works, the Design Team will tender for a completion contractor to carry out the works and the remediation of the outstanding snags, and the costs will be presented to the Bondsman.

The Department is committed to getting all of the outstanding works completed as soon as possible.

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**Special Educational Needs Staff**

274. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an application by a school (details supplied) for a special needs assistant will be expedited. [30977/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school.

The NCSE allocates SNA support to schools in accordance with the criteria set out in Department Circular 0030/2014, which is available on the Department’s website at www.education.ie, in order that students who have care needs can access SNA support as and when it is needed.

In considering applications for SNA support for individual pupils, the NCSE take account of the pupils’ needs and consider the resources available to the school to identify whether additionality is needed or whether the school might reasonably be expected to meet the needs of the pupils from its current level of resources.

SNAs are not allocated to individual children but to schools as a school based resource.

SNA allocations to all schools can change from year to year as children with care needs leave the school, as new children with care needs enrol in a school and as children develop more independent living skills and their care needs diminish over time.
My Department’s policy is to ensure that every child who is assessed as needing SNA support will receive access to such support. In line with this policy, I announced in May 2018 that 800 additional SNAs will be allocated for the beginning of the next school year, with a further 140 expected to be allocated by the end of the year.

By the end of this year, there will be a total of 15,000 Special Needs Assistants working in our schools, a 42% increase on 2011.

The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked by a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support on the grounds that Department policy was not met in accordance with Circular 0030/2014.

Schools may also appeal a decision, where the school considers that the NCSE, in applying Department policy, has not allocated the appropriate level of SNA support to the school to meet the special educational and/or care needs of the children concerned.

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2018/19, but wishes new enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE. The closing date for receipt of any appeals in regard to SNA allocations is Friday, 28th September 2018.

As this question relates to a particular child, I have referred the question to the NCSE for their direct reply.

**Schools Building Projects Status**

275. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an application by a school (details supplied) for a new building will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30991/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the school was advised in August 2016 that my Department is not in a position to provide funding for a school hall due to the necessity to prioritise funding for essential classroom accommodation to meet demographic need.

The Deputy will be aware that under the National Development Plan (NDP), increased funding has been provided for the school sector capital investment programme. This funding allows for a continued focus on the provision of new permanent school places to keep pace with demographic demand and also provides for an additional focus on the refurbishment of existing school buildings to include the building and modernisation of PE facilities in primary and post-primary schools.

Under the Ireland Project 2040, we will invest €8.4 billion (compared to €4.9 billion in the previous decade) in primary and post primary school buildings. This will include the provision of 50 large scale school building projects and 20,000 school places in state of the art new buildings.

The immediate priority of my Department is providing 20,000 new and replacement school places each year, to ensure that every child has a school place. The government will focus in the medium term on the provision of PE facilities in schools.

I also wish to advise the Deputy that my Department recently approved grant to the school for a mainstream classroom and 2 special needs rooms.
276. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied); the contact which has been had with the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31023/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Deputy will be aware that a building project for the school to which he refers is included in my Department’s Capital Programme.

My Department is currently finalising the project brief with the aim of progressing the project into the architectural planning process. My Department will be in direct contact with the school’s patron in this regard.

### School Accommodation

277. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied); the contact which has been had with the school to progress the development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31027/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In April, 2015, my Department approved an all-in-devolved grant for the provision of 2 mainstream classrooms and a WC for assisted users for the school in question. The additional accommodation was to be provided on a stand-alone basis.

The project proceeded to tender without reverting to my Department as required under the terms and conditions of the Scheme. In addition, the Board of Management had tendered for an unapproved scope of works.

In June 2018 the Board was advised that it was required to revert to the original works approved. It is now a matter for the Board of Management to progress the project accordingly.

### School Accommodation

278. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied) for a classroom extension; the contact that has been had with the school; and if his attention has been drawn to the increasing pupil numbers in the school. [31028/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I can confirm to the Deputy that the school in question recently wrote to my Department advising that it expects enrolments to increase in the coming academic year 2018/2019.

My Department contacted the school and advised the principal that should the enrolment increase to a level that would warrant the appointment of an additional teacher, it is then open to the school to re-activate its application for additional accommodation, should the school’s existing accommodation not be capable of accommodating the additional teacher.
279. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the development of a school (details supplied) in view of An Bord Pleanála approval; if a contract for the new works has been awarded; if so, when it is expected that work will begin; the target date for the school reopening; the substantial improvements that will be made compared to the previous school; if playing fields will be part of the new school; if the legalities in this regard have been completed; if the patronage and management of the new school will be maintained based on the previous school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31029/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The building project referred to by the Deputy will consist of the construction of a new part single storey, part two storey and part three storey post-primary school of 6,786sqm to provide general classrooms, specialised classrooms, PE Hall, general purpose area, a unit for pupils with multiple disability visual impairment, ancillary teaching and staff accommodation. The development will include 3 new hard play courts.

Playing fields are not part of the brief for this project.

The project is currently at Stage 2B of Architectural Planning. A third party planning appeal to An Bord Pleanála has significantly delayed the project from progressing to the next stage which is tender stage. A decision to grant permission was received in early June with a number of conditions that are being followed up by the Design Team.

On satisfactory completion of Stage 2B and providing no other issues arise the Department will be in a position to authorise the project to proceed to pre-qualification of contractors. In March, my Department wrote to the school outlining the projected timeframe for progression of this project to tender and construction stages in Quarter 4 of 2018.

The patronage and management of the school will not be affected by the school building project.

280. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of public sector jobs offered as internal competitions or restricted to existing Civil Service or public service staff in his Department in 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31546/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The number, grade and salary band of posts filled through internal competitions in my Department in 2017/2018 is set out below in tabular format.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Competition</th>
<th>No of posts</th>
<th>Salary Band (Modified scale)</th>
<th>Salary Band (Full PRSI)</th>
<th>Allowance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Competition for the post of Services Officer, Dublin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>€21,219.52 - €29,307.42</td>
<td>€21,724.62 - €30,777.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>No of posts</td>
<td>Salary Band (Modified scale)</td>
<td>Salary Band (Full PRSI)</td>
<td>Allowance</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Competition for the post of Services Officer, Athlone</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>€21,219.52 - €29,307.42</td>
<td>€21,724.62 - €30,777.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Private Secretary to the Minister/s of State</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>€27,667 - €47,082</td>
<td>€29,026 - €49,466</td>
<td>€19,653 (Modified) / €20,685 (Full PRSI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Private Secretary to the Minister/s of State</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>€45,264 - €56,979</td>
<td>€47,552 - €59,887</td>
<td>€19,653 (Modified) / €20,685 (Full PRSI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>€80,852 - €99,408</td>
<td>€84,973 - €104,507</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Senior Inspector</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>€79,127 - €92,567</td>
<td>€83,161 - €97,301</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Divisional Inspector</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>€79,127 - €92,567</td>
<td>€83,161 - €97,301</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Assistant Chief Inspector</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>€90,278 - €104,253</td>
<td>€94,897 - €109,606</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Regional Director</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>€90,278 - €104,253</td>
<td>€94,897 - €109,606</td>
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<td>2018</td>
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<td>€27,667 - €47,082</td>
<td>€29,026 - €49,466</td>
<td>€10,405 (Modified) / €10,951 (Full PRSI)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Constitutional Convention Recommendations

281. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the recommendations of the Constitutional Convention regarding Article 41.2 have been considered; the implications the Convention has identified; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30148/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** The Convention on the Constitution, in its Second Report which was published on 8 May 2013, recommended the amendment of Article 41.2 by making it gender-neutral to include carers in the home and carers beyond the home and that the State should be required to provide a “reasonable level of support” to ensure that carers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour.

These recommendations were considered by a Task Force of officials from my Department in 2014 in collaboration with representatives of other relevant Government Departments and the Office of the Attorney General.

On 5 July, the Government decided that the question to be put to the people in the forthcoming referendum on Article 41.2 will be simple deletion of the provision. Consideration was
given to the Reports of the Convention on the Constitution and the Task Force and to other reports on the subject. The Government’s conclusion was that inserting new language into the Constitution could have unpredictable legal consequences, dependent on interpretation by the courts.

However, there is a need for a wider consultation on the issue of care and the next Citizens’ Assembly will be asked to consider the matter.

Parental Leave

282. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to introduce reforms to the parental leave regime including changes to the qualifying age of the child and to the length of the leave; if an increase in leave and in the qualifying age will apply in respect of children that have already reached eight years of age and in circumstances in which the parents have already taken current maximum parental leave; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30324/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** The Programme for Partnership Government includes a commitment to increase paid parental leave during the first year of a child’s life, as research shows that parental care is of particular importance in the first year of life. To further this commitment, the Government established an interdepartmental group to consider the matter. The interdepartmental group has almost completed its work on developing a policy approach to implement the Programme commitments, and is in the process of putting the final touches to its report.

Separately, a Parental Leave (Amendment) Bill 2017, which provides for an expansion in unpaid parental leave from 18 weeks to 26 weeks, completed Report Stage in Dáil Éireann on 13 June. As the Deputy will appreciate, this is a Private Members’ Bill. The Government has, however, agreed in this context with the proposal in the legislation to raise the qualifying age of the child in respect of which parental leave can be obtained from 8 years of age to 12 years of age.

Visa Applications

283. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the requirements there are by way of cash assets persons must bring with them in the case of a Syrian citizen who is applying for entry to live with an Irish born spouse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30709/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the financial criteria for a Join Family (Irish National Spouse) visa application is outlined in section 17 of the Policy Document on Non-EEA Family Reunification available on the INIS website (www.inis.gov.ie).

In order to sponsor an immediate family member, an Irish citizen must not have been totally or predominantly reliant on benefits from the Irish State for a continuous period in excess of 2 years immediately prior to the application. In addition, the sponsor must have earned a cumulative gross income, over and above any State benefits, of not less than €40,000 over the three year period prior to application.

Declared and verified savings held by an applicant or sponsor may be taken into account in
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assessing cases which fall short of the income thresholds set out in the Policy Document.

The onus will be on the applicant to satisfy the immigration authorities as to the level of earnings or financial resources and to provide any evidence required in support thereof.

The Irish Refugee Protection Programme Humanitarian Admission Programme 2 (IHAP) also provides an opportunity to Irish citizens and persons with Convention refugee status, subsidiary protection status, and programme refugee status, who have immediate eligible family members from Syria, to propose to the Minister for these family members to join them in Ireland.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to 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.

In addition, applicants may themselves e-mail visa queries directly to INIS (visamail@justice.ie).

Traffic Calming Measures

284. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on whether the average speed enforcement system as operated in the Dublin Port tunnel has substantially helped to reduce the average speed by vehicles; his plans to roll out this system to other parts of the motorway network (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31040/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will be aware that an average speed camera project was initiated at the Dublin Port Tunnel in June 2017 on a pilot basis. This pilot project was funded by Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII).

According to TII, an analysis of driver behaviour carried out in October 2015 confirmed that 58% of drivers using the Dublin Port Tunnel exceeded the 80 km/h speed limit, and 20% exceeded this limit by more than 10 km/h.

Following the introduction of the average speed camera system at the Dublin Port Tunnel, the percentage of drivers exceeding the limit by more than 10 km/h has fallen to 0.15%. This suggests that the system has had a significant effect on driver behaviour. TII also emphasises that this reduction in excessive speed is particularly notable, occurring, as it does, against the backdrop of increasing weekday traffic volumes, with Monday-Friday traffic volumes rising by 40% over the past five years.

Prior to the introduction of this system, speed checks at the Dublin Port Tunnel were conducted using handheld laser-based technology, and required a Garda presence to identify and intercept speeding vehicles. For safety reasons, these checks could only be conducted outside the tunnel and, therefore, could not influence driver behaviour inside the tunnel itself.

The average speed camera system allows the enforcement of the speed limit within the tunnel itself, with automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) used to identify vehicles that have exceeded the speed limit and the relevant fixed charge notices (FCNs) are issued by An Garda Síochána without the vehicle being intercepted.
I understand that TII has recommended the extension of the average speed camera project for an additional four years and has committed to continuing its funding and operation of the system during the extension period.

In terms of speed enforcement on other roads, I would remind the Deputy that this is accomplished by An Garda Síochána through the use of both intercept and non-intercept methods, with safety cameras being used in specific locations, known as speed enforcement zones, around the country in order to provide non-intercept detection of speeding vehicles.

The overall impact of the safety cameras can be seen in the impact on the fatal collisions in the designated speed enforcement zones. The designation of specific sections of road as speed enforcement zones is based on an analysis of collision data by An Garda Síochána. In the years 2004 to 2009 (the 6 years before the introduction of the safety camera network began), approximately 3 out of 10 (30%) fatal collisions occurred in these zones. In 2015, this figure had reduced to 16% (or 24 road deaths) in safety camera zones.

The Deputy will appreciate that the deployment of Garda resources is, of course, a matter for the Garda Commissioner, and I, Minister for Justice and Equality, have no role in such operational matters.

Deportation Orders

285. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there is a cut-off point for a person who has had a deportation order for a number of years (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30031/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the information requested by the Deputy is as set out below.

The statutory criteria which must be considered in relation to a decision to make a deportation order under section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999 include national security and public policy, the character and conduct of the person concerned and the common good. In determining whether to make a deportation order, in addition to the factors set out in Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999, I must also consider all relevant constitutional and international human rights arising including those enshrined in the Refugee Convention, the UN Convention Against Torture and the European Charter of Human Rights. The question of not returning a person to a place where certain fundamental rights would be breached (or non refoulement as it is referred to) is fully considered in every case when deciding whether or not to make a deportation order. This involves consideration of whether returning the person would result in the life or freedom of that person being threatened on account of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, or whether the person would be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

A deportation order requires the person concerned to remove themselves from the State and it is only where they fail to do so that the State is forced to remove them and enforce the rule of law. A deportation order is of no definite duration but it is open to the subject of such an Order to make an application to have it revoked where there is a change of circumstances since the Order was made.

It is to be noted that the enforcement of deportation orders is an operational matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB).
I should remind the Deputy that queries in relation to the status of individual Immigration cases may be made direct to INIS by Email using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. The service enables up-to-date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek this information through the more administratively expensive Parliamentary Questions process.

Garda Vetting Applications Data

286. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the backlog of Garda vetting applications for volunteers for an event (details supplied) will be addressed; if Garda vetting will be made specific to the person in all cases rather than to various organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30032/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will be aware that the primary purpose of Garda vetting for employment purposes is to support protection for children and vulnerable adults. It is carried out by the Garda National Vetting Bureau in accordance with the provisions of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012-2016 and other relevant laws. Neither I nor my Department has any role in the processing of vetting applications.

I have been informed by the Garda Authorities that at present there are no backlogs or delays in the Garda vetting process for the event to which the Deputy refers.

In addition, I am informed that, in respect of the event referred to, the relevant organisation concerned is registered with the National Vetting Bureau for vetting services and is using the eVetting system. By late June, 1,292 vetting applications had been processed by the Vetting Bureau and returned in respect of this specific event. I have been informed that, as of 5 July, a further 369 applications for this event had been received by the Bureau from the registered organisation in the preceding 5 day period and these are being processed accordingly.

The turnaround times for eVetting applications is 5 working days for 80% of applications received. As the Deputy will appreciate, in some cases it is necessary for the Garda authorities to conduct further enquiries in respect of the requirements of the Acts, for example to verify identity or establish the outcome of an investigation. In such cases processing times may be longer than the general average.

Once the processing of a vetting application has been completed by the National Vetting Bureau the result is returned to the relevant registered organisation. It is a matter for that organisation to complete whatever processes are in place with the individual applicants.

**Irish Prison Service**

287. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 105 of 21 June 2018, the reason the information requested has not been made available in view of the fact that it is kept by the Irish Prison Service, IPS and can be produced in tabular form. [30079/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by officials in the Irish Prison Service (IPS) that the information requested by the Deputy, which I committed to provide to her when it had been compiled, is now to hand and outlined below.

I am informed that the number of prisoners sleeping on a mattress on the floor in Cloverhill
Prison in the 3 months referred to is as follows:

April - 8
May - 21
June - 15

I wish to advise the Deputy that as Cloverhill Prison is the primary remand prison for the Leinster area, it has been affected more significantly in terms of the increased number 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 at any given time.

Finally, I am further advised by my officials in the Irish Prison Service that for a significant period of the time referenced in the Question, a number of cells in the prison were out of commission for essential renovation and refurbishment works and that these cells are now back in commission and available to the Governor.

Wards of Court

288. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality report on the wards of court has not received a response in view of the urgent need for action outlined therein; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30080/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is aware, the High Court has jurisdiction in Wards of Court matters and management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions under the Courts Service Act 1998.

The report published on 22 February 2018 by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality on the Wards of Court provided 6 recommendations relating to the Wards of Courts and these recommendations are being addressed by my Department and the Courts Service.

Correspondence from the Chairperson of the Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality was received on 5 July 2018 which is receiving attention and a reply will be issued shortly.

Wards of Court

289. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason correspondence from an organisation (details supplied) has not received a response; and the further reason a request by it for a meeting has not been agreed to. [30081/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is aware, the High Court has jurisdiction in Wards of Court matters and management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions under the Courts Service Act 1998. Given the High Court jurisdiction, it is not appropriate for me, as the Minister, to intervene in relation to this matter.

I would like to inform the Deputy that the issues raised in the correspondence referred to
by the Deputy required thorough examination as well as consultation with the Courts Service. A detailed reply has been prepared to the organisation and will be issued in the next few days.

Legislative Measures

290. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his Department has identified laws that are dependent on or in place as a consequence of Article 41.2 of the Constitution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30104/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As part of the examination of options for the amendment of Article 41.2 of the Constitution, my Department asked other Departments to check whether or not legislation exists under their responsibility which could be impacted by any change to Article 41.2 and which would have to be amended as a consequence of such a change. Justice and Equality legislation was also examined in this regard. No legislation requiring amendment has been identified.

Direct Provision Data

291. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the location and number of direct provision centres in operation; and the number of persons residing in each centre. [30118/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):**

The location and occupancy of each of the 34 accommodation centres in operation is detailed in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>CENTRE</th>
<th>ADDRESS</th>
<th>CURRENT OCCUPANCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clare</td>
<td>Knockalisheen</td>
<td>Meelick</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>King Thomond Hotel</td>
<td>The Bog Road, Lisdoonvarna</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork</td>
<td>Ashbourne Hse</td>
<td>Glounthaune</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kinsale Road</td>
<td>Cork City</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Glenvera</td>
<td>Wellington Road</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Millstreet</td>
<td>Millstreet</td>
<td>270</td>
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<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>The Towers</td>
<td>The Ninth Lock, Clondalkin, D.22</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>Balseskin</td>
<td>St. Margarets, Finglas, Dublin 11</td>
<td>288</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>28 Lower Hatch Street, Dublin 2</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>Eglinton</td>
<td>The Proms, Salthill</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Great Western House</td>
<td>Eyre Square</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry</td>
<td>Atlas House (Killarney)</td>
<td>Killarney</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Atlas House (Tralee)</td>
<td>Tralee</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Johnston Marina</td>
<td>Tralee</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COUNTY | CENTRE | ADDRESS | CURRENT OCCUPANCY
--- | --- | --- | ---
Linden House | New Road, Killarney | 54
Park Lodge | Killarney | 43
Kildare | Eyrepowell | Newbridge | 83
Laois | Montague | Emo, Portlaoise | 212
Limerick | Hanratty’s | Glentworth Street, Limerick | 113
| Mount Trenchard | Foynes, Co. Limerick | 81
Longford | Richmond Court | Richmond Street, Longford | 76
Mayo | The Old Convent | Ballyhaunis | 242
Meath | Mosney | Mosney | 655
Monaghan | St. Patricks | Monaghan | 165
Sligo | Globe House | Chapel Hill | 212
Tipperary | Bridgewater House | Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary | 120
Waterford | Atlantic House | Tramore, Co. Waterford | 79
| Ocean View | Tramore, Co. Waterford | 102
Birchwood | Ballytruckle Road | 148
Viking House | Coffee House Lane | 80
Westmeath | Temple Accommodation | Horseleap, Moate, Westmeath | 70
| Athlone | Athlone | 280
Louth | Carroll Village | Dundalk | 51
| | | 5442
34 Centres | 17 Counties

**Direct Provision Data**

292. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons admitted to each direct provision centre in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018; and the length of time these persons have remained within the system. [30119/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):**

The information sought is contained in the following two tables. Table 1 details the admissions by centre for the years 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018. Table 2 details the duration in months by accommodation centre for those admitted in that timeframe.

**Table 1:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation Centre</th>
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<th>2018</th>
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<td>2018</td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>------</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>91</td>
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<td>15</td>
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[Table cont]

Table 2:
### Accommodation Centre

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<th>3-6 months</th>
<th>6-9 months</th>
<th>9-12 months</th>
<th>12-15 months</th>
<th>15-18 months</th>
<th>18-21 months</th>
<th>21-24 months</th>
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293. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of children, women and men resident in the Mosney direct provision centre. [30120/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** Mosney Accommodation Centre is currently home to 802 residents. The population comprises people who have applied for international protection and who have requested accommodation services as well as people brought to Ireland under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme.

The demographic breakdown of those residents who sought accommodation services while they applied for international protection and are resident in Mosney is 331 children, 208 adult females and 116 adult males.

There are 147 residents in Mosney who were brought to Ireland under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme. The demographic breakdown of this cohort is 54 children, 41 adult females and 52 adult males.

In total, there are 385 children, 249 adult females and 168 adult males currently resident in Mosney.

294. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of referrals from the Mosney direct provision centre received by Tusla in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018. [30121/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** In 2016 there were 15 referrals to TUSLA from Mosney Accommodation Centre via the Reception and Integration Agency of my Department in relation to persons seeking International Protection.

In 2017 there were 11 such referrals to TUSLA and to date in 2018 there have been 7 such referrals.

The referrals listed above are those recorded by the Reception and Integration Agency Children and Family Services Unit. The referrals are those made by the Designated Liaison Person(s) (DLP) at the Mosney Accommodation Centre.

The number of referrals received by TUSLA regarding persons living in Mosney Accommodation Centre may differ from the numbers recorded by RIA. This may arise where a referral...
is made by:

1. Professionals not employed by and/or not working in Mosney (and therefore not subject to the procedures of RIA’s Child Protection Policy and with no obligation to inform Mosney’s DLP or RIA that a referral has been made in respect of a person living in Mosney).

or

2. Family members and friends of a child or family about whom the referral is made and who are acting in a private capacity and under no obligation to inform the Mosney DLP or RIA that a referral has been made in respect of a person living in Mosney.

Accurate information about the total number of referrals received by TUSLA about children and families living in Mosney Accommodation Centre is only available from TUSLA.

**Direct Provision System**

295. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress of the integration services set up in 2016 to provide supports for families living in the Mosney direct provision centre. [30122/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** Mosney Accommodation Centre is home to 802 residents. The population comprises people who have applied for international protection and who have requested accommodation services as well as people brought to Ireland under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme.

My Department is responsible for the administration of funding to a number of schemes designed to assist integration of migrants to the state. Schemes who have received funding and are available to the residents of Mosney are as follows:

**European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund:**

Spirasi: Provision of Holistic Rehabilitation and Educational Support for Torture Victims in Ireland. The project is focused on the provision of initial assessments and Medical Legal Reports and building the capacity of Spirasi to deliver, expand and sustain the programme.

Migrant Rights Centre Project: Project to advance rights and build capacity of low waged Third Country Nationals and will target those most risk of poverty, exclusion and discrimination in low-waged and unregulated sectors.

New Communities Partnership: This is a Migrants Access Programme to the Labour Marketplace which aims to empower migrants by assessing their needs and providing 6 week intensive training courses to create and upskill their capabilities to efficiently access the labour market.

Irish Refugee Council of Ireland: Project focused on quality, protection and empowerment in the asylum procedure and to assist in transitioning from Direct Provision. The project uses a continuum of care approach to ensure applicants are assisted at each stage of the asylum procedure.

These projects are national projects that benefit residents of Mosney.

**European Social Fund:**

JUMP Project: The JUMP Project, which is based in County Meath, delivers courses, work-
shops, one-to-one training and coaching and mentoring to assist people to progress career progression routes. The project is focused on migrants.

National Integration Funding Programme:

RISE: Refugee Integration, Skills and Employability is a training programme run by Business in the Community that includes Syrian refugees based in Mosney among its participants.

Third Age: Fáilte Isteach is a Meath based project that trains local volunteers to become language tutors to migrant groups, with a particular emphasis on older volunteers.

Cultúr Migrant Integration and Anti-Racism project is based in County Meath.

Employment Supports for Refugee Women (Dormant Accounts Funded):

The Net-WORK project: Project is run by Cultúr Celebrating Diversity and the Meath Partnership and is specifically targeted at women moving out of Mosney.

In addition to these state funded projects, there are also a number of initiatives that have taken place at a local level to encourage integration for residents of Mosney with the wider community. These include the recent Learning for Life Training initiative in partnership with Diageo Ireland and the Mosney Foróige Group for the younger residents.

Direct Provision System

296. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of the outstanding recommendations of the McMahon report implemented further to the final progress report published in June 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30123/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The final report on the implementation of the McMahon recommendations was published by my Department last July and is available along with the two other item by item progress reports on my Department’s website.

The final Report noted that 98% of the recommendations had been fully implemented or were in progress. The remaining 2% have been surpassed by events such as the progressive reforms arising from our recent opting in to the recast Receptions Conditions Directive and the commencement of the International Protection Act 2015.

No further reports will be issued by my Department in its informal role as monitor, as a result of the excellent rate of implementation reported last year and the roll out of the subsequent programme of reform being pursued by the Government. Individual recommendations remain the responsibility of the individual Departments or agencies as set out in the Report.

Prison Staff

297. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 159 of 28 June 2018, if he will provide a copy of the respective formal notices of appointment by him of the four named governors in his reply to the statutory position of governor of Portlaoise Prison. [30128/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The duties of a prison governor are set out in the Prison Rules, 2007. Section 75(1) states that... “Subject to the direc-
tions of the Minister and the Director General, the Governor shall be responsible for the man-
agement of the prison of which he or she is responsible.” Furthermore, Section 75(7) states that
“A Governor shall comply with any directions of the Minister or the Director General or such
persons as may be designated by the Minister or the Director General.”

All Governors are assigned by the Director with responsibility for Human Resources of the
Irish Prison Service in consultation with the Director General. Both operate on behalf of the
Minister for Justice and Equality. It has never been the practice of Ministers to publish noti-
fications to named individuals of their appointments within the Department or in the agencies
under its remit.

In relation to the four Governors named in the question, I am informed that the position is
as follows. Responsibility for Portlaoise prison was held by Campus Governor Martin Mullen
from 29 July 2012 to 12 December, 2016. From 13 December, 2016 to 30 December, 2016
statutory responsibility rested with the lead operational Governor Daniel Robbins. Ethel Gavin
was appointed acting Campus Governor from 31 December, 2016 and held statutory responsi-
bility for Portlaoise prison until 2 June 2018 when it transferred to Governor John Farrell who
continues to hold this position.

Departmental Funding

298. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if funding has been
awarded to centres (details supplied); if so, the amount; the period and purpose of same; and
when the funding will be made available to the projects. [30129/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):**
An application for funding for intercultural support services has been submitted to the Depart-
ment of Justice and Equality. This proposal is currently under consideration and a decision will
issue shortly. Any funding awarded will be for a two-year period commencing in September
2018.

Immigration Data

299. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of
persons refused entry to the State in each of the past four years for the reasons set out in the
First Schedule of the Immigration Act 2004; and if he will make a statement on the matter.
[30136/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I wish to advise the Dep-
uty that it has not been possible in the time available to provide the details requested. I have
requested An Garda Síochána to compile the necessary information and I will revert to the
Deputy as soon as possible.

Coroners Service

300. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the
progress the Coroners (Amendment) Bill 2016 in view of the fact that its passage has been
noted as urgent by him and his predecessor; the reason for the delays in the progress of this Bill;
and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30139/18]
Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Coroners (Amendment) Bill, approved by Government in May 2017 for drafting, is a priority for me and for the Government. That is reflected by its inclusion on the Government’s list of priority legislation for publication during this Oireachtas session.

My officials have been working very intensively on this important Bill, together with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel, and the drafting is now well advanced. I expect to bring the Bill to Government very shortly for agreement to publish.

I agree that it has taken considerably longer than I had wished or intended, to finalise the Bill for publication. The reasons for this are genuine. It is a complex Bill, both in drafting terms and on the substance. The Deputy will be aware that this Bill will, among other matters, make provision regarding coronial investigation of maternal deaths, in response to the Private Member’s Bill tabled by Deputy Clare Daly in that regard. Both Deputy Daly’s Bill, and much of the work done by my Department on the reform of coronial law, refer to the text of the Coroners Bill 2007, which provided for a comprehensive reform of coronial law and of the administrative structure of the coroner service in Ireland. That administrative reform requires significant updating and is not yet ready to proceed. That means that we have had to translate the key reforms of coronial law that we are now seeking to make, from the structure and language of the 2007 Bill, into the existing legislation, which dates from 1962. I am satisfied that the Bill I intend to bring forward will fully meet these rather demanding technical drafting requirements, but they have slowed down the drafting process and rendered it more complex.

In addition, the Deputy will be aware there is a huge amount of overall legislative activity – and even of priority legislation - at present in relation both to Private Members’ Bills, and to the Government’s legislative programme, across a large number of fronts. The volume of legislative work means that the resource of the specialists who are available to do it is often spread very thinly.

My officials are currently finalising the Bill together with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel, and I expect to seek Government agreement to publish before the end of this month.

I intend to move the Bill as early as possible after publication, so that, with the cooperation of all sides, we can facilitate its swift passage through the Houses.

Northern Ireland

301. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the work of the Independent Reporting Commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30294/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): To facilitate monitoring of the implementation of measures aimed at ending paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland, the Fresh Start Agreement provided for the establishment by the two Governments of the Independent Reporting Commission. An international agreement between Ireland and UK establishing the Independent Reporting Commission was signed in Dublin on 13 September 2016 and it was given effect to by legislation in both jurisdictions allowing for the appointment of the Commission.

The Commission’s functions are to:

- report annually on progress towards ending continuing paramilitary activity connected with Northern Ireland (or on such further occasions as required);
- report on the implementation of the relevant measures of the three administrations – critical here will be the NI Executive’s Strategy to tackle paramilitary activity and associated criminality; and

- consult the UK Government and relevant law enforcement agencies, the Irish Government and relevant law enforcement agencies and, in Northern Ireland, the Executive, PSNI, statutory agencies, local councils, communities and civic society organisations.

In my response to the Deputy’s Question No. 126 of 20 June, I indicated that I would be meeting with the Independent Reporting Commission on 21 June to hear about the progress the Commission has been making in carrying out its functions.

I had a very informative and constructive meeting with members of the Commission. The Commission has been very active in pursuing its remit and has had a wide engagement with a range of relevant stakeholders, both North and South. The Commission anticipates submitting its first report to the Governments after the summer. I took the opportunity to thank the Members for their commitment and their ongoing, detailed work and I look forward to receiving the Commission’s first report.

Jury Service

302. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the working group to examine and report on the jury system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30349/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As mentioned by Deputy McGrath, the Working Group on Jury Service is examining the issues raised in the Report of the Law Reform Commission on Jury Service published in 2013 [LRC 107 – 2013] along with any relevant associated material and will make its own recommendations. The examination includes the concerns raised by the Law Reform Commission in 2013 such as those relating to how representative juries are of their communities, the wide group of people who can at present be excused as of right from jury service; juries serving in lengthy or complex criminal trials; the reasonable accommodation of persons with disabilities to serve as jurors; the implications of on-line internet activity and wireless technology for the work and conduct of juries and issues of remuneration arising from jury service. The Working Group will consider some additional areas relevant to the reform of policy in this area including, for example, its constitutional aspects and the overall fit of the existing legislative architecture provided by the Juries Act of 1976 as amended which sets out relevant law in this jurisdiction particularly in terms of qualification and selection for service as a juror.

The membership of the Working Group, which is chaired by my Department, is drawn from senior officials of the relevant Divisions of the Department of Justice and Equality, the Courts Service, Forensic Science Ireland, An Garda Síochána and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Its inaugural meeting took place on 30 April 2018 when it had an initial opportunity to discuss its proposed Terms of Reference and gave its first consideration to the Draft Juries Bill and the other aspects of the Law Reform Commission Report of 2013. The current focus of the Working Group is on engaging in a work programme based on that approach. The conclusions of the work of the Group will form the basis of a report and a draft General Scheme of a Juries Service Bill building on the initial draft for such a scheme proposed by the Law Reform Commission in its 2013 Report. This represents a substantial body of work given that the Commission’s Report made 56 recommendations of which 32 are expected to require legislative intervention.
While the time-frame of actions to be taken on foot of the Working Group’s deliberations will be dependent on its specific findings and recommendations the aim would be to have the anticipated General Scheme of a new Juries Bill, subject of course to receiving the necessary Cabinet approval, early in 2019.

Prisoner Data

303. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of remand prisoners held alongside persons serving a prison sentence by prison; and the number of remand prisoners cell sharing with sentenced prisoners. [30351/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am informed by the Irish Prison Service that as of Wednesday 4 July, the number of remand/trial prisoners in custody was 743. Of this 743, 222 remand/trial prisoners were sharing a cell with a sentenced prisoner. A breakdown by prison is contained in the table.

I wish to advise the Deputy that as Cloverhill Prison is the primary remand prison for the Leinster area, it has been affected more significantly in terms of the increased number 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.

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<th>Institution</th>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Deportation Orders

304. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when stamp 4 status will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30387/18]

**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 11 March 2005.

The person was deported from the State on 4 June 2006, however, according to information received from her legal representatives, she returned to this State the year after she was deported.

Representations were received on behalf of the person concerned requesting that the deportation order be revoked, pursuant to the provisions of section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). This request will be considered as soon as possible.

The Deputy might wish to note that the decision to ensue from the consideration of this request will be to have the existing deportation order ‘affirmed’ or ‘revoked’. Once such a decision has been made, this decision will be notified in writing. In the meantime, the deportation order remains valid and in place.

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

305. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason for the delay in processing an application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30408/18]

**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 application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy, on behalf of his daughter, is ongoing. On completion of the necessary processing the application 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 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.
306. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the rise in refusals for visas for tourists from Thailand, all of which have received the same refusal explanation, will be addressed; if there is a problem in issuing visas to Thai citizens; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30417/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that visit visa applications received from Thai citizens resident in Thailand are processed by the Embassy in Bangkok and the Visa Office in Dublin.

Where an application is refused, the refusal reasons for that application are communicated to the applicant in writing. I am further advised that a range of reasons apply to those applications from Thailand which were refused in the first half of this year.

The overall grant rate for visit visa applications received from Thai citizens residing in Thailand in the first half of 2018 is 86.4% which is only slightly down on the 87.9% grant rate for the second half of 2017. This is not as a result of any change of policy and reflects that each application is considered on its individual merits rather than prescribed refusal rates. It should be noted that the overall world-wide grant rate for short-stay visit visas to Ireland in 2017 was 88.8%.

**Prison Staff**

307. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of applicants that sought to be included under the disability percentage programme in terms of recruitment in the public service in respect of a competition (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30431/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the recruitment process for the position of Recruit Prison Officer is administered by Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Irish Prison Service. Accordingly, the Irish Prison Service has no role in respect of the running of this recruitment process and as such is not in a position to supply the information requested.

**Proposed Legislation**

308. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to introduce legislation to address the issue of maternal deaths; the aims and objectives of the proposed legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30433/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will appreciate that in general, the issue of maternal deaths is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Health. However, I do have plans to introduce legislation to strengthen the existing law on coronial investigation of maternal deaths.

The Coroners (Amendment) Bill, already approved for drafting by the Government in May 2017, is a very important Bill, which I expect to bring to Government shortly for agreement to publish.
This Bill will, among other key reforms of coronial law, introduce mandatory reporting, post-mortem examination and inquest, in cases of direct or indirect maternal death. It will also extend the legal aid provisions, introduced for certain inquests in the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2013, to a family member of the deceased at an inquest into a maternal death.

This will ensure clarity for responsible persons, including hospital authorities, and will support the development of transparent and accountable oversight for checking and investigating certain types of death. Most importantly, it will provide clarity and transparency for bereaved families. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution made by Deputy Clare Daly to the Bill, through her earlier Private Member’s Bill.

It will be an offence for a responsible person not to report a mandatory reportable death to the coroner. There will also be improved provisions on the reporting of certain peri-natal and infant deaths, to support prompt and transparent provision of information by health and other authorities to bereaved families. More broadly, the Bill will also update and strengthen the legal powers available to coroners regarding reporting, post-mortem and inquest of unnatural deaths; and including more robust powers to compel attendance by witnesses and the production of documents at inquest. The Bill will also allow a wider scope for inquests, from investigating the immediate cause of death to establishing the circumstances in which the death occurred.

The public importance of effective and transparent independent investigation in such cases is obvious. In addition, these measures will strengthen our compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights.

**Immigration Status**

309. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of an application for a visa in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30440/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that a new application for an Irish visa from the person referred to has not yet been made.

Comprehensive guidelines and information on the application process and documentation needed for each type of application can be found on the INIS website http://www.inis.gov.ie. Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been 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.

In addition, applicants may themselves e-mail queries directly to visamail@justice.ie.

**Departmental Expenditure**

310. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of travel expenses for him and those who have travelled with him since his appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30515/18]
Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Foreign and domestic travel payments are not collated in my Department in such a way as to allow for an automated recovery of the information sought by the Deputy, as various different officials are likely to have travelled with me as Minister to different events over the last year. A manual review of the records of officials’ travel expenses is being undertaken and the information sought compiled. I will contact the Deputy directly once the information sought is to hand.

Immigration Status

311. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on whether it is appropriate that a person (details supplied) that made an online visa application can be given no indicative timescale as to when their application is likely to be processed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30540/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the particular application referred to was submitted to the Visa Office in Dublin on 12 April 2017, and is one made under the terms of 2004/38/EC Directive (Free Movement) on the rights of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of Member States.

While every effort generally is made to process these applications as soon as possible, processing times will vary having regard to the volume of applications, their complexity, the possible need to investigate, enquire into, or seek further information in relation to certain applications, and the resources available. Unfortunately, due to the large number of applications in this category waiting to be processed and the fact that such applications are processed in chronological order (i.e. based on date order of receipt), I cannot at this time give a definitive date as to when this application will be finalised.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been 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.

In addition, applicants may themselves e-mail queries directly to visamail@justice.ie.

Project Ireland 2040

312. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of times he has met his officials regarding Project Ireland 2040 since its launch; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30556/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As part of the Government’s overall vision set out in Project Ireland 2040, significant investment is provided for under the National Development Plan in the Justice and Equality field. In particular, the Plan provides for major investment in technology and specialised building projects across the sector, with a view to providing a safe and fair environment within which the National Planning Framework can be delivered.

I engage on an ongoing basis with my officials to discuss progress on delivery of the Gov-
ernment’s priorities, including in relation to financial matters and capital projects across the Justice and Equality sector. In particular, I meet formally with the Management Board of my Department every month or so, with the agenda for these meetings including a standing item on financial matters, as well as regular updates on key projects and programmes within the National Development Plan across the Justice and Equality sector.

### Freedom of Information Data

313. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of freedom of information requests his Department has received since January 2018; the number of refusals; the number that have been appealed and that are ongoing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30573/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I wish to inform the Deputy that for the period 1 January 2018 up to and including 30 June 2018, my Department has received 442 Freedom of Information requests.

The breakdown is provided in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carry over from 2017 (Live requests)</th>
<th>FOI requests received to date</th>
<th>Withdrew</th>
<th>Granted/Part granted</th>
<th>Refusals</th>
<th>Ongoing (live requests)</th>
<th>Appealed*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The number of appealed cases is a subset of the part granted/refused figure.

In addition to the breakdown provided to the Deputy previously, I have included columns to reflect numbers carried forward from 2017, ongoing cases and requests that have been withdrawn.

### Vacancies on State Boards

314. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of vacancies on state boards under the remit of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30590/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** In respect of the Deputy’s question the following table outlines the current number of vacancies on state boards under the remit of my Department.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Board</th>
<th>Number of Vacancies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Censorship of Publications Board</td>
<td>1 Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Censorship of Publications Appeals Board</td>
<td>1 Chair, 4 Ordinary Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification of Film Appeals Board</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judicial Appointments Advisory Board</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courts Service Board</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policing Authority</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Direct Provision System
315. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to a notice (details supplied) issued to residents at a direct provision centre in Newbridge; and if he will intervene to have the notice rescinded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30606/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** My Department was made aware on 1 July that the notice referred to by the Deputy was displayed at the Accommodation Centre. The notice was written by local management in response to complaints received by residents of the Centre.

These complaints notwithstanding, the wording of the notice was not satisfactory. The notice was rescinded the following day and a new notice issued requesting that residents show consideration for other residents and refrain from the use of telephones or devices without earphones in shared bedrooms during the night. The notice also reminds residents that communal areas are available for them where phone calls and other activities can take place that will minimise disruption to others.

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**Garda Stations**

316. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the reopening of Rush Garda station which was announced in 2016; the date it is due to be opened; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30660/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will appreciate that the programme of replacement and refurbishment of Garda accommodation is progressed by the Garda authorities working in close cooperation with the Office of Public Works (OPW), which has responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation. This includes identifying and progressing any necessary remedial or refurbishment works required at individual stations. As Minister, I have no direct role in these matters.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Programme for a Partnership Government commits to a pilot scheme to reopen 6 Garda stations, both urban and rural, to determine possible positive impacts that such openings will have on criminal activity, with special emphasis on burglaries, theft and public order.

The Garda Commissioner’s final report on the matter, which is available on my Department’s website, recommended that Rush Garda Station be reopened, along with stations in Ballinspittle, Co. Cork, Bawnboy, Co. Cavan, Donard, Co. Wicklow, Leighlinbridge, Co. Carlow and Stepaside, Co. Dublin.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that a brief of requirements was provided to the OPW in relation to the reopening of each of these 6 stations, including Rush Garda Station, and that the Garda authorities requested the OPW to undertake technical surveys to determine the works which would be required to enable the stations to reopen.

I am further informed that the OPW has concluded these necessary technical surveys and reported to the Garda Commissioner. I understand An Garda Síochána and OPW remain engaged on progressing the matter.

It is not possible to say at this stage when the six stations will reopen as this depends on a number of factors, but my officials are engaging on an on-going basis with An Garda Síochána and the OPW as they progress these very important projects.
Garda Recruitment

317. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to increase cultural diversity in the membership of An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30668/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will be aware, recruitment to An Garda Síochána is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and is governed by the Garda Síochána (Admissions and Appointments) Regulations 2013, and I, as Minister, have no direct involvement in the matter.

I am assured by the Garda Commissioner that he recognises the importance of recruiting into An Garda Síochána from a wide cross section of the population so that the organisation provides a policing service that reflects the growing diversity of Irish society. To support this a concerted effort is being made to encourage women and minority communities to consider a career in An Garda Síochána. Recent recruitment campaigns have made a significant effort through online videos and other media to attract candidates from minority communities and diverse social groups. In the most recent recruitment campaign a series of videos and text were produced in multiple languages including English, Irish, French, Spanish, Italian and Arabic. They were published on the Garda Facebook page which has more than 180,000 followers.

In relation to the proportion of women members in An Garda Síochána I am informed that the total number as of the 31 May 2018, the latest date for which figures are readily available, is approximately 3,600 or close to 27% of the total strength. This compares favourably with the number on 31 December 2008 which was approximately 3,100 or 22% of the total strength. This is broadly in line with other police services in England and Wales.

The Commissioner’s Policing Plan 2018 commits to the development of a positive action plan to attract and recruit applicants from minority and diverse groups and to review barriers or disincentives to entry to An Garda Síochána and to examine ways in which applications from diverse minority communities for entry into An Garda Síochána can be increased. In that regard, An Garda Síochána are in the process of developing a strategy to further embed the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion within the organisation.

The Deputy may also be aware that the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland established by the Government is, as part of its terms of reference examining the composition, recruitment and training of personnel to ensure that the personnel in the organisation reflect the diversity of Irish society. The Commission is due to report in September 2018.

Garda Transport Provision

318. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to change the Garda office holder fleet to a range of electric and or hybrid fuelled vehicles; if funding was granted to An Garda Síochána to begin converting the fleet in 2017; if not, if it will be provided in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30669/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** There has been very significant investment in Garda resources across the State in recent years. The Government’s Capital Plan 2016 – 2021 provides €46 million for investment in the Garda fleet, to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose fleet. This is in addition to the investment of almost €30 million in the period 2013 to 2015. Indeed in the period 2013 to the end of 2017 almost €44 million has been invested in the fleet with some 2,000 vehicles coming
on stream in that period to ensure that Gardaí can be mobile, visible and responsive on the roads
and in the community to prevent and tackle crime.

As the Deputy will appreciate, decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda
vehicles across the various Garda divisions are a matter for the Garda Commissioner in the light
of his identified operational demands and the availability of resources. As Minister, I have no
direct role in that matter.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the feasibility of energy efficiencies which may
be afforded by hybrid or electric vehicles is under consideration. I am informed that An Garda
Síochána purchased two electric vehicles in 2018 to evaluate the potential and limitations of
electric vehicles in operational Garda environments. I understand that once the vehicles have
been fitted out to the standard operational specification they will be allocated to front line du-
ties. The outcome of this pilot study will inform any future decisions in relation to the Garda
fleet.

More generally, I am informed that An Garda Síochána have been involved in the Public
Sector Energy reporting programme since 2011 and have achieved a 25.7% improvement in en-
ergie efficiency up to 2017, against the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP) 33%
energy efficiency target by 2020. In relation to transport, the majority of efficiencies have been
achieved from the conversion from petrol to diesel.

Garda Resources

319. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda
custody suites in operation nationally [30704/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will appreci-
ate that it is the Garda Commissioner who is primarily responsible for managing and controlling
generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. As Minister, I have no direct
role in the matter.

I have asked the Garda Commissioner for the specific information requested and when it is
to hand I will inform the Deputy accordingly.

Criminal Prosecutions Data

320. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the
operation of the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008; the number of prosecutions and
convictions that have arisen in each of the past six years; and if he will make a statement on the
matter. [30746/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Criminal Law (Hu-
man Trafficking) Act 2008 was commenced in June 2008 and specifically prohibits traffick-
 ing for sexual and labour exploitation, including sex trafficking and forced labour.

It is the main law relating to human trafficking in Ireland; other relevant legislation includes
the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) (Amendment) Act 2013, and the Criminal Law (Sexual

The Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of my Department publishes reports annually which in-
clude details of prosecutions and convictions under the 2008 Act, and for other offences where
human trafficking has been investigated. The information in these Annual Reports is based on material provided by An Garda Síochána. Information drawn from those reports and preliminary information with regard to 2017 (which report has yet to be published) is included in the table below. All annual reports to date and further information on human trafficking is available at the Government’s Anti-Human Trafficking hub, www.blueblindfold.gov.ie.

The 2008 Act includes, at section 3, an amendment to the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998. The vast majority of prosecutions, and all of the convictions to date, listed in the table below, relate to offences under this section, which generally involves the non-commercial sexual exploitation of a child, and is not regarded as human trafficking.

 Those figures in brackets in the below table refer to prosecutions under section 4 of the 2008 Act, and relate to crimes which are regarded as human trafficking. Though there have not been any convictions to date for offences under this section, I am satisfied that this Act and the other legislation referred to, combined with the disruption caused to traffickers by Garda action, are an effective tool in the fight against trafficking.

Note that for any given year the figures below relate to prosecutions commenced in that year; in a small number of cases more than one individual is being prosecuted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prosecutions</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18 (2)</td>
<td>25 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convictions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Criminal Prosecutions Data

321. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the operation of the Sexual Offences (Jurisdiction) Act 1996; the number of prosecutions and convictions that have arisen in each of the past six years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30747/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will appreciate that prosecutions are solely a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and I have no role in this regard. However, in terms of the operation of the Sexual Offences (Jurisdiction) Act 1996, I have requested a report from the Garda authorities on this matter and I will contact the Deputy directly when the report is to hand.

Family Law Cases

322. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason the Circuit Family Court, which was due to sit in Clonmel, County Tipperary, from 3 to 6 July 2018, inclusive, had no judge available, which resulted in the cases due to heard adjourned until October 2018 with resulting damage to children and families due to the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30757/18]

**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 is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions. Furthermore, the scheduling of Circuit Court cases and the allocation of court business are matters for the Presi-
dent of the Circuit Court and the presiding judge who are, under the Constitution, independent in the exercise of their judicial functions.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has advised that there are currently a number of Circuit Court judges unavailable for sittings due to illness and therefore there was not enough judges to deal with all of the courts that had been scheduled. It should be noted that currently there are no vacancies in the Circuit Court.

The Courts Service has informed me that every effort is made to keep the number of cancelled sittings to a minimum and that family law cases are prioritised after criminal hearings. The Courts Service has further advised that the matter will be kept under ongoing review and that every effort will continue to be made to support court sittings.

**Probation and Welfare Service**

323. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the duties carried out in an office (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30770/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Office of Public Works (OPW) is currently refurbishing the former Department of Social Protection office on Eyre Street, Newbridge, Co. Kildare for the use by the Probation Service Kildare Team. It is expected that this office will become operational in the coming months.

The Probation Service is the lead agency in the assessment and management of offenders in our communities. It has a national remit with services delivered locally by staff based in 35 community based offices across the country. Its work involves managing orders of the Criminal Courts through the supervision of offenders in the community. Through its work in offender rehabilitation, it contributes to bringing about safer communities and fewer victims.

**Spent Convictions**

324. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the circumstances under which convictions become spent and will not appear in a Garda clearance. [30782/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will be aware that the primary purpose of Garda vetting for employment purposes is to support protection for children and vulnerable adults. It is carried out by the Garda National Vetting Bureau in accordance with the provisions of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012-2016 and other relevant laws. Neither I nor my Department has any role in the processing of vetting applications.

The Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016 sets out in detail the arrangements in law whereby certain past convictions may not be disclosed and may be regarded as spent. This Act made a series of amendments to the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 in respect of the arrangements for the disclosure or otherwise of past convictions in the context of the vetting process.

Generally speaking, the Act provides that in certain circumstances and in respect of certain offences a person is not obliged to disclose convictions which are over seven years old. I would emphasise that these arrangements are subject to specified limitations and these are detailed in the 2016 Act. It should be noted in particular that sexual offences or convictions in the Central
Criminal Court are not eligible to become spent convictions.

These provisions are applied by the National Vetting Bureau in the context of processing all vetting applications.

**Immigration Policy**

325. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps he will take regarding the recent agreement at the European Council regarding migration flows into Europe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30857/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** In its conclusions of 28 June the European Council, following a meeting which was attended by the Taoiseach, reconfirmed that a functioning EU policy on migration relies on a comprehensive approach to migration which combines effective controls of the EU’s external borders, increased external action as well as the internal aspects of migration.

In order to break the business model of the smugglers and prevent loss of life at sea, the Council agreed that a new approach is required to the disembarkation of those who are saved in Search and Rescue operations. In this regard, the European Council called on the Council and the Commission to explore the concept of regional disembarkation platforms, in cooperation with third countries as well as UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Furthermore, the European Council agreed to set up ‘controlled centres’ in willing Member States to allow for rapid processing to distinguish between irregular migrants and those in need of international protection.

These measures are at the very early stages of development. I and my officials will play an active role in any discussions on their development and the Council itself confirmed in its Conclusions that any centres established must operate in full compliance with international law.

The European Council also called on Member States to contribute further to the EU Trust Fund for Africa. In this regard, Ireland has pledged a further €9 million to the Fund in addition to the €6 million already pledged bringing Ireland’s total contribution to the Fund to €15 million. This is the third highest level per capita of any EU Member State.

**Garda Operations**

326. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will contact the Garda authorities and request that they have a zero tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour, drug taking and alcohol drinking in public places around O’Connell Street, Dublin 1, and surrounding streets, especially during the peak summer months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30858/18]

327. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will contact the Garda authorities and request that they have a zero tolerance approach to alcohol-related crime, especially during night-time economy around the Temple Bar area and surrounding streets, in particular during the peak summer months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30859/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 326 and 327 together.
As the Deputy will appreciate, the allocation of all Garda resources, including personnel, is solely a matter for the Garda Commissioner and his management team and I have no direct role in this regard. However, I can assure the Deputy that An Garda Síochána continue to take all forms of anti-social and drug-related behaviour very seriously. An Garda Síochána continue to monitor all new and emerging crime trends in our communities, particularly in the summer months and deploy Garda resources accordingly to address any problems that arise.

Working with communities to tackle public disorder and reduce anti-social behaviour remains a key priority for An Garda Síochána. This approach includes a strong focus on quality of life issues and collaboration with local authorities to help address the causes of anti-social behaviour. I might add that there is a range of strong legislative provisions available to An Garda Síochána to combat anti-social behaviour, including provisions under the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Acts, the Criminal Damage Act and the Intoxicating Liquor Acts. There are also the incremental provisions contained in the Criminal Justice Act 2006 which provide, in Part 11, for warnings and civil proceedings in relation to anti-social behaviour by adults and, in Part 13 of the Act, for warnings, good behaviour contracts and civil proceedings in relation to anti-social behaviour by children.

Anti-social behaviour has no place in a civilised society. For its part, the Government remains committed to ensuring that An Garda Síochána have all the necessary resources to tackle all forms of criminality in our communities. In this context, the Deputy will be aware that a very substantial budget of €1.65 billion has been allocated to the Garda Vote for 2018 and €98.5m has been provided for Garda overtime for 2018, which inter alia supports Garda activity to tackle these types of problems.

While An Garda Síochána will continue to tackle these problems head-on, they cannot eradicate the problem of anti-social behaviour alone. Specifically in relation to young offenders, it is also up to us as adults, particularly the parents and guardians of our young, to ensure that children are raised to be respectful and law-abiding. These lessons begin in the home, are further reinforced in our schools and then by wider society in general. We must all work together to ensure that such behaviour is never normalised and is tackled immediately.

Clearly, Garda visibility is very important and this Government remains committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To this end, the House will be aware that 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during 2018, some 200 of whom attested in March, with a further 200 attesting recently. The new recruits are visible proof of the Government’s commitment to an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 including 15,000 Garda members.

Garda Transport Provision

328. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if additional funding will be provided to purchase additional Garda vehicles between July 2018 and year end; if so, the number of vehicles that will be purchased; when those vehicles will be brought into the fleet; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30860/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, the Government’s Capital Plan 2016 – 2021 provides €46 million for investment in the Garda fleet, to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose fleet. This is in addition to the investment of almost €30 million in the period 2013 to 2015. In total, in the period 2013 to 2017, almost €44 million has been invested in the fleet with some
2,000 vehicles coming on stream.

As the Deputy will appreciate, decisions in relation to the allocation of Garda vehicles are a matter for the Garda Commissioner in the light of his identified operational demands and the availability of resources. As Minister, I have no direct role in the matter.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that €4.7 million has been made available in 2018 to An Garda Síochána for the purchase of new vehicles for the fleet. I am further informed that it is intended to purchase some 260 vehicles during 2018 as a whole. The allocation of these vehicles will be decided following delivery and fit-out in accordance with operational needs.

I am further informed that this budget is fully committed and there is no plan to allocate further funding this year.

### Garda Transport Data

329. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of marked and unmarked Garda cars, vans and motorcycles that were attached to north Dublin roads policing unit as of 30 June 2016, 2017 and 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30861/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** There has been very significant investment in Garda resources across the State in recent years. The Government’s Capital Plan 2016 – 2021 provides €46 million for investment in the Garda fleet, to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose fleet. This is in addition to the investment of almost €30 million in the period 2013 to 2015. Indeed in the period 2013 to the end of 2017 almost €44 million has been invested in the fleet with some 2,000 vehicles coming on stream in that period to ensure that Gardaí can be mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime.

As the Deputy will appreciate, decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda vehicles across the various Garda divisions are a matter for the Garda Commissioner in the light of his identified operational demands and the availability of resources. As Minister, I have no role in that matter.

I understand that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources. The responsibility for the efficient deployment of all official Garda vehicles in each Division is assigned to the Divisional Officer, who may allocate vehicles between stations as required by operational requirements.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the North Dublin Roads Policing Unit is part of Ballymun District in Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) North Division. The number of marked and unmarked Garda cars, vans and motorcycles that were attached to Ballymun District as of 31 December 2016, 31 December 2017 and 5 July 2018 respectively is set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cars</th>
<th>Vans</th>
<th>Motorcycles</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marked</td>
<td>Unmarked</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Marked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Immigration Data

330. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons refused permission to enter the State via Dublin Airport and Dublin Port in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30866/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that it has not been possible in the time available to provide the details requested. I have requested An Garda Síochána to compile the necessary information and I will revert to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Garda Training

331. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí who took the motorcycle course in each of the years 2014 to 2017 and to date in 2018; the duration of the course; the frequency with which this course is held; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30867/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As you will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for carrying on and managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána including by arranging for the training of the members and civilian staff of An Garda Síochána and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

I have requested the specific information sought by the Deputy from the Commissioner and I will write to him directly on receipt of same.

Garda Civilian Staff Data

332. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of civilian staff per Garda station in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30873/18]

341. Deputy Jim O’Callaghan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each Garda division as of 1 July 2018; the number of community gardaí in each division; the number of Garda Reserve in each division; the number of civilian staff in each division in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31041/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 332 and 341 together.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that
the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am informed by the Commissioner that the overall Garda strength on 31 May 2018, the latest date for which information is readily available, was 13,604. There are also 558 Garda Reserves and more than 2,300 civilians attached to An Garda Síochána. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Armed Support Units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To achieve this the Government has put in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. We are making real, tangible progress on achieving this goal.

I am informed by the Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, almost 2,000 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. Garda numbers, taking account of retirements, increased to 13,551 at the end of 2017 – a net increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

I am pleased that funding is in place to maintain this high level of investment in the Garda workforce to ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. This year a further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College. In total, 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during the year, 400 of whom have attested to date. Further, Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, are on track to reach 14,000 by the end of 2018.

In addition, a further 500 civilians will also be recruited to fill critical skills gaps across the organisation and to facilitate the redeployment of Gardaí from administrative and technical duties to front-line operational duties. There are plans to strengthen the Garda Reserve with new Reserves expected to commence training in 2018.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardai across every Division to increase Garda visibility in our communities and to support all Garda activity including Community Policing.

For the Deputy’s information, I have set out in the attached tables the number of Gardaí, Community Gardaí, Garda Reserve in each Division and Civilian Staff in each Garda Station, as of the 31 May 2018, the latest date for which figures are available.

**Civilian by Station**

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Asylum Seeker Employment
333. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of residents of direct provision centres eligible to apply for the right to work under the EU (recast) reception conditions directive, 2013/33/EU. [30897/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The EU (recast) Reception Conditions Directive 2013 (2013/33/EU) came into operation on 30 June following my signing into law of the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 giving effect to the various provisions of the Directive.

In relation to access to the labour market, it is important to note that the labour market permission is not restricted to applicants who are residing in Accommodation Centres. Thus my Department is not focused on the number of applicants in Accommodation Centres who may be eligible to access the labour market but rather on the overall numbers who are eligible.

Accordingly, it is estimated that approximately 3,000 protection applicants will be eligible to apply for the permission.

### Asylum Seeker Employment

334. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an asylum seeker who has been granted international protection self-employment permission may employ or enter into partnership with another asylum seeker; if this practice is restricted; if so, if this is compliant with the EU (recast) reception conditions directive, 2013/33/EU; and the relevant section that allows for such a restriction. [30899/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Article 15(2) of the EU (recast) Reception Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU) allows for Member States to decide the conditions for granting access to the labour market for applicants for International Protection, in accordance with national law. Under the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018, which transposes the Directive into Irish law, applicants for International Protection who have been granted a labour market access permission and who are self-employed cannot employ any person or carry on a business in partnership with another person.

As I am sure the Deputy will appreciate, every individual applicant is at different stage in the international protection determination process and the temporary permission to access the labour market expires as soon as the applicant receives a final decision on their application, i.e, after all appeals procedures have been exhausted. Restricting applicants from employing any other person or carrying on a business in partnership with another person, including another applicant, recognises the applicant’s temporary permission to access the labour market. This protects potential employees or partners from a situation where an applicant’s labour market permission expires, is otherwise withdrawn or partners who ends up with different outcomes of the protection process.

### Gambling Legislation

335. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to establish a regulator; his views on a media report (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30916/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** The Deputy will be aware that Government, on 10 January, 2018, approved the updating of the
2013 General Scheme of the Gambling Control Bill. The proposed updating follows on from the review work undertaken in the Department of Justice and Equality and consultations with interested stakeholders. Changes to the Scheme will be subject to further consultations with the Office of the Attorney General and other relevant Departments.

The key element of the Government Decision of 10 January 2018 is the establishment of a new gambling regulatory authority as an independent statutory body under the auspices of the Department of Justice and Equality.

This approach to independent regulation is, I believe, critical for the development of modern gambling legislation. It mirrors the situation in most EU Member States and would bring Ireland in line with best international practice.

An independent regulator would offer assurance that decision-making would be free from any potentially undue influence.

Effective modern licensing, regulation and enforcement of the gambling industry will require additional significant resources, primarily for the operation of the new regulatory authority. Similar authorities in other EU Member States involve significant staff numbers and IT provision.

In the context of reviewing and updating the General Scheme in all necessary aspects, a Working Group, chaired by myself, comprising all stakeholder Departments, relevant Offices and the Office of the Attorney General has been meeting since February 2018.

I expect the Group to submit its report to Government in early Autumn, with work on a revised General Scheme to follow thereafter.

I am aware of the media report referred to by the Deputy and I am confident that the measures I will bring forward will help to address the issues contained therein.

Garda Accommodation

336. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there is a budget allocation to refurbish and make habitable official Garda living accommodation. [30919/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will be aware, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. Further, the programme of replacement and refurbishment of Garda accommodation is progressed by the Garda authorities working in close co-operation with the Office of Public Works. As Minister, I have no direct role in these matters.

There has been very significant investment in Garda resources across the State in recent years. Considerable efforts are being made by the Government to enhance the working environment generally for members of An Garda Síochána and major investment has been committed under the Capital Plan 2016-2021 to upgrade Garda premises.

The Garda Station Building and Refurbishment Programme 2016-2021 is an ambitious 5 year programme, based on agreed Garda priorities, that will benefit over thirty locations around the country and includes over €60 million of Exchequer funding as part of Government’s Capital Plan 2016 – 2021 as well as a major Public Private Partnership project.

The programme is providing new stations and modernising older stations at key locations
around the country, ensuring safe, modern working environment for members and staff of An Garda Síochána as well as fit-for-purpose facilities for visitors, victims and suspects. The works carried out at each location are agreed on a case-by-case basis as between OPW and An Garda Síochána.

In addition to the Building and Refurbishment Programme, I am informed by the Garda authorities almost €650,000 is available in the Garda Vote for 2018 for minor maintenance works, including fire protection, throughout the Garda estate. I am informed that there is no specific budget allocated to refurbish official Garda living accommodation. Applications for refurbishment of properties in the Garda estate, including official accommodation, are made by Divisional Officers and are assessed with having regard to the overall accommodation requirements of An Garda Síochána and the budget available.

International Agreements

337. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when Ireland plans to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30920/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Significant progress has been made in the preparations for ratification of the European Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, also known as the ‘Lanzarote Convention’. Last year saw the enactment of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 and the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017 which formed an important step in ensuring that Irish law is fully compatible with the Convention. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 created new offences around the online sexual grooming of children and strengthened existing laws relating to child pornography. The Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime Act) 2017 has also enhanced protections for victims of these crimes.

In addition, a detailed review of Ireland’s compliance with the Convention is being conducted with a view to identifying any barriers to ratification. As part of this review, my Department has engaged with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs with respect to the prevention and protection aspects of the Convention. The views of a number of other relevant Government Departments and agencies have also been sought. Once the review is complete and it is assessed that Ireland can fully meet the requirements of the Convention, the necessary formal steps towards ratification will be taken.

Parental Leave

338. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the Parental Leave (Amendment) Bill 2017, which was referred to the Dáil Select Committee on Justice and Equality; the status of proposals to amend parental leave laws being dealt with by the interdepartmental working group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30975/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** The Programme for Partnership Government includes a commitment to increase paid parental leave during the first year of a child’s life, as research shows that parental care is of particular importance in the first year of life. To further this commitment, the Government established an interdepartmental group to consider the matter. The interdepartmental group has almost com-
completed its work on developing a policy approach to implement the Programme commitments, and is in the process of putting the final touches to its report.

Separately, the Parental Leave (Amendment) Bill 2017, which provides for the expansion of unpaid leave from 18 to 26 weeks, completed Report Stage in Dáil Éireann on 13 June.

**Gambling Legislation**

339. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the Gambling Control Bill 2018; when it will proceed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31026/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will be aware that the Gambling Control Bill 2018 is a Private Member’s Bill sponsored by Deputies Jim O’Callaghan, Jack Chambers and Anne Rabbitte. I am therefore not in a position to comment on the status of this Bill.

The Government did not oppose this Bill, which is a replication of the General Scheme of the Gambling Control Bill approved by the Government in 2013, when it was introduced to the Dáil for Second Stage on 9 May 2018.

The Government, on 10 January, 2018, had approved the updating of the 2013 General Scheme. The proposed updating follows on from the review work undertaken in the Department of Justice and Equality and consultations with interested stakeholders. Changes to the Scheme will be subject to further consultations with the Office of the Attorney General and other relevant Departments.

The key element of the Government Decision of 10 January 2018 is the establishment of a new gambling regulatory authority as an independent statutory body under the auspices of the Department of Justice and Equality.

In the context of reviewing and updating the General Scheme in all necessary aspects, a Working Group, chaired by myself, comprising all stakeholder Departments, relevant Offices and the Office of the Attorney General has been meeting since February 2018. The work undertaken by the Group will assist in identifying new or emerging legislative and policy issues not currently represented in the original General Scheme and which may need to be addressed in new legislation.

I expect the Group to submit its report to Government in early Autumn, with work on a revised General Scheme to follow thereafter.

**Legal Services Regulation**

340. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 404 of 13 July 2017, if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the position of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority in regard to the recoupment of public moneys extended to it to date is that these funds are non-recoupable (details supplied); if the position in regard to whether these moneys will be recouped by the State will be clarified; and if so, when. [31036/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The matters raised by the Deputy are among those that are being dealt with by officials of my Department in conjunction
with their counterparts at the Legal Services Regulatory Authority in supporting the continuing roll-out of the Authority’s functions under the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015. They are also matters on which I can assure the Deputy both my Department and the Authority are in ongoing discussion with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

As had been reflected in my Written Reply to Question No. 404 of 13 July 2017, the Authority has been supported in this endeavour by an advance of €1 million during each of the years 2016 and 2017 from my Department’s Vote and a similar allocation of €1 million has been made for the current year. These advances are being made, as provided under section 32 of the 2015 Act, with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for the purposes of expenditure by the Authority in the performance of its functions. As also reflected in that Written Reply and since set out in more detail in the Authority’s published Annual Report for 2017, the Authority spent its first year completing a series of statutory and time-bound reports and public consultations while also establishing a start-up office and recruiting its first full-time Chief Executive who was appointed in November 2017.

As part of the roll-out of the 2015 Act, a number of legal and technical issues have arisen in relation to the practical application of the funding framework that the Act provides. These provisions were intended, from a policy perspective, to provide the means whereby the Authority, having been funded for an initial and short start-up period on a recoupable basis, could then become self-funding in the longer term. This would be achieved by means of a levy based on actual expenditure by the Authority in the immediately preceding financial year and raised from those legal practitioners being regulated in the terms currently set out in Part 7 of the 2015 Act. The fact that the effective roll-out of the Authority’s remaining functions will require substantially more time than initially considered and that the levy also needs time to generate actual income have revealed a potential gap in the original model of recoupability that now needs to be reconsidered and resolved. This is made more complex because the levy is also intrinsically linked, in its application, to a number of other measures including the current work of the Authority in setting-up the Roll of Practising Barristers in support of which I recently commenced the necessary provisions of Part 9 of the 2015 Act.

My Department has, therefore, acknowledged the Authority’s position, which it has reflected in its risk register, that the levy provisions as drafted in the 2015 Act may not, in their practical implementation and in the transpiring circumstances of the start-up, provide an adequate source of funding to the Authority and may not similarly provide for the recoupability of advances as may originally have been foreseen. My Department has also been informed by the Authority that it has engaged a financial consultant to examine the current levy provisions and to provide an expert economic/financial opinion on them. This is expected to be provided soon and will be given early and detailed consideration by my Department and the Authority in conjunction with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform who are, as I have said, aware of the issues concerned. Both my Department and the Authority are committed, on that basis, to the prompt and robust analysis and examination of the funding provisions within the 2015 Act to ensure that there is a sustainable levy-based framework under which the Authority is sufficiently funded going forward to fulfil its broad remit as a new regulatory body. We also wish to ensure that there is no setback to the progress it has made to date and to the important programme of reform it has undertaken under its Strategic Plan for 2018-2020. Along with the relevant officials of my Department I will, therefore, be giving detailed consideration to any necessary measures proposed including legislative amendments or refinements, if any, that may be considered appropriate.

*Question No. 341 answered with Question No. 332.*
Questions - Written Answers

Statelessness Determination Process

342. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of individual applications for recognition of statelessness that have been received. [31046/18]

343. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of individual applications for recognition of statelessness that were granted in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018. [31047/18]

344. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the average time to make a determination on an application for the recognition of statelessness. [31048/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 342 to 344, inclusive, together.

Statelessness results from the complex interaction of many legal and other factors. There is no specific determination process for recognition of stateless persons in Ireland; claims of statelessness can arise at any point in the immigration and protection processes and the numbers involved are very low. These cases are frequently disposed of without recourse to a determination of statelessness through procedures (e.g. permission to remain) set out under the Immigration Acts or International Protection Acts. Such cases are not centralised in a single process or section of the immigration service and, as such, statistics on stateless persons are not available in the way sought by the Deputy.

Naturalisation Applications

345. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application for permission to reside here made by persons (details supplied) on 16 June 2016; when a determination will be made on the application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31049/18]

**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 first and fifth named persons referred to by the Deputy, is ongoing. On completion of the necessary processing the applications will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

There is no record of a current application for a certificate of naturalisation from the other named persons referred to by the Deputy. A determination on whether an applicant satisfies the statutory criteria attendant to naturalisation can only be made after an application is received.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for a certificate of naturalisation if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, which governs the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation.

Detailed information on Irish citizenship and naturalisation, as well as the relevant application forms, is available on the INIS website at www.inis.gov.ie. The website also contains guidance on the completion of an application for naturalisation and an on-line naturalisation residency calculator which individuals may find of assistance in establishing if the statutory residency requirements are met.

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.

Departmental Staff Recruitment

346. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of public sector jobs offered as internal competitions or restricted to existing civil service or public service staff in his Department in 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31552/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Appointments to positions in the civil service are made from open, interdepartmental and internal competitions. Policy on the use of panels available to fill positions is set centrally by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Further to the query raised by the Deputy, competitions for interdepartmental and internal panels are restricted to existing civil servants and the table below outlines appointments made from these panels in my Department and offices under its aegis in 2017 and to date in 2018.

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Appointments to the rank of Sergeant and Inspector are a matter for the Commissioner under section 14 of Garda Síochána Act 2005. Promotions to the rank of Sergeant or Inspector within An Garda Síochána are subject to the conditions set out in the Garda Síochána (Promotion) Regulations 2006. Promotion competitions for these ranks are restricted to eligible serving Garda Members and are not subject to open competition. I am advised by the Commissioner that there is currently a competition in train for promotion to the ranks of Sergeant and Inspector with the aim of bringing the strength to 300 and 2,000 respectively as agreed under the Employment Control Framework.

The following table sets out the strength of the Inspector/Sergeant ranks in An Garda Síochána as of 31 May 2018.

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Enterprise Support Schemes

347. Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if increased specific grants will be offered to home-grown business start-ups to contribute to an innovative, research led economy and reduce over-reliance on foreign direct investment. [30983/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Any one of the 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), located in the Local Authorities nationwide is your ‘first-stop-shop’ for advice and guidance, financial assistance and other supports if you intend to start or grow your own business.

In the first instance, the LEOs provide a ‘signposting’ service in relation to all relevant State supports available through agencies such as Revenue, the Department of Social Protection, Education and Training Boards, Credit Review Office, and Microfinance Ireland. The LEOs can also offer advice and guidance in areas such as Local Authority rates, Public Procurement and other regulations affecting business.

The LEOs can offer direct grant aid to microenterprises (10 employees or fewer) in the manufacturing and internationally traded services sectors which, over time, have the potential to develop into strong export entities. Subject to certain eligibility criteria, the LEOs can provide financial assistance within three main categories: Feasibility Grants (investigating the potential of a business idea); Priming Grants (to part-fund a start-up); and Business Development Grants for existing businesses that want to expand. (It should be noted that the LEOs do not provide direct grant-aid to areas such as retail, personal services, local professional services, construction/local building services, as it may give rise to the displacement of existing businesses). In addition, there is a Technical Assistance Grant available for eligible micro-exporter applicants who are seeking to explore alternative markets for their product or service.

For anyone interested in starting or growing a business, the LEOs may be able to offer ‘soft’ support in the form of training (e.g. a Start Your Own Business course); a mentor to work with the business proposer; or targeted programmes such as Lean for Micro (to help boost business productivity and competitiveness).

Micro-enterprises may also avail of the Trading Online Voucher Scheme (TOVS) from the LEOs. The Scheme offers the opportunity for businesses to develop their website or digital marketing strategy by availing of vouchers of up to €2,500 or 50% of eligible expenditure.

Anyone with a viable business proposal can also use the LEO to make an application to MicroFinance Ireland, which offers support in the form of loans of up to €25,000 to start-ups with viable business propositions that do not meet the conventional risk criteria applied by the banks. Successful applicants can avail of a more favourable interest rate from MFI if they make their application through the LEO.

The LEO Capital budget was increased by four million in 2017 and was retained this year, bringing the total Capital funding to €22.5m.

Enterprise Ireland supports companies in regional and rural areas to start, innovate and remain competitive in international markets, now and into the future. Enterprise Ireland provide a range of financial and non-financial supports for home-grown business start-ups to scale and succeed in international markets, these supports are tailored to a company’s stage of growth and
Enterprise Ireland’s focus for 2018 is to help clients, including homegrown business start-ups to build on the strength of their 2017 performance by supporting them to innovate, be competitive and to diversify their global footprint - key attributes required to be resilient to economic shocks:

- launched a new Market Discovery Fund to incentivise companies to research viable and sustainable market entry strategies in new geographic markets; and
- launched a new fast-track Agile Innovation Fund which gives companies rapid access to innovation funding to enhance processes and adapt products for new markets.

- Providing supports such as The Be Prepared Grant and the Act On consultancy grant to assist companies, such as homegrown business start-ups.

Enterprise Ireland will continue to work with homegrown business start-ups to assist them scale and succeed in international markets.

I should also draw your attention to the ‘Supporting SMEs’ Online Tool, which is a cross-governmental initiative to help start-ups navigate the range of Government business supports for which they could be eligible. The tool is available at www.supportingsmes.ie By answering the eight questions in the Online Tool, a small business will, in one location, be able to:

- find out which of the over 170 Government business supports from 27 different Government Departments, Agencies and Initiatives are available to them;
- obtain information on the range of Government supports for accessing credit;
- identify their nearest Local Enterprise Office where they can discuss the outcomes of the guide further;
- download all these filtered results into a document for their further use.

**Legislative Measures**

348. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her Department has identified laws which are dependent on or in place as a consequence of Article 41.2 of the Constitution; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30093/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** There is no legislation under the remit of my Department that is dependent on, or in place as a consequence of, Article 41.2 of the Constitution.

**Ministerial Travel**

349. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the cost of travel expenses for her and those who travel with her since her appointment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30504/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Details of my expenses since my appointment are available on my Department’s website, www.dbei.gov.ie. Officials who accompany me are paid the normal travel and subsistence rates as
provided for under the terms of Circulars 05/2017, 06/2017 and 07/2017.

Project Ireland 2040

350. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of times she has met her officials regarding Project Ireland 2040 since its launch; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30545/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** On the 29 June I, along with Ministers Halligan and Breen, launched Project 2040: Investing in Business, Enterprise and Innovation 2018-2027. This report outlines the role of my Department in delivering Project Ireland 2040.

One of the ten strategic outcomes of Project Ireland 2040 is the development of a strong economy, supported by enterprise, innovation and skills. A large part of the work of my Department is relevant to the achievement of this goal including, for example, supporting small and medium enterprises; facilitating entrepreneurship; investing in research, development and innovation; attracting foreign direct investment and investing in regional growth potential.

I meet with officials of my Department on all of these issues on an ongoing basis.

Freedom of Information Requests

351. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of FOI requests her Department has received since January 2018; the number of refusals; the number that have been appealed and that are ongoing; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30562/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Details of FOI request received by my Department and its Offices to date in 2018 are set out in the following table. The table also provides details of FOI requests that were refused and where the final decision was the subject of appeal. Finally, details of requests currently on hand are set out in the table.

FOI Requests Received by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and its Offices to date in 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of FOI requests received since 1st January 2018</th>
<th>Number of FOI requests refused</th>
<th>Number of FOI decisions appealed</th>
<th>Number of FOI requests currently being processed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vacancies on State Boards

352. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of vacancies on State boards under the remit of her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30579/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The following table details the number of vacancies currently on each of the State Boards under the aegis of my Department.
Agency | Number of Vacancies
---|---
Enterprise Ireland | 1*
Health and Safety Authority | 0
IAASA | 0
IDA | 3**
NSAI | 0
PIAB | 3***
SFI | 0
WRC | 0

* 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.

**The Public Appointment Service (PAS) recently completed a selection campaign on behalf of the IDA, two candidates have been selected and appointments are imminent.

*** With regard to the PIAB, two candidates were recently selected following a campaign administered by the Public Appointment Service (PAS). Both candidates will take their place on the Board with effect from 1 August 2018. The third vacancy is designated under the PIAB legislation to Insurance Ireland to nominate a member to the Board. PIAB are awaiting their nominee.

Details of all appointments and vacancies on the State Boards under the aegis of my Department are available on the State Boards website at [www.stateboards.ie](http://www.stateboards.ie)

Skills Shortages

353. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the steps she is taking to identify areas in which there are particular labour shortages; the measures she is taking to address these shortages; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30689/18]

354. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to identify the reason for labour shortages in particular sectors; if she has examined measures to address these shortages; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30690/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 353 and 354 together.

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, the Secretariat to which is based in my Department, is an independent, non-statutory body. The Group has a broad sectorial membership including representatives from the business community, education and training providers, trade unions, and a small number of Government Departments and agencies.

The Group’s mandate is to carry out research, analysis and horizon scanning in relation to emerging skills requirements at thematic and sectorial levels. This analysis can include the identification of any reasons for shortages or barriers to participation in particular sectors. Its follow up work involves engagement with the Department of Education and Skills, Higher Education Authority, SOLAS and other relevant bodies to produce an agreed action plan to address
the skills needs identified.

Recently completed and ongoing work being undertaken by the EGFSN includes analyses of skills needs or skills implications relevant to the food and drink sector, design, high level ICT, trade related skill sets in the context of Brexit and digitalisation.

As part of the new national skills architecture, the EGFSN presents its findings to the National Skills Council, chaired by the Minister for Education and Skills, which, together with additional skills and labour market intelligence provided by the Regional Skills Fora, Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) in SOLAS, and information on employment permit trends, provides a mechanism for mediating demands on resources in a manner that facilitates the prioritisation of investment in identified skills needs, and enhancing the responses by education and training providers to provision and delivery of those needs.

The research of the EGFSN and the SLMRU also informs my Department’s Economic Migration Policy Unit. This Unit has the responsibility for the employment permits system which is managed by the operation of the Highly Skilled Eligible Occupations List and the Ineligible Categories List. The employment permits regime is designed to facilitate the entry of appropriately skilled non-EEA migrants to fill skills shortages. The objective is balanced by the need to ensure that there are no suitably qualified Irish/EEA nationals available to undertake the work and the shortage is a genuine one. The rationale underpinning the inclusion or omission from the occupation lists is informed by EGFSN, the SLMRU and is augmented by a consultation process that includes calls for submissions. This process is regularly reviewed to ensure that it is operating efficiently.

The analysis of the Expert Group on Future Skills has been reflected in the overarching strategies for the education and training system published in recent years. These include Ireland’s National Skills Strategy 2025, and the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019, including its associated annual implementation plans, both of which have been developed by the Department of Education and Skills.

This analysis has also informed the development of my own Department’s framework policy for enterprise policy, Enterprise 2025- Ireland’s National Enterprise Policy 2015-2025, its recent refresh, Enterprise 2025 Renewed, and the instrument for the annual implementation of the objectives set out in Enterprise 2025, the Action Plan for Jobs, which seeks to create the optimum conditions for job creation within the economy, including through ready availability of relevant skills and talent.

**Labour Court Recommendations**

355. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on whether it is acceptable that a publicly funded body refuses to implement the recommendation of the Labour Court in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30762/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen):** At the outset, I must emphasise that Ireland’s system of industrial relations is, essentially, voluntary in nature and responsibility for the resolution of industrial disputes between employers and workers, rests 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 and the Labour Court, to support parties in their efforts to resolve their differences. These bodies are independent in the delivery of their quasi-judicial
functions, in which I as Minister have no role. This approach has served Ireland well over the years and in a large number of high profile disputes.

I understand that the case in question relates to a redundancy payment situation that was heard by the Labour Court on 23 March 2018 and that the Court recommended a payment in excess of the statutory redundancy payment amount.

The Labour Court engages with parties in industrial relations disputes in which resolution of issues at local level has not proved possible. In such instances, the dispute can be referred to the Court for an opinion in the form of a recommendation of the Court.

However, in line with the voluntary nature of industrial relations in Ireland, it is the case that recommendations of the Labour Court are not binding on the parties although of course it is expected that Labour Court recommendation are given serious consideration by the parties involved.

**Company Closures**

356. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the actions she is taking in view of the announcement by a company (details supplied) to close its assembly facility in Kanturk, County Cork, in September 2018; if she will request the IDA to prioritise this area for investment and job creation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30783/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The announcement by Fullwood Packo that it is to close its assembly facility in Kanturk is very disappointing, both for the firm’s hard-working employees and for local area. The Government’s immediate concern is for those workers and their families that are directly affected by this announcement. Every relevant State support will, of course, be made available to these employees.

The IDA will also be working with the company to complete a skills audit on the current employee base which will be shared with local enterprise in the region. The Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection is aware of the situation as well and we will be collectively, across Government, doing our utmost to help these workers transition and find new employment opportunities.

While this news in respect of Fullwood Packo is deeply regrettable, it is important to emphasise that the overall trend in terms of job creation in Ireland is very positive. 2017, for example, was another record year for the State in terms of FDI-driven employment and investment, and strong employment growth is expected to continue in 2018.

The Government is committed to supporting job creation in the regions and my Department and its agencies are working towards ambitious targets to ensure that employment and investment are distributed as evenly as possible across the country. The employment situation on the South West, which covers Cork and Kerry, has been steadily improving in recent years. IDA Ireland client companies in Cork alone now employ over 35,000, representing an increase of 48% since 2010.

**Trade Strategy**

357. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innov-
tion the degree to which potential challenges or threats to the development and expansion of trade and marketing for Irish goods have been identified; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30995/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Ireland is an open, highly developed and well-connected economy that is dependent on international trade and investment for sustainable growth. With a small domestic market, further expansion in other markets is essential to our continued economic growth.

I am well aware of the shifting and evolving global challenges which may affect us in the future. No open economy like ours can be fully shielded against global impacts. Brexit has profound implications for our companies that depend heavily on trade, and intricate, interwoven, supply chains with Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. Research commissioned by my Department estimates significant exposure to Brexit in our Agri Food, Pharmaceutical, Electrical Machinery, Wholesale and Retail and Air Transport Sectors.

There are, of course, other challenges too, such as the imposition by the US of tariffs on imports of steel and aluminium to the US, including from the EU.

In the context of these challenges, I believe that we have the right policies to build resilience where possible and firmly strengthen our competitiveness and innovative capacity, thus ensuring the economy is properly positioned to meet any external challenges. “Enterprise 2025 Renewed” and “Building Stronger Business; Responding to Brexit by Competing Innovating and Trading” are part of that policy mix.

Last month the Government formally launched the “Global Ireland – Ireland’s Global Footprint to 2025” initiative which will double the scope and impact of Ireland’s global footprint in the period to 2025. Global Ireland 2025 will support Ireland’s efforts to grow and diversify export markets, inward investment and tourism. It will ensure that Ireland is better positioned to build the alliances necessary to advance its interests and defend its positions in a post-Brexit EU, while also helping to secure our deep and positive relationship with the UK and its constituent parts into the future. Global Footprint 2025 envisages further increases in our enterprise agency global footprint and Embassy network.

The Government’s Trade Strategy, ‘Ireland Connected: Trading and Investing in a Dynamic World’, supports an extensive programme of Ministerial-led trade missions, as part of a major drive towards market diversification. This includes markets that are growing and have scale as well as markets where we are already well established but with potential for further growth.

The Government’s Enterprise 2025 Renewed strategy published in March 2018 sets out targets for export growth and diversification within the indigenous exporting base, with ambitions to increase exports as a percentage of total sales of Irish owned companies from 52 percent to between 55 and 60 percent by 2020 and increase Enterprise Ireland client exports beyond UK markets from €14.1 billion to €17.4 billion by 2020. The strategy also targets a 50 percent increase in the number of FDI investments from non-US markets by 2020.

In 2017, Enterprise Ireland launched its Eurozone Strategy as a key element of its supports to help companies diversify their export markets. In particular, it aims to increase exports to the Eurozone by €2bn per annum by 2020, equivalent to 50 percent increase. This would represent one of the most significant shifts in Enterprise Ireland supported client exports into the Eurozone and is particularly important in the context of Brexit.

As well as the global efforts supported by our Enterprise Agencies, key to our success has been our commitment to trade liberalisation in order to open new markets for our indigenous
sectors. The EU suite of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with third countries help to open new markets, break down barriers and provide new opportunities for Irish based firms. Brexit has reinforced the importance of accelerating the delivery of EU trade deals with leading economies and regional blocs. We continue to support the EU’s ambitious programme of negotiating new Free Trade Agreements giving Irish based firms expanded market access and a predictable trading environment in third countries, including SMEs. To this end, my Department has commissioned a major examination of the economic opportunities and impacts for Ireland arising from EU Free Trade Agreements which will be available later this year. The objective is to deepen our understanding of how Ireland can best take advantage of these opportunities, and ensure that our businesses are prepared to access new markets.

Trade Promotion

358. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she is satisfied that Irish products on world markets remain sufficiently attractive in view of the various international challenges; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30996/18]

360. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the steps she will take to enhance efforts in the course of the promotion and sale of Irish goods overseas; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30998/18]

361. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which business and enterprise here continue to avail of modern technology and innovation to facilitate the promotion of Irish products on world markets; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30999/18]

362. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the degree to which she continues to promote, generate and support Irish business at home and abroad in view of challenges on the horizon; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31000/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 358 and 360 to 362, inclusive, together.

Competitiveness is key to success in international markets, to job growth and as a means of achieving sustainable improvements in living standards. Improving competitiveness performance is a core focus for Government, and as part of this work my Department, its agencies and the National Competitiveness Council are continually engaged with relevant stakeholders on the particular policy needs required to strengthen our international competitiveness.

In its 2017 Competitiveness Challenge Report, the Council has identified a range of threats to Ireland’s competitiveness, including the potential impact of Brexit, the concentration of our export markets and the range of products and services exported.

At firm level, Enterprise Ireland (EI) actively supports firms to develop new products and services for new and existing markets. EI’s Strategy 2017-20 “Build Scale-Expand Reach” looks to increase the reach of its client company exports, with two-thirds of exports going beyond the UK. To broaden the export footprint across the globe, the EI Strategy focuses on training and supports to enhance management capability, leadership and productivity, marketing/sales skills, innovation and R&D, access to funding to help companies to build market share and create new market opportunities.
Sustaining and growing jobs and diversifying the export base is a challenge when aligned with the key objective of reducing the overall dependence on the UK market as a percentage of overall exports. Therefore, my Department has allocated additional funding in both 2017 and 2018 to enable EI achieve its objectives.

Extra staff has been placed in EI’s overseas offices with sectorial knowledge and expertise such as in engineering, food, life sciences and construction. This will drive export growth to international markets where there are known opportunities and reduce reliance on the UK.

There is now a major focus on directing resources and expertise to the Eurozone markets where EI sees opportunities, targeting a 50% increase in exports by 2020. A new ‘Irish Advantage’ communications campaign is targeting Eurozone buyers to buy Irish innovation in key Brexit impacted sectors.

There are also significant opportunities in various other international markets for quality Irish goods and services. The future relative importance and forecasted growth rates of China, India, the South-East Asian countries, the Gulf States, Latin America and Africa combined with the scale of these markets means we will support Irish companies to continue to work to build exports in these markets. In January of this year, EI launched its new Market Discovery Fund to help more Irish companies accelerate their market diversification efforts.

EI is undertaking 200 international and domestic trade events in 2018 to accelerate the number of EI clients diversifying into new markets, beyond the UK and into the Eurozone and global markets. The number of trade events being undertaken represents a 50% increase on 2017, reflecting the serious challenge that Brexit poses for Irish businesses.

A more diverse export base can reduce exposure to external demand shocks, exchange rate fluctuations and instability in export earnings and enhance growth and jobs. I will continue to work with my Department and EI to ensure Irish-based exporters, particularly in exposed sectors such as traditional manufacturing and agrifood, will continue to be supported to scale and diversify sustainably and strategically.

Innovation remains at the forefront of any business to ensure that they grow and expand to ensure they are at a level to compete on the EU and global markets effectively. Innovation involves helping companies improve competitiveness by developing new processes, products or services or by modernising and adapting current processes, products or services to bring them to a standard that will allow the company to enter new and existing markets internationally. Innovation is an essential component in a company’s ability to maintain a competitive edge in overseas markets. EI has a suite of supports available to assist client companies innovate and develop their enterprise. These supports help new and existing companies to develop new and improved products and services which serve as the basis for sustainable export growth.

Enterprise Ireland

359. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the degree to which business expansion can rely on innovation as a means of improving efficiency and competitiveness in the global marketplace; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30997/18]

367. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the degree to which innovation remains an integral part of Ireland’s campaign to maximise its industrial impact in terms of effective trading, efficiency and modernisation with particular reference to competing on EU and world markets; and if she will make a statement on the mat-
Enterprise Ireland drives innovation in Irish industry by developing in-company capabilities and by leveraging all external assets, such as the higher education system, the investor community, the Foreign Direct Investment Multinational base and international funding/expertise to support company innovations.

Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) are essential components in a company’s ability to maintain a competitive edge in global markets. Supporting research and innovation will therefore continue to remain an integral part of Ireland’s campaign to maximise impact in EU and global markets. Enterprise Ireland’s support for research, development and innovation involves helping companies improve their competitiveness through the development of new processes, products or services or by modernising and adapting current processes, products or services to bring them to a standard that will allow the company to enter new and existing markets internationally.

Enterprise Ireland’s core objective is to help companies start, grow, innovate and win export sales in global markets and there are financial and non-financial supports available at every stage of that journey to the point where companies are in a position to export to new markets. Enterprise Ireland supported clients have grown and achieved total exports of over €21bn per annum and achieved the benefits of same such as increased profits and company growth. Enterprise Ireland’s strategic aim is to increase this figure to €26bn per annum by 2020.

In terms of innovation, more specifically, Enterprise Ireland supports and de-risks RDI by supporting companies to do RDI in-house, by supporting collaboration with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs); or by sourcing/licensing new technologies from HEIs which can provide a step change in their innovative capabilities. At the same time Enterprise Ireland has supports in place to help companies maximise the funding they can receive from the European Union through programmes such as Horizon 2020. These supports all help new and existing companies to develop new and improved products and services which serve as the basis for sustainable economic growth.

Brexit is forcing Irish companies employ RDI in a bid to protect their current exports in the UK and to explore different markets and innovation will continue to play a central role in this regard. Enterprise Ireland’s annual business results survey shows that companies that invest in innovation are higher performing in terms of employment, export sales and are more sustainable through recessionary and other economic shocks such as Brexit. It is essential that Irish companies produce products and services that are more novel than their competitors, better performing, more efficiently delivered, and cost effective for their customers.

There are a wide range of Enterprise Ireland RD&I Programmes available to companies and they all contribute hugely to company development, growth and expansion, some of which are outlined below:

In Company RD&I

In Company RD&I supports the development of new or substantially improved products, services or processes which will have a competitive advantage in their target market. The Agile Innovation Fund launched in Quarter 4 2017 now facilitates fast track approval of such awards.

Commercialisation Fund
The Commercialisation Fund is aimed at improving the competitiveness of Irish industry through both the creation of technology-based companies and through the development of licenses. It is available for projects that address a gap or need in the market by developing innovations that will ideally be ready for licensing to Irish industry or may form the basis of a new start within 5 years.

Innovation Vouchers

The Innovation Voucher initiative provides vouchers worth €5,000 to small businesses to introduce them to research, development and innovation, linking them with a network of knowledge providers, North and South of the border.

Innovation Partnerships

The Innovation Partnership programme helps industry to engage in collaborative research projects with Irish universities and Institutes of Technology to develop new products and services.

Technology Gateways

The Technology Gateway Programme provides Business Development resources to the Institutes of Technology to help them interact with industry on a local, regional and national basis.

Technology Centres

Technology Centres are organised to respond rapidly to industry defined needs and conduct market relevant R&D in partnership with collaborating groups of companies.

Campus Incubators

Enterprise Ireland funding has supported the development of a national network of business innovation centres and specialist bio-incubation facilities. Incubators now exist on every university and Institute of Technology Campus in the country. Such facilities are internationally recognised as an important element of public assistance for technology intensive start-ups. They are also an important driver of regional development with the majority of companies remaining in their region after they have completed their incubation period.

EU Funding

Enterprise Ireland continues to lead the Horizon 2020 National Support Network in order to secure as much Irish engagement with this funding programme as possible. This assistance available from the European Union for new enterprises, is the instrument which supports collaborative R&D in Europe and provides an important source of non-exchequer funding for companies. Irish companies that compete successfully for funding from Horizon 2020 will boost their innovative capability and competitiveness which in turn will deliver strong national economic impacts, including job creation, exports and sales.

The Horizon 2020 SME Instrument is available and is specifically for single or groups of highly innovative SMEs with international ambitions, determined to turn strong, innovative business ideas into winners on the market. The instrument provides full cycle business innovation support from the stage of business idea conception and planning over business plan execution and demonstration to commercialisation.

The research and innovation supports provided by Enterprise Ireland and other agencies of my Department will be complemented by the Government’s new €500 million Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund. This new Fund is specifically targeted at game-changing in-
novations that will have a significant impact on the ability of companies in Ireland to compete in global markets. Expressions of Interest are now invited from consortia wishing to apply for funding under this new Fund. The type of projects that will receive funding will be:

- Collaborative enterprise-driven partnerships that will develop, deploy and commercialise disruptive technologies to transform business;

- Impactful projects focused on “industrial research” and seeking at least €1 million in funding over 3 years and involving enterprises and research partners;

- Projects with at least one SME partner – this is an essential requirement in every consortium.

*Questions Nos. 360 to 362, inclusive, answered with Question No. 358.*

**Enterprise Support Schemes**

363. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the degree to which enterprise led by women continues to be supported and promoted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31002/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Female founders have traditionally been under-represented in start-ups, and that is why my Department and its agencies have a range of initiatives aimed at supporting women to start and scale businesses that provide quality jobs throughout the country.

Enterprise Ireland (EI) is committed to supporting cohorts of ambitious, capable founders, and placing them on faster growth trajectories. Research undertaken by EI in 2012 found that there were a number of key inhibitors to female entrepreneurship rates and developed an integrated strategy to address these issues and increase the number of female-founded start-ups in Ireland.

One of the key ways in which EI supports female entrepreneurship is through its dedicated Competitive Start Funds. The first Competitive Start Fund for Female Entrepreneurs was launched in 2012. Since then there have been 8 dedicated female competitive start funds.

The purpose of these targeted Funds is to accelerate the growth of female founded start-up companies that have the potential to employ more than 10 people and achieve €1 million in export sales within three years. This is achieved by putting a €50,000 equity investment in the company. The Funds are designed to enable companies to reach key commercial and technical milestones, which will ensure the delivery of their product or service to an international audience.

The most recent Competitive Start Fund for female entrepreneurs, which I launched earlier this year, made a total of €1m funding available for up to 20 female-led companies. EI received over 100 funding applications for this Fund and the final selection for funding is currently taking place.

In 2017, 46 per cent of all companies who received CSF investment from Enterprise Ireland were female founded.

Another key Enterprise Ireland initiative is the Going for Growth programme. Currently in its 10th cycle, the initiative supports female entrepreneurs who have been trading for at least
two years and are strongly focussed on growth. For zero fee, participants are offered a unique learning environment with a peer-led approach based on the shared experiences of both the Lead Entrepreneur and the other participants facing similar challenges. Feedback shows that participants’ businesses experienced a growth in sales over the 9th cycle of over €20million and employment rose by 17.5%.

Every year EI holds a Fuelling Ambition Roadshow, which aims to encourage, support and drive the ambition of female entrepreneurs (existing and new) nationally by showcasing thriving Irish female entrepreneurs. A total of 7 roadshow events were held in 2018, attended by c600 female entrepreneurs, across the country during March, April and May in Waterford, Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Killarney, Monaghan and Roscommon.

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are also actively engaged in encouraging and inspiring an increase in female-led businesses through initiatives such as the annual National Women’s Enterprise Day and the Women in Business Networks. Last year we saw the National Women’s Enterprise Day rolled out on a regional basis.

Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) Programme, run by the LEOS, has also been strongly supportive of female entrepreneurs. Since it began in 2014 over 1430 applicants (over 37% of total applicants) have been female.

We are making progress. The number of female founded start-ups supported by EI has increased from 12 in 2011 to 67 in 2017. This includes a significant increase in the proportion of female founded High Potential Start-ups supported by EI which accounted for 28% of EI HP-SUs in 2017 compared to 7% in 2011. In addition, 61% of participants attending LEO training programmes in 2017 were female while 46% of the LEO mentoring participants were female.

I feel confident that with continued support we will continue to see increases in female led businesses in Ireland.

**Enterprise Support Schemes**

364. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which the appropriate authorities at EU level continue to offer support by way of innovation, technology or other expertise in anticipation of Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31003/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan):** Horizon 2020 is the current EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. This is the EU programme which supports research and innovation throughout the 28 EU Member States. Funding is secured for the final work programme for Horizon 2020 which will run until the end of 2020. Brexit is therefore not expected to have a significant impact upon the activity or the funding for Horizon 2020.

In terms of European research and innovation activities, the UK is one of a number of important collaborators for Ireland under Horizon 2020. In addition to the UK, Ireland has a diversified range of collaborative links with Member States, particularly Germany, Spain and France. An analysis of Ireland’s collaborations under Horizon 2020 indicates that collaborations occur in multi partner projects and that Ireland is not overly dependent on the UK for scientific collaboration in successful EU programmes.

The European Commission has recently published its proposals for the next Framework Programme, named Horizon Europe. The new proposal contains an increase in overall funding
for the support of research and innovation in the remaining 27 member states, and is currently under discussion between the Commission and the Member States.

The UK has indicated that it would like the option to fully associate with the EU’s research and innovation programmes.

**IDA Ireland**

365. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the degree to which IDA Ireland’s development programme continues to develop to maximise advantages for job creation and economic competitiveness on international markets; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31004/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Competition for global foreign direct investment (FDI) has become increasingly intense. Nevertheless, multinational companies continue to invest and re-invest here with leading global firms from many sectors - including life sciences, ICT, engineering and digital media - all based in Ireland. The contribution that these investments make to our wider economy is undoubtedly significant and the Government is working hard to ensure that the country remains a destination of choice for overseas firms.

Ireland’s strengths when it comes to attracting FDI are well-documented. These include our competitiveness, talented and productive workforce, favourable demographics and membership of the European Union. Our pro-enterprise business environment, and track record as a home to FDI, are also key factors. Reinforcing and sustaining these strengths is important to ensuring Ireland’s continuing FDI competitiveness.

The IDA’s 2017 Annual Results provides evidence of our continuing capacity to attract FDI to Ireland. Total employment by overseas companies in Ireland has now surpassed 210,000 people - a record level - with the numbers of investments also increasing. We are also attracting more investment to the regions.

**Knowledge Development Box**

366. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which the knowledge development box continues to be an asset in securing investment in jobs here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31005/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Knowledge Development Box (KDB), introduced in Budget 2016, forms part of Ireland’s competitive offering to continue to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and to support Irish owned companies to innovate and to compete effectively on international markets. The KDB provides an effective 6.25% rate of corporation tax which is internationally competitive. The KDB complements the existing suite of initiatives available to companies that undertake R&D activities in Ireland across the life cycle of research and development – providing a competitive proposition for continued business investment.

The continuing imperative to establish Ireland as the best place in which to succeed in business is reinforced in our national Enterprise and Innovation strategies - strategies based on export-led growth, underpinned by innovation and talent - strategies that aim to embed resilience, to deliver sustainable employment opportunities and a higher standard of living for all.
As a key part of Ireland’s competitive offering as a location of choice from which to do business, the KDB has helped secure investment since its introduction in 2016. It will continue to form part of Ireland’s proposition and stimulate further investment in R&D activities by both Irish and foreign owned enterprises - ultimately delivering jobs and economic substance in Ireland.

Question No. 367 answered with Question No. 359.

Job Creation Data

368. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of jobs created in the past two years to the indigenous sector; the number of such jobs created through foreign direct investment in the same period; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31007/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Regarding the number of jobs created in over the last two years, the figures available to my Department are those in respect of jobs created in client companies of the Enterprise Development Agencies Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Údarás Na Gaeltachta.

In addition, job creation figures are available for the Local Enterprise Offices. There were 7,883 jobs created in 2016 and 7,135 jobs created in 2017 by clients of the Local Enterprise Offices.

It should be noted that the data in the Department’s Annual Employment Survey, which is the active time series and the source for the data relating to Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Údarás Na Gaeltachta supported companies, can change year-on-year. For example, companies that enter the population or have transferred agency, have the opportunity to revisit numbers for the previous year when they are completing the Survey. As these figures are compiled on an annualised basis, the figures for 2018 will be available in the early part of 2019.

The table following provides details from the Department’s Annual Employment Survey of jobs created in 2016 and 2017 in companies supported by Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Údarás Na Gaeltachta.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Jobs Gains (Permanent Full Time Jobs and Other Jobs) for Foreign-owned and Irish-owned clients supported by the State Enterprise Development Agencies for 2016 and 2017.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Jobs Gains 2016</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Owned *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Owned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* includes food FDI companies that are clients of Enterprise Ireland.

Job Creation Data

369. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of small job-creating enterprises set up in the past two years; the number of jobs involved; the degree to which this programme can continue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31008/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** En-
Enterprise Ireland supports companies in regional and rural areas to start, innovate and remain competitive in international markets, now and into the future. In addition, with the advent of the network of Local Enterprise Offices, Enterprise Ireland now plays a critical role in driving and nurturing entrepreneurship all the way from an originating idea at local level, to taking-on global markets.

The Local Enterprise Office can offer direct grant aid to microenterprises (10 employees or fewer) in the manufacturing and internationally traded services sector, which over time have the potential to develop into strong export entities. LEO grant support schemes for start-ups include Priming Grants (available to micro enterprises within the first 18 months of start-up).

For the years 2016 and 2017, 558 LEO Clients received Priming Assistance resulting in the job creation of 961 Nett Jobs.

Table 1 presents the number of Priming Grants Class of 2016 and 2017 and their respective employment figures as measured by the 2016/2017 Annual Employment Survey.

Table 1: Priming Grants 2016 and 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Clients</th>
<th>Total Nett employment (Based on 2016 &amp; 2017 AES survey)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>558</td>
<td>961</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Enterprise Ireland actively works with High Potential Start-Ups (HPSUs), companies with the potential to develop an innovative product or service for sale in international markets and the potential to create 10 jobs and €1m in sales within 3 to 4 years of starting up. Enterprise Ireland’s HPSU Team, works with start-up companies to ensure that they can avail of supports that reflect the stage of development of the business and the type of activity that the business is engaged in.

Table 2 presents the number of High Potential Start Ups in the Class of 2016 and 2017 and their respective employment figures as measured by the 2017 Annual Employment Survey.

Table 2: High Potential Start Ups 2016 and 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of HPSU</th>
<th>No. of Companies</th>
<th>Total employment (Based on 2017 AES survey)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>1,183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Services for People with Disabilities

370. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if transport will be provided for a person (details supplied) to attend a facility; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30116/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government.
which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

**Legislative Reviews**

371. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the Anatomy Act 1832; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30615/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** A General Scheme of a Human Tissue Bill is being finalised. The proposed Bill will include provisions on anatomical examination and will propose the repeal of the Anatomy Act 1832.

**Mental Health Services Provision**

372. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health the progress of the implementation of the national framework for recovery in mental health 2018-2020 to date; the indicators being used to monitor the progress of each action; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30705/18]

**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.

**Motorised Transport Grant**

373. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of reinstating the mobility allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30822/18]

374. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of reinstating the motorised transport grant scheme; his plans for same in budget 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30823/18]

667. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the status of the health (transport support) Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30821/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 373, 374 and 667 together.

The Deputy will be familiar with the background to the closure of both the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant schemes in February 2013.

Since the closure of the Mobility Allowance, the Government has directed that the Health Service Executive should continue to pay an equivalent monthly payment of up to €208.50 per month to the 4,046 people (4,700 in 2013) in receipt of the Mobility Allowance, on an interim basis, pending the establishment of a new Transport Support Scheme. The annual cost of the Mobility Allowance scheme at the time that it closed was €9.3 million.

With regard to the Motorised Transport Grant, this scheme operated as a means-tested grant
to assist persons with severe disabilities with the purchase or adaptation of a car, where that car was essential to retain employment. The maximum Motorised Transport Grant, which was payable once in any three year period, was €5,020. Following the closure of the scheme in February 2013, no further Motorised Transport Grants have been payable. The annual cost of the Motorised Transport Grant scheme at the time that it closed was €1.3 million.

The Government decided that the detailed preparatory work required for a new Transport Support Scheme and associated statutory provisions should be progressed by the Minister for Health. The Programme for a Partnership Government acknowledges the ongoing drafting of primary legislation for a new Transport Support Scheme, to assist those with a disability to meet their mobility costs. The Health (Transport Support) Bill is on the list of priority legislation for publication in the Spring/Summer session 2018.

My colleague, the Minister for Health and I recently brought a Memorandum to Government for proposals for a new Transport Support Payment Scheme. Following consideration of the matter, it was decided to withdraw the Memorandum from the Cabinet agenda on 8 May last. I intend to revert to Government with revised proposals to reflect the discussion at Cabinet, in due course.

While I cannot comment on the specific proposals under consideration, I can confirm that the proposals seek to ensure that:

- There is a firm statutory basis to the Scheme’s operation;
- There is transparency and equity in the eligibility criteria attaching to the Scheme;
- Resources are targeted at those with the greatest needs; and
- The Scheme is capable of being costed and is affordable on its introduction and on an ongoing basis.

It is important to note that the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers scheme, operated by the Revenue Commissioners, remains in place. This scheme provides VRT and VAT relief, an exemption from road tax and a fuel grant to drivers and passengers with a disability, who qualify under the relevant criteria set out in governing regulations made by the Minister for Finance. Specifically adapted vehicles driven by persons with a disability are also exempt from payment of tolls on national roads and toll bridges. Transport Infrastructure Ireland has responsibility for this particular scheme.

There are improvements in access to a range of transport support schemes available to persons with disabilities in the State and on-going work is being carried out by Government Departments, agencies and transport providers to further improve access to public transport services. Under the National Disability Inclusion Strategy, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport has responsibility for the continued development of accessibility and availability of public transport for people with a disability.

**Departmental Staff Recruitment**

375. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the basis upon which public sector recruitment may be restricted to existing staff, including the basis for the common recruitment competition pools operated by the HSE; and his plans to amend legislation to prevent the use of such pools. [30883/18]
Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Services for People with Disabilities

376. Deputy Alan Kelly asked the Minister for Health when and the way in which an organisation (details supplied) decided not to provide therapies in a school in view of the fact it received funding to do so; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30949/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities

377. Deputy Alan Kelly asked the Minister for Health his views on whether an organisation (details supplied) has failed to provide therapies for children at its school in view of the fact that it made pension payments to its executives in breach of public pay policy in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30951/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities

378. Deputy Alan Kelly asked the Minister for Health if consideration has been given to acquiring part of the property portfolio of an organisation (details supplied) in lieu of misspent funding in view of its failure to provide services it was funded to provide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30954/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government,
which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists

379. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment for orthodontic treatment. [30021/18]

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

380. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a hospital appointment; the reason for the delay in issuing a date for the procedure; if the person can undergo the procedure under the National Treatment Purchase Fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30022/18]

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 Waiting Lists

381. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Health the waiting times in respect of prostatectomy procedures across all the relevant hospitals in the Saolta University Healthcare group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30028/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the matters raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Staff Data

382. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Health the consultant urologist vacan-
cies across all hospitals in the Saolta University Healthcare group; the length of time for which these posts have been vacant; when these posts will be filled in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30029/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

**Services for People with Disabilities**

383. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health if persons under 18 years of age will be able to access personalised budgets in the demonstration project in view of the recommendations by the Task Force on Personalised Budgets to the Minister of State for Disability Issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30030/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I have considered the findings of the Task Force on Personalised Budgets and intend to publish its report in the near future. The Government is committed to improving services and choices for people with disabilities and I am satisfied that the preferred option is to test the use of personalised budgets for adults with disabilities, in the first instance, as recommended by the task force.

**Hospital Services**

384. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health the reason the decision to provide a new modular cardio cath lab service for Waterford University Hospital has been made before the national cath lab report has been finalised; if County Sligo and the north west region will be allocated a similar service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30035/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** There are currently two cath labs based in Galway which service the acute cardiac cases for Sligo and the Northwest. For elective cases there is a mobile cath lab unit operating one day a week in both Sligo and Letterkenny.

The aim of the National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services 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. 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 this Review, which is expected to be complete by June 2019.

The Deputy may wish to note that the provision of a modular cath lab at Waterford, in relation to which I have asked my Department to engage with the HSE, is an interim solution pending the outcome of the National Review.

**Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

385. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if assistance will be given to a person (details supplied) in order to facilitate the purchase of medically essential cooling equipment for their home. [30036/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been re-
ferred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Staff

386. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will be relocated to the palliative care unit of a hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30037/18]

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 Investigations

387. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the anonymised details of all disciplinary actions which have taken place or are planned in response to or relevant to patient safety incidents in maternity services at Portiuncula Hospital including those detailed in recent reports. [30039/18]

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

Patient Safety

388. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the number of patient safety incidents which have taken place; the number which have resulted disciplinary actions in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to the end of March 2018, by hospital group in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30040/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, the question has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

General Practitioner Services

389. Deputy Pat Deering asked the Minister for Health the position regarding general practitioners charging medical card holders for blood tests; and if persons are not required to pay for the service, the way in which payments already made will be refunded. [30048/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the terms of the current GMS contract, GPs are required to provide eligible patients with “all proper and necessary treatment of a kind usually undertaken by a general practitioner and not requiring special skill or experience of a degree or kind which general practitioners cannot reasonably be expected to possess.” There is no provision under the GMS GP contract for persons who hold a medical card or GP visit card to be charged for routine phlebotomy services provided by their GP which are required to either assist in the diagnosis of illness or the treatment of a condition.

The HSE has advised GPs that where a blood test forms part of the investigation or necessary treatment of a patient’s symptoms or conditions, this should be free of charge for patients who hold a medical card or GP visit card. Notwithstanding this, I am aware that some GPs have
begun to charge GMS patients for phlebotomy services in some circumstances.

This is a matter of concern for me as it has long been the position, under successive Governments, that no user charges should apply to GP services provided to GMS and GP visit card patients. If a patient who holds a medical card or GP visit card believes he or she has been incorrectly charged for routine phlebotomy services by his or her GP, then that patient may take the matter up with their HSE Local Health Office, who will investigate the complaint.

If the local office determines that the charge was inappropriate, it will inform the HSE Primary Care Reimbursement Service who will arrange to refund the cost of the blood test to the patient and recoup this amount from the GP. The local office will inform the GP of the decision to deduct the payment.

**Emergency Departments Staff**

390. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the recommended staff to patient ratio for emergency departments; the ratio for same at University Hospital Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30050/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Framework for Safe Nurse Staffing and Skill Mix in General and Specialist Medical and Surgical Care Settings in Adult Hospitals in Ireland was published earlier this year. This Framework sets out the staffing requirements and skill mix needed in our hospital wards to achieve the best outcomes for patients. It sets out a framework to determine the appropriate number of nurses and healthcare assistants required for each ward, based on the number of patients and their particular needs, rather than solely on the ward size. My Department is currently in the process of undertaking a similar exercise to establish appropriate staffing levels in Emergency Departments and the Department will publish its findings in due course.

I am also aware that a WRC agreement was reached with the INMO in 2016 in relation to nursing staff levels in Emergency Departments. The parties recently reaffirmed their commitment to this agreement.

In terms of the recommended staff to patient ratio in the Emergency Department in University Hospital Kerry, I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy on that matter.

**Emergency Departments Services**

391. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the provisions being made to address the overcrowding in the emergency department at University Hospital Kerry. [30051/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Department is working with the HSE to identify the location and mix of beds across the hospital system, which can be opened and staffed this year and into 2019 in order to improve preparedness for Winter 2018/2019. A submission received from the HSE in this regard is currently under consideration by the Department as part of the broader work being completed to increase bed capacity in line with the recommendations of the Health Service Capacity Review.

In relation to University Hospital Kerry, I can confirm that as part of this process the HSE have received a proposal from the South South West Hospital Group in relation to providing additional inpatient beds in UH Kerry to alleviate overcrowding at this site. This proposal is being assessed as part of the broader national plan to increase bed capacity and any decision on
funding will be made as part of this broader process.

**Hospital Procedures**

392. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health the number of surgeries carried out on intersex infants in 2017 in Crumlin Hospital to align the infant’s genitals with chromosomal sex. [30053/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond direct to you.

**Medical Card Applications**

393. Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice asked the Minister for Health when a decision will be made on a medical card application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30057/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy.

**Health Services Provision**

394. Deputy Eugene Murphy asked the Minister for Health if all health services provided in a practice (details supplied) in County Roscommon will be maintained. [30059/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

**Maternity Services**

395. Deputy Jack Chambers asked the Minister for Health the status of the recommendations that have been made in internal and external reviews of maternity services in each maternity hospital for the past ten years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30062/18]

396. Deputy Jack Chambers asked the Minister for Health if the HSE has a process in place to collate the recommendations made by internal and external reviews of maternity services in hospitals for the past ten years; the implementation of each of those recommendations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30063/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 395 and 396 together.

While I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy’s questions concerning recommendations made following previous reviews of maternity services, I welcome the opportunity to reiterate the Government’s commitment to the progressive development of those services and to outline some of the progress which has been made in this regard.

was published in January 2016. In addition to population needs, international trends and the findings of a public consultation process, the development of the Strategy was informed by previous reports and experiences of our maternity services, both positive and negative. Indeed, the development of the Strategy delivered on a recommendation from the report, Investigation into the safety, quality and standards of services provided by the Health Service Executive to patients, including pregnant women, at risk of clinical deterioration, including those provided in University Hospital Galway, and as reflected in the care and treatment provided to Savita Halappanavar. Consequently, many recommendations made in past reports are addressed in the Strategy.

The Strategy aims to ensure that appropriate care pathways - Supported, Assisted and Specialised - are in place in order that mothers, babies and families get the right care, at the right time, by the right team and in the right place. It recognises that, while all pregnant women need a certain level of support, some will require more specialised care. Accordingly, it proposes an integrated model that delivers care at the lowest level of complexity and encompasses all the necessary safety nets in line with patient safety principles.

The phased implementation of the Strategy is being led by the National Women & Infants Health Programme, which has been established in the HSE to lead the management, organisation and delivery of maternity, gynaecology and neonatal services across primary, community and acute care. One of the Programme’s objectives is to ensure, where relevant, that learning from individual sites is disseminated to all maternity hospitals/units nationwide.

Additional development funding of €4.15 million is being allocated to maternity services this year. The Programme has prioritised improving quality and safety, establishing community midwifery teams and increasing access to anomaly scans. Such initiatives represent essential building blocks to provide a consistently safe and high quality maternity service and will continue to deliver tangible benefits for the 80,000 families who access maternity care each year.

**General Practitioner Services Provision**

397. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if general practitioner cards will be extended to all carers in receipt of the respite care support grant. [30066/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In December 2017, the Government announced that additional funding would be provided to enable all carers in receipt of Carer’s Allowance to qualify for a GP visit card. Government approval was given on the 11 April to provide GP services without fees to persons in receipt of either full or half rate Carer’s Allowance or Carer’s Benefit and to draft the Heads of Bill to legislate for this provision. It is intended that this measure will be implemented this year, subject to the enactment of the necessary legislation which is currently passing through the Houses of the Oireachtas.

There are currently no plans to extend GP visit Cards to persons specifically in receipt of a Carer’s Support Grant (formerly known as the Respite Care Grant), however it is noted that many persons in receipt of this Grant will qualify for a GP visit card as the Carer’s Support Grant is paid automatically to persons in receipt of Carer’s Allowance or Carer’s Benefit.

**Health Services Provision**

398. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if panic buttons and personal alarms will be made available to persons under 65 years of age who are vulnerable and require
Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The provision of panic buttons or personal alarms is not a matter for my Department. I understand that Pobal, funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development, provides personal alarms for people over 65 years and older through the Seniors Alert Scheme. No such scheme is in operation for the under 65’s.

Medicinal Products Expenditure

399. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Health the level of drugs expenditure in the health budget in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and the percentage of the health budget spent on drugs in each of those years, in tabular form. [30071/18]

400. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Health the levels of high-tech and orphan drugs expenditure in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and the percentage of the drugs budget spent on high-tech and orphan drugs in each of the years, in tabular form. [30072/18]

401. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Health the way in which Ireland’s expenditure on high-tech and orphan drugs in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018 compares with the EU average on a per capita basis and in terms of a proportion of both health expenditure and drugs expenditure. [30073/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 399 to 401, inclusive, together.

Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Emergency Departments Staff

402. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Health the provisions being made to address the staff shortages in the emergency department at University Hospital Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30074/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Government is fully aware of the difficulties and challenges that are currently faced by all hospital staff, including nurses and midwives, in delivering care in the hospital setting. I am aware that nursing staff working in University Hospital Kerry Emergency Department engaged in a lunchtime protest last week. I understand that this was to highlight their concerns in relation to overcrowding in the Emergency Department and its impact on patient care.

At a national level, there is an agreement in place in relation to Emergency Departments, which was brokered through the Workplace Relations Commission. HSE management and officials from my Department recently (27th June) engaged in a conciliation session with the INMO on implementation of this agreement. The outcome of this conciliation was that HSE and the INMO re-affirmed its commitment to fully comply with all aspects of the Agreement.

As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.
403. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the way in which the transitional care funding works, which funding is in place to bridge the gap in the interim for fair deal applicants who are occupying a bed in an acute facility but can be admitted to a nursing home; the definition of acute facility in this context; the person who pays for the bridging loan; the way in which it is recouped; if there are proposed changes to this practice being considered as part of the review of the fair deal scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30075/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** There has been a sustained focus in recent years on reducing delayed discharges and enabling patients to be discharged from hospital sooner. Additional measures, including Home Support Packages and transitional care approvals to private nursing homes are funded through Services for Older People and not through the Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS). There is no cost to the patient or resident and therefore no bridging loan or recoupment is necessary. There are no plans to make changes to the NHSS in this regard.

**Health Screening Programmes**

404. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Health his policy in regard to sickle cell disease; his plans to fund a national screening programme to detect children affected by the disease; his plans to found cross-border access to bone marrow transplants within the EU for those suffering from sickle cell disease; if his Department and the HSE are seeking to learn from the experience of their counterparts in the UK who have more experience on the matter; and if he will meet representatives of organisations (details supplied) to discuss the way in which to progress the matter. [30082/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** There are over 600 people with sickle cell disease in Ireland and over two thirds of those with the disease are under 18 years of age. Majority of those with the disease are seen in the two centres of expertise - Our Lady’s Children Hospital in Crumlin and St. James’s Hospital. To ensure an early diagnosis and prevent early deaths, the team at Crumlin, over many years, organised a neo-natal screening in the majority of maternity hospitals.

Sickle cell disease, among many other rare diseases, is addressed as part of the generic policy framework in the National Rare disease plan which was published in 2014. The scope of the plan is broad given that there are 8,000 rare diseases approximately affecting millions of EU citizens; and consequently, there can be a dearth of expertise and knowledge about some rare diseases, simply because they are so rare.

One of the achievements of the Rare Disease Plan was to encourage designated centres of expertise to participate in European Reference Networks (ERNs) for Rare Diseases. ERNs are European networks connecting health care providers and centres of expertise so that international expertise on specific rare diseases may be pooled together for the benefit of patients. Any centre applying for membership of an ERN must have strategies in place to ensure that care is patient-centred; that patient’ rights and preferences are respected; and must show a research component to their work.

The recommendations in the national plan related to empowering and protecting patients and carers, and research on rare diseases will be fulfilled in part through this process. It is expected that ERNs will have a major structuring effect by linking thematic expert centres across the EU.
With the encouragement of the National Clinical Programme for Rare Diseases and the Department of Health, five centres of expertise were designated in June 2016 during the first round of calls from the European Commission for participation in European Reference Networks. Three of these designated centres applied for membership of ERNs and two were approved.

The issue of rare diseases and of the creation of an all-island patient register has been raised in the context of on-going discussions at North-South meetings. It is also anticipated that the Model of Care for Rare Diseases will set out recommendations for rare disease registries. This model of care is in development by the National Clinical Programme for Rare Diseases. At the EU level, the Joint Research Centre is developing a joint European Platform on Rare Disease Registration which will promote EU level standards for data collection and contribute to the development of rare disease registries across the EU.

As Minister I consider meeting any organisation that requests to do so. However due to busy parliamentary and other business it is not always possible to meet all representative groups that contact my office.

In respect of the other issues raised, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy.

**Mental Health Services Funding**

405. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if the proceeds of the sale of a site (details supplied) will be invested in mental health services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30109/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Government’s commitment to delivering a new Central Mental Hospital is clearly articulated in the Programme for Government, and funding has been earmarked for this purpose in the Capital Plan. The construction of the National Forensic Mental Health Services Hospital in Portrane is not dependent on the sale of the Dundrum site. That said, there is a Government decision and policy as set out in “A Vision for Change” that proceeds from the sale of older mental health assets, such as the Dundrum site, will be reinvested in new developments within mental health.

The disposal or otherwise of the site of the Central Mental Hospital in Dundrum cannot proceed until such time as the hospital is vacated, following the completion of the new National Forensic Mental Health Hospital in Portrane.

**Mental Health Services Provision**

406. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health his plans to increase the capacity and or number of beds for forensic patients beyond the 3.5 per 100,000 envisioned for the new forensic mental health facility at Portrane, County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30110/18]

**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.

**Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Provision**
407. Deputy James Browne asked the Minister for Health the way in which CAMHS patients will be treated within the new forensic mental health hospital to replace the Central Mental Hospital; if these patients will be housed separately from the new unit; if there will be specific CAMH services on site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30111/18]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

408. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Health if transport services will be provided for a person (details supplied) to attend a facility; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30114/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities

409. Deputy Timmy Dooley asked the Minister for Health if a blind person can receive a direct payment in lieu of personal assistant hours in order that they can purchase a flexible personal assistant service to meet their specific needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30115/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): There are currently no means by which a person can receive a direct payment to purchase a personal assistant service. However, as the Deputy may be aware, in line with a commitment in the Programme for Government I established a Task Force on Personalised Budgets for People with Disabilities on 20 September 2016. The Task Force consisted of a Strategy Group and an Advisory & Consultative Group. It included officials from the relevant Government Departments and agencies, HSE, academic and policy experts, stakeholder organisations and a wide range of people with lived experience of disability and disability services (both intellectual and physical).

Its remit was to consider people whose primary disability was physical or sensory, intellectual, autism, neurological or any combination of these and to make recommendations on personalised budgets models which will give people with disabilities more control in accessing health funded personal social services, giving them greater independence and choice in accessing services which best meet their individual needs. The Report, which I intend to publish in the near future, will outline the next steps for the development of personalised budgets in Ireland.

Cross-Border Health Services Provision
410. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health if an issue of cross-Corder health-care for a person (details supplied) will be addressed and clarified; if they have a right to equality of treatment which would be given to a citizen resident in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30124/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** EU Regulation 883/2004 enables an Irish Citizen to receive emergency healthcare when on a temporary visit to another EU/EEA Member State. The Member State providing the emergency care will provide necessary healthcare to ensure that a patient is in a stable condition to allow them to enable return to their home Member State.

In relation to this particular case, the HSE has advised that contact should be made on behalf of the patient seeking to avail of healthcare in Ireland with Letterkenny University Hospital in the first instance to make arrangements for an assessment of the patient’s medical needs.

**Disability Services Provision**

411. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of 12 dedicated respite houses announced on 12 December 2017 (details supplied). [30127/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The 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.

**Hospital Waiting Lists**

412. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the 12 children on the waiting list for scoliosis surgery who have had their cases and surgeries suspended; if his attention has been further drawn to the reason for the suspensions; the estimated timeframe for each suspension; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30131/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The long-term strategy to develop sustainable scoliosis services from 2018 has been prioritised by the Department of Health and the HSE in the 2018 HSE National Service Plan. In this regard, €9 million of funding has been provided in 2018 to improve access to paediatric orthopaedic services including scoliosis.

The Children’s Hospital Group advises that consultants clinically prioritise patients for surgery on the waiting list. The Hospital Group further advises that the reasons for suspension of surgery can vary and include clinical judgement and patient choice, e.g. due to exams etc. The Group also advises that plans have been put in place to increase activity during the summer months.
In relation to the current number of patients on the suspended waiting list, as this is a service matter I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Disability Support Services

413. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of a project (details supplied); the timeframe for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30141/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Constitutional Convention Recommendations

414. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Health if expert advice or data, including existing and or projected costings to the Constitutional Convention in the context of its consideration of Article 41.2 with particular reference to carers was provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30147/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** The Department of Health contributed advice to the Department of Justice and Equality in recent months to assist in the development of options for the Government’s proposal to hold a referendum on Article 41.2 of the Constitution. This took account of policy in relation to people with disabilities, older people and carers. The Department of Health understands that a number of options were thoroughly examined.

Disability Services Provision

415. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the CHOs that have established a residents’ council, family forum, service user panel or equivalent for disability services. [30153/18]

**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.

Disability Services Data

416. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of residential places for persons with a disability being provided by CHO area in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30154/18]
417. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of new emergency places provided to persons with a disability to date in 2018 by CHO area in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30155/18]

419. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of in-home respite supports for emergency cases to date in 2018 by CHO area in tabular form. [30157/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 416, 417 and 419 together.

The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy’s questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

**Disability Services Data**

418. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of new home supports for emergency cases to date in 2018 by CHO area in tabular form. [30156/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

*Question No. 419 answered with Question No. 416.*

**Disability Services Data**

420. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons moved on from a congregated setting to date in 2018 by CHO area in tabular form. [30158/18]

**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 ser-
vices they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs.

The Department of Health is also responsible for the development of policy on, and over-
sight of, the provisions of specialist health and personal social services for people with disabil-
ity, including the reform programme for health funded specialist disability services.

Transforming Lives is the programme to implement the recommendations of the Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services. The Review is a multi-year project which is resulting in very significant changes to the way in which services and supports for people with disabilities are delivered in moving away from institutional models of care and service delivery to community-based, person-centred models of service. The implementation of the recommendations in the VFM Review continues to be a priority in the HSE’s National Service Plan for 2018.

The Report “Time to Move on from Congregated Settings – A Strategy for Community In-
clusion” proposes a new model of support in the community moving people from congregated settings to the community in line with Government policy.

The Programme for Partnership Government contains a commitment to continue to move people with disabilities out of congregated settings, to enable them to live independently and to be included in the community. The objective is to reduce this figure by one-third by 2021 and ultimately, to eliminate all congregated settings.

At the end of December 2017, there were less than 2,400 people with a disability living in congregated settings. The HSE has prioritised the transition of 170 people from congregated settings in 2018 under its Service Plan. The HSE has established a subgroup, under the Value for Money Steering Group, which is developing an implementation plan for moving people from institutions that will be rolled out at a regional and local level, in full consultation with residents and their families.

To ensure that the needs of people transitioning from congregated settings are fully taken into account during the process, the model of care for individuals will be based on a person-centred plan (PCP). The PCP may change over time in line with an individual’s needs and circumstances and the model of service delivery applicable at a particular time.

As the HSE is responsible for leading out on the recommendations on “Time to Move on from Congregated Settings - A Strategy for Community Inclusion”, I have arranged for the Deputy’s question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Disability Services Data

421. Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony asked the Minister for Health the number of persons with a disability, that is, ID, autism and physical and sensory disability, in receipt of work or work-like activity services by CHO area in tabular form. [30159/18]

422. Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony asked the Minister for Health the number of persons with a disability in receipt of rehabilitation training to date in 2018 by CHO area in tabular form. [30160/18]

423. Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony asked the Minister for Health the number of persons with a disability, that is, ID, autism and physical and sensory disability, in receipt of other day services excluding rehabilitation training and work or work-like activities to date in
2018 by CHO area in tabular form. [30161/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 421 to 423, inclusive, together.

The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Disability Services Data

424. Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony asked the Minister for Health the number of day only respite sessions accessed by persons with a disability to date in 2018 by CHO area in tabular form. [30162/18]

425. Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony asked the Minister for Health the number of overnights with or without day respite accessed by persons with a disability to date in 2018 by CHO area in tabular form. [30163/18]

426. Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony asked the Minister for Health the number of persons with a disability, that is, ID, autism and physical and sensory disability, in receipt of respite services by CHO area in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30164/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 424 to 426, inclusive, together.

The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy’s questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Disability Services Data

427. Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony asked the Minister for Health the number of PA service hours delivered to adults with a physical and or sensory disability to date in 2018 by CHO area in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30165/18]
428. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of adults with a physical and or sensory disability in receipt of a PA service to date in 2018 by CHO area in tabular form. [30166/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 427 and 428 together.

The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

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**Home Help Service Provision**

429. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of home support hours delivered to persons with a disability to date in 2018 by CHO area in tabular form [30167/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

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**Home Help Service Provision**

430. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons with a disability, that is, ID, autism and physical and sensory disability in receipt of home support services to date in 2018 by CHO area in tabular form. [30168/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.
431. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Health when the task force on personalised budgets will report. [30169/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** In line with a commitment in the Programme for Government I established a Task Force on Personalised Budgets for People with Disabilities on 20 September 2016. The Task Force consisted of a Strategy Group and an Advisory & Consultative Group. It included officials from the relevant Government Departments and agencies, HSE, academic and policy experts, stakeholder organisations and a wide range of people with lived experience of disability and disability services (both intellectual and physical).

Its remit was to consider people whose primary disability was physical or sensory, intellectual, autism, neurological or any combination of these and to make recommendations on personalised budgets models which will give people with disabilities more control in accessing health funded personal social services, giving them greater independence and choice in accessing services which best meet their individual needs. I have considered the findings of the Task Force Report and intend to publish it in the near future.

**Disability Diagnoses**

432. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of children awaiting a first assessment from the HSE under the Disability Act 2005 at the end of June 2018 or latest date available by local health office area in tabular form. [30170/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

**Speech and Language Therapy Waiting Lists**

433. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the speech and language therapy assessment waiting list by local health area; and the number waiting less than four, four to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively in tabular form. [30171/18]

434. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the speech and language therapy initial treatment waiting list in each local health office area; and the number waiting less than 4, 4 to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively in tabular form [30172/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 433 and 434 together.
As these question(s) relate to service matters, I have arranged for them to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Speech and Language Therapy Waiting Lists

435. Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the speech and language therapy further treatment waiting list in each local health office area; and the number waiting less than four, four to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively in tabular form. [30173/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Occupational Therapy Waiting Lists

436. Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the occupational therapy first time assessment waiting list in each local health office area; the number waiting less than four, four to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively; and the number waiting aged 0 to four, five to 17, 18 to 64 and 65 or more years of age in each category in tabular form. [30174/18]

437. Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the occupational therapy treatment waiting list in each local health office area; the numbers waiting less than four, four to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively; and the numbers waiting aged 0 to four, five to 17, 18 to 64 and 65 or more years of age, respectively in each category in tabular form. [30175/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 436 and 437 together.

As these questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for them to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Tobacco Control Measures

438. Deputy Mary Butler asked the Minister for Health the number of initial tobacco sales to minors test purchase inspections carried out at the end of June 2018 or the latest date available. [30176/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As sales to minors test purchase inspections are a matter for the Health Service Executive (HSE), this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Sunbeds Regulation

439. Deputy Mary Butler asked the Minister for Health the number of test purchases carried out under the Public Health (Sunbeds) Act 2014 at the end of June 2018 or the latest date available. [30177/18]
440. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of mystery shopper inspections carried out under the Public Health (Sunbeds) Act 2014 at the end of June 2018 or the latest date available. [30178/18]

441. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of establishments receiving a planned inspection under the Public Health (Sunbeds) Act 2014 at the end of June 2018 or the latest date available. [30179/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 439 to 441, inclusive, together.

These are matters for the HSE therefore I have referred the questions to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

**Food Safety Authority of Ireland Inspections**

442. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of official food control planned and unplanned surveillance inspections of food businesses at the end of June 2018 or the latest date available. [30180/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Official control inspections in food businesses are carried out by a range of State bodies (‘official agencies’) under service contracts with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI). The official agencies include the HSE, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Local Authorities, Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority and National Standards Authority of Ireland; each official agency has responsibility for official controls in certain sectors of the food supply chain.

The official controls verify compliance by food business operators with the requirements of food legislation, including food hygiene and safety, traceability, authenticity, labelling, and food standards. Where necessary, enforcement action is taken to ensure consumer protection and food safety. The FSAI monitors the work done by the official agencies and reports on it to my Department.

The most recent complete data available on official control inspections in food businesses, including planned and unplanned inspections are for January-December 2017 and are presented in the table below. In total, 63,723 inspections were carried in 2017.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official Agency</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health Service Executive (Environmental Health Service)</td>
<td>*44,934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine</td>
<td>11,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authorities</td>
<td>4,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority</td>
<td>2,245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Standards Authority of Ireland</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Inspections</td>
<td>63,723</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes planned and unplanned surveillance inspections

**Tobacco Control Measures**
443. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of inspections of e-cigarette and refill container manufacturers, importers, distributors and retailers under the European Union (Manufacture, Presentation and Sale of Tobacco and Related Products) Regulations 2016 at the end of June 2018 or the latest date available. [30181/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The number of Inspections of e-cigarette and re-fill container manufacturers, importers, distributors and retailers is a matter for the HSE. I have referred your question to the HSE for direct reply.

**Health Promotion**

444. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who have completed a structured patient education programme for diabetes at the end of June 2018 or the latest date available. [30182/18]

**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.

**Health Services Data**

445. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of babies breast-fed exclusively and not exclusively at first PHN, postherpetic neuralgia, visit at the end of June 2018 or the latest date available [30183/18]

446. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of babies breast-fed exclusively at first PHN visit at the end of June 2018 or the latest date available. [30184/18]

447. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of babies breastfed exclusively and not exclusively at three month PHN visit at the end of June 2018 or the latest date available. [30185/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 445 to 447, inclusive, together.

As this is a service matter, I have referred these 3 PQs to the HSE.

**Health Services Data**

448. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of babies breast-fed exclusively at three month PHN visit at the end of June 2018 or the latest date available. [30186/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** As this is a service matter, it is being submitted to the HSE.

**Home Care Packages Data**

449. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in receipt of an intensive home care package; and the percentage of same with a key worker assigned.
10 July 2018

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

450. Deputy Mary Butler asked the Minister for Health the number of home support hours provided from intensive home care packages to date in 2018. [30188/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

451. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing ten community physiotherapists or hospital physiotherapists at entry level, and five and ten years of experience, respectively. [30189/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Health Insurance Data

452. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated saving if the full economic cost for the use of beds in public and voluntary hospitals for the purposes of private medical practice were paid for by private insurance operators. [30190/18]

453. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated savings if all private patients in public hospitals were charged in full for services provided rather than being charged a maintenance or per diem charge. [30191/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 452 and 453 together.

The information requested is not currently available. The cost of all inpatient and daycase activity is calculated as part of the Activity Based Funding (ABF) system for acute hospitals. However, the resulting ABF price only applies to public patients because certain costs which would be relevant to private patients are funded through the block grant to these hospitals. A new methodology and detailed costing study would therefore be required in order to accurately calculate the full economic cost of private activity. This matter will be considered as part of the further roll-out of the ABF funding model.

General Practitioner Data

454. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of expanding general practitioner training intake to 200. [30192/18]
Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): 194 GP training places were funded in 2018. The HSE estimates that costs of approximately €367,926.67 and €389,093.30 would be incurred from 2021 and 2022 onwards to provide an additional 6 training places starting with the 2019 intake.

**General Practitioner Data**

455. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of the State directly employing a general practitioner inclusive of salary and PRSI costs. [30193/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): This information is not available. General Practitioners are independent private contractors and there is currently no approved salary scale in the public service for this post.

**Health Services Staff Data**

456. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost and breakdown of providing practice nurses to work with 25 general practitioners, including cost of their training and pay for work for that period. [30194/18]

457. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost and breakdown of providing medical secretaries to work with 25 general practitioners, including cost of their training and pay for work for that period. [30195/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 456 and 457 together.

Under the GMS scheme, GPs can claim practice support subsidies that contribute towards the cost of employing a practice nurse, manager and/or secretary.

The rate payable depends on the GP’s GMS panel size and the number of years experience the nurse or secretary has. The current full subsidy rates are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsidy Type</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursing subsidy (per year) 1 year’s experience</td>
<td>€30,945.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing subsidy (per year) 2 years’ experience</td>
<td>€32,665.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing subsidy (per year) 3 years’ experience</td>
<td>€34,384.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing subsidy (per year) 4 or more years’ experience</td>
<td>€37,822.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretarial subsidy (per year) 1 year’s experience</td>
<td>€20,630.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretarial subsidy (per year) 2 years’ experience</td>
<td>€22,349.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretarial subsidy (per year) 3 or more years’ experience</td>
<td>€24,068.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Practice manager subsidy (per year) — based on first point in the nursing subsidy €30,945.86

As GPs are independent private contractors and employ their own practice staff, the terms of the contract of employment are negotiated directly with each employee.

Given the variation in payment rates that may therefore apply to each contract, the Department cannot estimate the cost of employing and training 25 practice nurses or secretaries beyond the payment of the above subsidy rates.

Health Services Staff Data

458. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of increasing the number of midwives by 100, 150 and 250, respectively in tabular form. [30196/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Health Services Staff Data

459. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of increasing the number of nurses by 100. [30197/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Health Services Staff Data

460. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of increasing the number of obstetricians and gynaecologists employed by ten. [30198/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Health Services Staff Data

461. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of increasing the number of obstetricians and gynaecologists employed by 47. [30199/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Hospital Beds Data

462. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health to set out the estimated cost of reopening the minimum of 1,000 hospital beds that are in the health service but closed, as deduced from a comparison of bed numbers from the health service capacity review published in 2018 and the capacity review from 2008. [30200/18]
Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As Minister for Health, I am committed to continuing the effort to address overcrowding in our Emergency Departments, and in particular, the capacity of the system to respond during periods of peak demand. In this context, I have asked my Department to work with the HSE to identify the location and mix of beds across the hospital system, which can be opened and staffed this year and into 2019 in order to improve preparedness for Winter 2018/2019. A submission received from the HSE in this regard is currently under consideration by my Department.

There is no one capital or revenue cost for opening additional hospital beds. The cost is dependent on the nature of the additional hospital bed (Day Case, In-Patient, Intensive/Critical Care), the clinical speciality and where the additional beds will be provided (an existing hospital, an extension to an existing hospital or the development of a new hospital).

Hospital Beds Data

463. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health to set down the estimated cost of providing 500 additional hospital beds. [30201/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): There is no one capital cost for building additional hospital beds. The capital cost is dependent on the nature of the additional hospital bed (Day Case, In-Patient, Intensive/Critical Care), the clinical speciality and where the additional beds will be provided (for example, to an existing hospital, an extension to an existing hospital or the development of a new hospital).

Hospital Beds Data

464. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health to set down the capital costs of providing 500 additional hospital beds. [30202/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): There is no one capital cost for building additional hospital beds. The capital cost is dependent on the nature of the additional hospital bed (Day Case, In-Patient, Intensive/Critical Care), the clinical speciality and where the additional beds will be provided (for example, to an existing hospital, an extension to an existing hospital or the development of a new hospital).

Hospital Beds Data

465. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health to set down the estimated cost of increasing the number of hospital beds in use in the system by 500, including the capital cost; and the number of beds that could be brought on stream before incurring a capital cost. [30203/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): There is no one capital or revenue cost for building additional hospital beds. The cost is dependent on the nature of the additional hospital bed (Day Case, In-Patient, Intensive/Critical Care), the clinical speciality and where the additional beds will be provided (for example, to an existing hospital, an extension to an existing hospital or the development of a new hospital).

As Minister for Health, I am committed to continuing the effort to address overcrowding in our Emergency Departments, and in particular, the capacity of the system to respond during
periods of peak demand. In this context, I have asked my Department to work with the HSE to identify the location and mix of beds across the hospital system, which can be opened and staffed this year and into 2019 in order to improve preparedness for Winter 2018/2019.

A submission received from the HSE in this regard is currently under consideration by my Department. I can confirm that this proposal includes both new beds which incur capital costs and new beds within existing space which have little or no capital cost requirement.

**Hospital Beds Data**

466. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health to set down the fully absorbed cost of a hospital bed; the fully absorbed cost of a hospital bed including staff, ancillary services and running costs; the cost per bed, per day and per year. [30204/18]

**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.

**Medicinal Products Supply**

467. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health to set down the savings in 2018 through the four-year deal agreed with the pharmaceutical sector. [30205/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The 2016 Framework Agreement on the Supply and Pricing of Medicines (available at http://www.ipha.ie/alist/ipha-hse-agreement.aspx), between the State and the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA), is expected to deliver approximately €600 million in savings from IPHA companies over the four year lifetime of the Agreement and €150 million in savings from non-IPHA companies.

The 2016 Agreement represents clear additional value to the State over previous agreements. For example, the reference basket of countries, used to set drug prices in Ireland, has been expanded from 9 to 14 countries, including lower cost countries. Also, the Agreement now provides for an annual price realignment, so that Irish medicine prices can be reduced in line with price reductions across the reference countries. This will ensure the State achieves better value for money on medicines as prices in other basket countries are adjusted downwards over time. In addition, the Agreement provides for a 30% reduction in the price of biologic medicines when a biosimilar medicine enters the market.

A key focus of this agreement is to achieve lower prices in the face of both demographic pressures on expenditure and the continued development of new medicines, many of which pose affordability challenges to the Irish health service and internationally.

The estimated saving for 2018 from the Agreement is €185 m.

**Prescriptions Charges**

468. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health to set down the estimated cost of reducing the medical card prescription charge by 50 cent. [30206/18]

469. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health to set down the income raised through prescription charges in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018. [30207/18]
470. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health to set down in tabular form the estimated cost of lowering the drugs payment scheme monthly threshold to €85, €100, €112, €116, €120 and €124. [30208/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 468 to 470, inclusive, together.

Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes. Therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

**Dental Services Provision**

471. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health to outline the expenditure on the six-monthly scale and polish entitlement under the dental treatment services scheme in 2009. [30209/18]

**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.

**Dental Services Provision**

472. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health to outline the expenditure on the extended gum cleaning entitlement under the dental treatment services scheme in 2009. [30210/18]

**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.

**Dental Services Staff**

473. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health to set down in tabular form the estimated cost of increasing the number of dentists by ten and 40, respectively. [30211/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

**Dental Services Staff**

474. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health to set down the estimated cost of increasing the number of orthodontists by five. [30212/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

**Dental Services Staff**

475. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health to set down in tabular form the
estimated cost of increasing the number of orthodontists by ten and 60, respectively. [30213/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Ambulance Service Funding

476. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health to set down the estimated cost of employing and equipping one ambulance with its complement of personnel and support staff. [30214/18]

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

477. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health to set down the estimated cost of training and recruiting 110 advanced paramedics. [30215/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Ambulance Service Funding

478. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health to set down the estimated cost of an additional three ambulances, including personnel for each of the four HSE regions. [30216/18]

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

479. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of purchasing three fully equipped ambulances for each of the four HSE regions, that is, 12 ambulances in total. [30217/18]

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

480. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of the required whole-time equivalent personnel for 12 ambulances. [30218/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.
Questions - Written Answers

Home Help Service Expenditure

481. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of increasing the number of home help hours by 10%. [30219/18]

482. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of increasing the number of home care packages by 10%. [30220/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 481 and 482 together.

As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

**Occupational Therapy Staff**

483. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing ten occupational therapists at entry level, five years and ten years of experience, respectively, in tabular form for each grade; and the overall cost. [30221/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

**Occupational Therapy Staff**

484. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing 100 occupational therapists. [30222/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

**Physiotherapy Provision**

485. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing ten physiotherapists at entry level, five and ten years of experience, respectively. [30223/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

**Physiotherapy Provision**

486. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing 100 physiotherapists. [30224/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

**Psychological Services**
487. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing 150 psychologists. [30225/18]

**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.

**Speech and Language Therapy Staff**

488. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing ten speech and language therapists at entry level, five years experience and ten years experience, respectively. [30226/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

**Speech and Language Therapy Staff**

489. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing 100 speech and language therapists. [30227/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

**Disability Support Services**

490. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of providing an additional 500,000 hours of the personal assistant scheme. [30228/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

**Disability Support Services**

491. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of a community neuro-rehabilitation team. [30229/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and
plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

**Disability Support Services**

492. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of a transitional service, that is, intensive rehabilitation services post-acute injury to enable persons to return home. [30230/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to a service issue, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

**Respite Care Services Provision**

493. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of increasing respite care services by 20%. [30231/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The 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.

**Suicide Prevention**

494. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing 11 suicide crisis assessment nurses. [30232/18]

**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.

Suicide Prevention

495. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing five housing liaison suicide crisis assessment nurses. [30233/18]

**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.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Provision

496. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of providing an additional 14 community child and adolescent mental health services, CAMHS, teams in line with A Vision for Change. [30234/18]

**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

Services for People with Disabilities

497. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of filling the remaining posts of the mental health intellectual disability posts for children that have not yet been filled. [30235/18]

**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

Mental Health Services Staff

498. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of filling 30 mental health intellectual disability posts for children. [30236/18]

**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

Mental Health Services Data

499. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of doubling the budget for counselling in primary care. [30237/18]

**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
500. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of opening the remaining child and adolescent psychiatric beds that are not open. [30238/18]

**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.

**Mental Health Services Staff**

501. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of increasing addiction counsellors by 10%. [30239/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

**Health Services Reports**

502. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the Health Service Executive’s value improvement programme, which is targeting improvement opportunities up to €346 million; the financial value of such improvement opportunities to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30240/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Health Service Executive acknowledged in its 2018 National Service Plan that given competing pressures for Government funding that there is an onus on the health and social care system to drive efficiencies, productivity and value from its existing funding base in a way that delivers best health outcomes, improves people’s experience of using the service and demonstrates value for money.

The delivery of the Value Improvement programme is supported by a central team consisting of a programme director, programme manager, business manager, administrator and access to subject matter expertise in finance, HR and analytics.

Progress has been slower than anticipated to date. Contributing factors to this were the significant operational management pressure due to winter surge, extensive flu season and storm emergencies, and particular calls on the VIP senior team to support GDPR implementation. The HSE is now putting in place appropriate resources across the system to ensure delivery of progress on the programme.

**Hospital Accommodation Provision**

503. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if an additional six beds have been provided in the National Rehabilitation Hospital. [30241/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will
empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to a service issue, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Data

504. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons availing of the nursing home support scheme as of 1 July 2018. [30242/18]

*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 Beds Data

505. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional beds provided to date in 2018 in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda. [30243/18]

*Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):* Against a background of growing demand for unscheduled care and high acute hospital occupancy rates, Government provided €30 million in 2017 and a further €40 million in 2018 for measures to increase acute hospital capacity and alleviate overcrowding in Emergency Departments last winter.

Nearly 240 beds were opened over the course of last winter, including 29 in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda (OLOL).

Furthermore, OLOL Drogheda is currently undergoing a major capital infrastructure project. This includes an extension to the existing Emergency Department, which is due to be operational by early 2019.

Hospital Beds Data

506. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional beds provided to date in 2018 in University Hospital Galway. [30244/18]

*Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):* Against a background of growing demand for unscheduled care and high acute hospital occupancy rates, Government provided €30 million in 2017 and a further €40 million in 2018 for measures to increase acute hospital capacity and alleviate overcrowding in Emergency Departments last winter.

Over the course of winter, nearly 240 additional beds were opened, including 28 in University Hospital Galway.
507. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional beds provided to date in 2018 in University Hospital Limerick. [30245/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Against a background of growing demand for unscheduled care and high acute hospital occupancy rates, Government provided €30 million in 2017 and a further €40 million in 2018 for measures to increase acute hospital capacity and alleviate overcrowding in Emergency Departments last winter.

Over the course of last winter, nearly 240 additional beds were opened, including 17 in University Hospital Limerick (UHL).

Furthermore, in May 2017 a new Emergency Department was opened at UHL. The purpose of the €24 million development was to provide UHL with increased capacity for emergency medicine to meet the demands of population growth, changing service models and to improve efficiency targets.

**Hospital Beds Data**

508. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional beds provided to date in 2018 in St. Vincent’s University Hospital, Dublin. [30246/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Against a background of growing demand for unscheduled care and high acute hospital occupancy rates, Government provided €30 million in 2017 and a further €40 million in 2018 for measures to increase acute hospital capacity and alleviate overcrowding in Emergency Departments last winter.

Over the course of winter, nearly 240 additional beds were opened, including 22 in St. Vincent’s University Hospital, Dublin.

**Hospital Beds Data**

509. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional beds provided to date in 2018 in University Hospital Waterford. [30247/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Against a background of growing demand for unscheduled care and high acute hospital occupancy rates, Government provided €30 million in 2017 and a further €40 million in 2018 for measures to increase acute hospital capacity and alleviate overcrowding in Emergency Departments last winter.

Nearly 240 beds were opened over the course of last winter, including 19 in University Hospital Waterford.

**Hospital Beds Data**

510. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional beds provided to date in 2018 in Cork University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30248/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Against a background of growing demand for unscheduled care and high acute hospital occupancy rates, Government provided €30 million in 2017 and a further €40 million in 2018 for measures to increase acute hospital capacity
and alleviate overcrowding in Emergency Departments last winter.

Nearly 240 beds were opened over the course of last winter, including 30 beds and 2 critical care beds in Cork University Hospital.

**Hospital Beds Data**

511. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional beds provided to date in 2018 in St. Luke’s Hospital, Kilkenny. [30249/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Against a background of growing demand for unscheduled care and high acute hospital occupancy rates, Government provided €30 million in 2017 and a further €40 million in 2018 for measures to increase acute hospital capacity and alleviate overcrowding in Emergency Departments last winter.

Over the course of winter, nearly 240 additional beds were opened, including 14 in St. Luke’s Hospital, Kilkenny.

**Hospitals Building Programme**

512. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the project to provide a modular build at South Tipperary General Hospital. [30250/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Against a background of growing demand for unscheduled care and high acute hospital occupancy rates, Government provided €40 million in 2018 for measures to increase acute hospital capacity and alleviate overcrowding in Emergency Departments.

As part of these initiatives, funding has been allocated for the provision of a new 40 bed modular unit at South Tipperary General Hospital. Work on the development of the project is on-going, with construction underway.

**Health Services Data**

513. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the expansion of the medical assessment services at Roscommon University Hospital. [30251/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

**Health Services Data**

514. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of paediatric homecare packages being provided. [30252/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.
515. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting fewer than 13 weeks and more than 13 weeks respectively following a referral for routine colonoscopy or oesophago-gastroduodenoscopy, OGD, at the end of June 2018 or latest date available. [30253/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In relation to the number of persons waiting fewer than 13 weeks and more than 13 weeks respectively following a referral for routine colonoscopy or OGD at the end of June 2018 or latest date available, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

**Nursing Education**

516. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of postgraduate education programmes for nurses and midwives being provided. [30254/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I take it that the deputy is referring to postgraduate courses funded by the HSE. The HSE support many nurses to engage in various types of post-graduate education, both to develop competence for particular areas of clinical practice and for professional development in areas such as leadership and management. I have asked the HSE to provide details to you directly in relation to post graduate courses for nurses and midwives in respect of which HSE funding was provided in 2017.

**Nursing Staff**

517. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of nurses and midwives with authority to prescribe medicines. [30255/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Given that this is an operational matter, it is appropriate that it should be dealt with by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI). I have referred the Deputy’s question to the NMBI for attention and direct reply.

**Nursing Staff**

518. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of nurses and midwives with authority to prescribe ionising radiation, that is, X-ray. [30256/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Given that this is an operational matter, it is appropriate that it should be dealt with by the HSE. I have referred the Deputy’s question to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

**Nursing Education**

519. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of six national foundation education programmes for nurses in critical care, surgical pre-assessment, acute medicine unscheduled care, frailty, emergency care and anaesthetic recovery room nursing. [30257/18]
Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Given that this is an operational matter, it is appropriate that it should be dealt with by the HSE. I have referred the Deputy’s question to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

Health Services Staff Training

520. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health if a national education programme to prepare 130 nurses for advanced practitioner roles has been commissioned; and if not, when same will occur. [30258/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In 2017, the HSE commissioned a consortium of four universities (UCC, NUIG, UCD and TCD) to deliver a broad-based education programme for advanced nursing practice in partnership with services to support nurses to practice across the services including integrated care, in the areas of chronic disease management, older person care and unscheduled care.

In October 2017, 120 candidate ANP’s commenced an education programme in the service areas of chronic disease management (rheumatology and respiratory medicine), older persons care and unscheduled care across the country. The service areas for ANP development reflect priority service challenges in respect of access, waiting lists, hospital avoidance, and improved patient flow. This project was extended in 2018 with a further 30 candidate ANPs being funded by my Department through the HSE to undertake education and have their posts backfilled in the same areas of practice.

Nursing Education

521. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the status of the expansion of the public health nurse sponsorship programme to 150 nurses. [30259/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is an operational matter, it is appropriate that it should be dealt with by the HSE. I have forwarded the Deputy’s question to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

Nursing Education

522. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the status of the expansion of the sponsorship for healthcare workers to train as nurses to 30 places, incorporating both academic fees and salaries. [30260/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As it is an operational matter, it is appropriate that it should be dealt with by the HSE. I have referred the Deputy’s question to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

Nursing Education

523. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the status of the development of a national framework to establish an online resource to support and guide professional development planning for all nurses and midwives. [30261/18]
Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Given that this is an operational matter, it is appropriate that it should be dealt with by the HSE. I have referred the Deputy’s question to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

Nursing Education

524. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the status of the expansion of education provision by centres of nursing and midwifery. [30262/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Given that this is an operational matter, it is appropriate that it should be dealt with by the HSE. I have referred the Deputy’s question to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

Nursing Education

525. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the status of the establishment of a nursing postgraduate entry programme. [30263/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Report of the Review of Undergraduate Nursing and Midwifery degree programmes was commissioned by my Department to examine the efficiency and effectiveness of the programmes in preparing nurses and midwives to practice in the healthcare system now and into the future.


The Report of the Review included close to 40 recommendations. One of those recommendations was the establishment of a nursing Postgraduate entry programme. The HSE and my Department are currently conducting a scoping exercise in relation to this recommendation. In February 2018, my Department wrote to the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (MMBI) requesting that the NMBI consider developing standards and requirements for general and intellectual disability post-graduate education/registration programmes.

I understand that this was discussed by the NMBI and was referred to the Education, Training and Standards Committee. The Committee will revert to the Board in relation to this matter. I have written to the NMBI and asked that you be updated of progress on this matter in due course.

Hospital Appointments Status

526. Deputy Brian Stanley asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30266/18]

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 sched-
uled 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 Waiting Lists Data**

527. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons from County Meath waiting for a cataract operation; the average wait time; the longest wait time; and the actions being taken to reduce wait times. [30268/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Improving waiting times for hospital procedures is a key commitment in the Programme for Government and in 2018 €50 million was allocated to the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) to provide treatment for patients.

The Action Plan places a particular focus on cataract surgery. The plan commits to offering treatment to all cataract patients who are clinically suitable for outsourcing and who have been waiting more than 9 months for treatment.

In respect of the work of the NTPF, 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.

In terms on the current waiting times in Meath specifically, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

**Respite Care Services Data**

528. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for child and adult respite, respectively in County Meath; the average waiting time for respite; the longest wait for respite; and the number of staff working to provide respite services in County Meath for each of the past five years. [30269/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The 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.
529. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of contracts agreed between the HSE and a company (details supplied) since 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30271/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

### HSE Expenditure

530. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the amount paid by the HSE to a company (details supplied) since 2011 for services, infrastructure or projects by year in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30272/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

### Departmental Schemes

531. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the timeframe for the implementation of a new home care scheme; and when it will be put on a statutory basis. [30274/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** In advancement of the Government’s commitment to promote community-care so that people can continue to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible, the Department of Health is currently engaged in the development of a new, stand-alone statutory scheme and system of regulation for home-care services.

The new home-care scheme will introduce clear rules in relation to the services for which individuals are eligible and in relation to service-allocation. It will therefore be an important step in ensuring that the system operates in a consistent and fair manner and will help to improve access to home-care services on an affordable and sustainable basis. The introduction of a system of regulation for home-care will help to ensure public confidence in the services provided. The new scheme will also be designed to support family/unpaid carers and will complement and integrate effectively with other health and social-care services such as long-term residential care (including the Nursing Homes Support Scheme), primary and community services and hospital services.

As an initial step in the development of the new scheme, the Department of Health commissioned the Health Research Board to undertake a review of the home-care systems in place in four European countries. The review, which was published last April, will help to ensure that Ireland’s new home-care scheme and system of regulation is informed by international experience. In addition a public consultation on the financing and regulation of home-care was undertaken last year. The purpose of this consultation, to which approximately 2,600 submissions were received, was to enable the Department to find out about the views of service-users, their families and healthcare workers on current and future home-care provision. A report on the findings of the consultation was published on 26 June and will inform the development of the new scheme. Further consultation with service-users will take place later this year, in addition
to which the Department is actively engaging with the key NGOs and representative groups.

The development of a statutory scheme and system of regulation for home-care services is a complex undertaking. While the publication of the HRB review and of the report on the findings of the public consultation represent important milestones in the process of developing the new scheme, a significant amount of additional work remains to be carried out before final decisions are taken on the form of the home-care scheme and system of regulation. This is required if the reforms are to be successful, affordable and sustainable. The Department will continue to prioritise its work in developing the new scheme and every effort will be made to progress this matter as quickly as possible. However a realistic timeframe for the establishment of the new scheme on a statutory basis is 2–3 years.

While the new home-care scheme is under development, the Department of Health and Health Service Executive are continuing efforts to improve existing home-care services. In 2018 the HSE brought the funding for home help and Home Care Packages together into a single home support service for older people. As well as simplifying the application-process for home-care, the new service will be more responsive to service-users’ changing needs. More broadly the HSE will continue to encourage local integration of services and to build appropriate care-pathways, in particular for people with complex needs. A consumer-directed approach to home-support provision will be introduced, giving service-users greater choice in relation to when they receive services and their selection of a service-provider. This enhancement of current service-provision is being supported by increased investment in home-care services. In line with the commitment in A Programme for a Partnership Government (2016) to increase funding for home-care annually, funding for Older Persons’ Services rose from €763m in 2017 to €811m in 2018, including approximately €417m for the provision of home-support services.

Ambulance Service Data

532. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the availability of ambulances in the greater Dublin area; the average response times for ambulances following receipt of a 999 call; the number of instances in which an ambulance has not been immediately dispatched following receipt of an emergency call; the action he is taking to ensure adequate ambulance resources are in place and to ensure emergency calls can be responded to in a fast and efficient manner; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30278/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

533. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the mental health supports available for children awaiting scoliosis surgery here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30283/18]

**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.
534. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the mental health supports available for young persons that have a physical disability; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30284/18]

**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.

### Illicit Trade in Tobacco

535. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the next national steps to be taken with respect to the WHO protocol to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products in view of the fact that the conditions for the entry into force of the instrument adopted under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control were met on 27 June 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30286/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Ireland is applying the standard approach to the ratification of international agreements to the Protocol on the Illicit Trade of Tobacco in that it is seeking to ensure that all the necessary domestic legislation and amendments to legislation have been identified and effected before it proceeds to ratification. This approach is to ensure that Ireland can fulfil all of its obligations under the agreement upon its entry into force for Ireland.

### Dietician Service Provision

536. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there is no dietician in the Dublin 3, 5, 9, 13 and 17 areas; if funding will be made available for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30290/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

### Medicinal Products Reimbursement

537. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health if the approval of the drugs Nivolumab and Pembrolizumab will be expedited in order to prolong the life of certain cancer patients and in particular in the case of a person (details supplied); if they will be made VAT exempt and tax allowable in the circumstances in which a patient has no option but to self fund these drugs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30314/18]

**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. In addition, Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 precludes me from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual. It would be inappropriate to comment on the cases of individual patients.

In Ireland the majority of patients’ access medicines through the publicly funded Commu-
In line with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, if a company would like a medicine to be reimbursed by the HSE and available through the community drugs schemes, the company must first submit an application to the HSE to have the new medicine added to the reimbursement list.

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:

- Pembrolizumab (Keytruda) as monotherapy is indicated for the treatment of advanced (unresectable or metastatic) melanoma in adults.

- Pembrolizumab (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 ≥ 50% tumour proportion score (TPS) with no EGFR or ALK positive tumour mutations.

I have 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.

- Pembrolizumab (Keytruda) as a monotherapy for the treatment of locally advanced or metastatic NSCLC in adults whose tumours express PD-L1 with a ≥ 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.

Nivolumab is currently reimbursed for the following indications:

- Nivolumab (Opdivo) for monotherapy treatment for patients diagnosed with unresectable
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metastatic melanoma.

- Nivolumab (Opdivo) for the treatment of relapsed or refractory classical Hodgkin lymphoma after autologous stem cell transplant and treatment with brentuximab vedotin.

- Nivolumab (Opdivo) for the treatment of advanced renal cell carcinoma after prior therapy in adults.

- Nivolumab (Opdivo) for the treatment of squamous cell carcinoma of the head and neck (SCCHN) in adults progressing on or after platinum-based therapy.

- Nivolumab (Opdivo) plus ipilimumab (Yervoy) for the treatment of advanced melanoma.

The Department has been informed by the HSE that the following indications are currently in process for reimbursement:

- 2nd line use in locally advanced non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) in adult
- 2nd line use in locally advanced unresectable or metastatic urothelial carcinoma
- Adjuvant melanoma indication

These applications for reimbursement will be processed in line with the 2013 Act.

In relation to the issue of VAT exemption for self-funding patients, as you will appreciate that is a matter for my colleague Mr Paschal Donohoe TD, Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform for his attention.

Health Services Funding

538. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application for funding by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30315/18]

**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.

Commencement of Legislation

539. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health when he plans to commence Part 9 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015; the resources that have been set aside to allow the commencement of this Part; and the reason for the delay. [30317/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Part 9 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 and the registration of births is the responsibility of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection. The current legislation governing registration of births provides only for the registration of a mother’s details and a father’s details. It is not possible, at present, to register the details of a birth using the term “parent”. This is provided for in Part 9 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, which is yet to be commenced.

On 5 July 2018 the Government approved the publication of the Children and Family Relationships (Amendment) Bill 2018 and it is scheduled to be introduced into Dáil Éireann on Wednesday 11 July. It is envisaged that the passage of this Bill through the Oireachtas will fa-
cilitate the commencement of Parts 2 & 3 of the Act of 2015 in the autumn of 2018, which are the responsibility of my Department.

**Hospital Appointments Status**

540. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied). [30318/18]

**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**

541. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health if a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied) will be confirmed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30320/18]

**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.

**Dental Services**

542. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 190 of 21 June 2018, if staff will be acquired to cover dental services in Virginia health
centre; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that waiting lists are behind in County Cavan due to children from east County Cavan going to Cavan town for treatment (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30322/18]

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

543. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30325/18]

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.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

544. Deputy Mary Butler asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be assessed for a wheelchair; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30326/18]

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.

Mental Health Services

545. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Health if the benefits of acupuncture in the management of mental health will be investigated with an organisation (details supplied); the way in which the organisation’s members can be incorporated with the HSE as an additional method in the management of mental health nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30327/18]

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

Medical Products
546. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 310 of 8 May 2018, if a detailed breakdown of patient entitlement to post-mastectomy products, including product types and product cost across each of the relevant HSE local area offices will be provided in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30328/18]

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 Procedures

547. Deputy Carol Nolan asked the Minister for Health when the chief medical officer’s report into the investigation of claims regarding transvaginal mesh complications will be complete; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30335/18]

549. Deputy Carol Nolan asked the Minister for Health if proposals have been made to commission scanning, imaging or ultrasound devices in hospitals to detect polypropylene transvaginal mesh or sub-urethral sling complications; his plans to train or recruit specialised radiologists and or technicians to carry out this function; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30337/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 547 and 549 together.

As Minister for Health I am committed to putting in place the measures necessary to ensure that both the current use of Transvaginal mesh implants (TVMIs) in surgical procedures in Ireland, and the ongoing clinical management of women who have had these procedures in the past are in line with international best practice and emerging evidence. The report of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) to him will make recommendations in relation to the clinical and technical issues involved and is expected to be finalised in the coming weeks.

In advance of finalisation of the report by the CMO, two priority recommendations have been identified for immediate advancement. These are (i) the development of appropriate patient information resources and consent materials and (ii) clarification and development of treatment pathways and appropriate referral services for women suffering from mesh-related complications.

I am informed that the CMO wrote to the Acting Director General of the HSE, and to the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (IOG), the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), and the Continence Foundation of Ireland (CFI) on May 28th 2018, requesting that the Executive commence work on these Priority Recommendations, in conjunction with the IOG, the RCSI and the CFI.

The HSE has confirmed that work has commenced by the National Women and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP) in the HSE to progress these recommendations, and the experiences of the women concerned will be an essential element to informing the assessment of need and identifying the aftercare services required. This work will include identifying the appropriate specialist clinical expertise and facilities required at hospital group level and nationally to provide comprehensive aftercare services, including the role of specialist diagnostic services such as translabial scanning. Pending the completion of this work, there may be a need to look at sourcing services from abroad to address any immediate shortfalls identified, either through utilisation of the treatment abroad scheme or by commissioning services from abroad. A Learning Notice concerning mesh devices in uro-gynaecological procedures was circulated by the NWIHP on 26th June 2018 to all maternity hospitals and acute hospitals with gynaecological
services to highlight the importance of appropriate patient selection, adequate information and consent and also to inform the service providers that a Response Group has been convened to propose remedies for and address the provision of aftercare for complications. This learning notice has been posted on the NWIHP website which can be found at this link.

Treatment Abroad Scheme

548. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health the number of applications received by the HSE for transvaginal mesh removal in the UK through the treatment abroad scheme; the number approved and denied, respectively; the grounds for refusal in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30336/18]

**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.

*Question No. 549 answered with Question No. 547.*

Occupational Therapy Waiting Lists

550. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if an occupational therapy appointment will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30338/18]

**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.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Coverage

551. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health his plans on including a device (details supplied) under the long-term illness scheme for persons over the age of 21 years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30339/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.
552. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Health the number of appeals under the fair deal scheme made in each of the years from 2013 to 2017; the amount awarded on appeal for each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30340/18]

**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.

553. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Health the number of appeals made to have an appeal decision under the fair deal scheme backdated to the date of the initial award of the fair deal scheme; the value of these appeals in each of the years from 2013 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30341/18]

**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.

554. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Health his plans to change the policy of awarding appeals under the fair deal scheme from the date of appeal decision to that of backdating it to the date of the initial award; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30342/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** The Nursing Homes Support Scheme is a system of financial support for those in need of long-term nursing home care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their means while the State pays the balance of the cost. The Scheme aims to ensure that long-term nursing home care is accessible and affordable for everyone and that people are cared for in the most appropriate settings.

Certain decisions of the HSE in relation to the scheme may be appealed within 40 working days of the original decision been made. The decisions which may be appealed include:

- the result of the needs assessment,
- the HSE’s decision not to consider an application for State Support,
- the HSE’s decision not to carry out a financial assessment,
- the result of an application for State Support,
- the result of an application for the Nursing Home Loan,
- the result of a review.

Appeals are considered by suitable people who are appointed by the HSE with the approval of the Minister of Health. The outcome of an appeal may be further appealed to the High Court on a point of law. A case can also be taken with the Office of the Ombudsman.
The National Guidelines for the Standardised Implementation of the NHSS provide that State Support and the Nursing Home Loan should be paid in respect of qualified applicants from either the date that the application is approved, or date of admission to the nursing home whichever is the later.

There are no plans to amend these guidelines to provide for funding to be backdated in the case of a successful appeal.

**Legislative Measures**

555. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if the legal parentage rights of same-sex couples who conceive a child through surrogacy will be addressed in upcoming legislation amending the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015. [30345/18]

617. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Health when he expects the enactment of legislation to amend the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 to allow both male same-sex partners to sign a surrogate child’s birth certificate; the timeline for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30670/18]

668. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Health if he will amend the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 in order that the names of both men in a same-sex marriage can appear on the birth certificate of their son born through surrogacy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30845/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 555, 617 and 668 together.

I received Government approval on Thursday 5 July to allow the publication of the Children and Family Relationships (Amendment) Bill 2018 and enable the Bill’s introduction in Dáil Éireann this week. The specific purpose of this Amendment Bill is to correct a typographical and technical error in the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, which will facilitate the subsequent commencement of Parts 2 and 3 of that Act and makes no change to the policy intention of the Act of 2015.

The Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 was enacted to modernise family law in a way that is inclusive of and sensitive to the reality of contemporary family life in Ireland and to meet the needs of children living in diverse family types. Parts 2 and 3 of the Act, for which I am responsible, are key elements of the Act and are concerned with the rights of children conceived through the use of donor embryos or gametes.

The Children and Family Relationships Act specifically relates to procedures where the intending mother is also the birth mother. As such this Act does not encompass surrogacy.


**National Treatment Purchase Fund**

556. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the amount of funding provided to each community healthcare organisation area via the NTPF in 2017 and to date in 2018; and if
he will make a statement on the matter. [30352/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Improving waiting times for hospital procedures is a key commitment in the Programme for Government and in 2018 €50 million was allocated to the NTPF to provide treatment for patients.

In April this year I published the Inpatient and Day Case Action Plan 2018, a joint initiative between my Department, the HSE and the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF). The Plan outlines the combined impact of HSE and NTPF activity in 2018 to reduce the number of patients waiting for treatment.

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 being referred on to such a list following clinical assessment by a consultant/specialist at an outpatient clinic. These authorisations are made in respect of the longest waiting patients first.

In addition, under the Plan, the NTPF, working closely with the HSE, has invited all hospital groups to develop proposals to maximise the use of existing facilities and capacity. The NTPF advises it has received 70 different proposals across all hospital groups.

The NTPF works closely with the Department of Health, the HSE, and acute public hospitals to arrange treatment for eligible patients, but does not provide funding to CHO areas.

**Patient Deaths**

557. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if his attention or that of his predecessors has been drawn to the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30355/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I am not aware of having our attention drawn to this case. As the Deputy is aware, this tragic event occurred over 45 years ago and it would be extremely difficult to ascertain if any particular Minister for Health had their attention drawn to this case over this near half century.

**Hospital Services**

558. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the cost of deploying a modular cardiac laboratory at University Hospital Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30360/18]

559. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the length of time the modular cardiac laboratory will be in situ at University Hospital Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30361/18]

560. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the additional staff complement that will come with the deployment of a modular cath laboratory at University Hospital Waterford. [30362/18]

561. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health if the mobile cardiac laboratory in situ at University Hospital Waterford will remain in place and operational until a modular laboratory is deployed. [30363/18]
562. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the full range of services a modular cardiac laboratory deployed at University Hospital Waterford will provide; and the difference between a mobile laboratory and a modular laboratory. [30364/18]

563. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the nature and detail of the tendering process required to deploy a modular cath laboratory at University Hospital Waterford. [30365/18]

564. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the nature and detail of the project design work required to deploy a modular cath lab at University Hospital Waterford. [30366/18]

565. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the nature and detail of the planning process required to deploy a modular cath lab at UHW. [30367/18]

566. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the nature and detail of the construction and commissioning work required to deploy a modular cath lab at University Hospital Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30368/18]

567. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the timeframe for delivery of a modular cath lab at University Hospital Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30369/18]

568. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the immediate action he is taking to commence the process of deploying a modular cath lab at University Hospital Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30370/18]

574. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the Department, agency or public body that will have responsibility for deploying a modular cath lab at University Hospital Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30376/18]

575. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the Department, agency or public body that will have responsibility for the tendering process required to deploy a modular cath lab at University Hospital Waterford. [30377/18]

576. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the Department, agency or public body that will have responsibility for the project design work required to deploy a modular cath lab at University Hospital Waterford. [30378/18]

577. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the Department, agency or public body that will have responsibility for the planning process required to deploy a modular cath lab at University Hospital Waterford. [30379/18]

578. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the Department, agency or public body that will have responsibility for the construction and commissioning work required to deploy a modular cath lab at University Hospital Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30380/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 558 to 568, inclusive, and 574 to 578, inclusive, together.

I believe there is merit in the proposal for a modular cardio-catheterisation laboratory at UHW in order to address waiting times at the hospital and to provide a better service for the people of Waterford and the South East. I have received advice from the HSE and there is some further work required on the detail. I have asked my Department to proceed without delay to
engage with the HSE on the next steps in providing a modular lab. This will include consideration of the specific details he requests regarding tendering, project design, planning processes, construction and commissioning work.

The timeframe for the development of modular builds as outlined by the HSE must include tendering, project design work, planning, construction and commissioning so it will take until next year to deliver the modular cath lab. I have committed that this will be funded in the 2019 Estimate.

**Hospital Services**

569. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health his plans to deliver a second permanent cath lab at University Hospital Waterford, UHW; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30371/18]

570. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health his plans to deliver 24-hour seven-day week primary percutaneous coronary intervention, PPCI, at UHW; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30372/18]

571. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the reason UHW is the only centre that provides PPCI on a limited nine to five, Monday to Friday basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30373/18]

572. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health if a proposal from a person (details supplied) to cease all PPCI at UHW will be rejected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30374/18]

573. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the cost of providing a permanent second cath lab at UHW; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30375/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 569 to 573, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy knows, following the publication of the Herity Report, I asked my Department to undertake a National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services.

The aim of this Review 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.

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, which is expected to be complete by June 2019.

The Deputy will also be aware that I have asked the Department to proceed without delay to engage with the HSE on the next steps in providing a modular cardiac cath lab at UHW. **Questions Nos. 574 to 578, inclusive, answered with Question No. 558.**

**Hospital Appointments Status**

579. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an assessment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30386/18]
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

580. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30388/18]

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.

HIQA Reports

581. Deputy Eugene Murphy asked the Minister for Health if reports produced by HIQA in relation to dental services in County Roscommon will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30389/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Dental Services Provision

582. Deputy Eugene Murphy asked the Minister for Health his plans to close or move the dental services provided in Castlerea County Roscommon; and if he will make a statement on
the matter. [30390/18]

**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.

**Primary Care Centres Administration**

583. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the services he is seeking to relocate to the Boyle primary care centre from other medical centres in County Roscommon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30391/18]

584. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health his plans to move services provided by a medical centre (details supplied) to the Boyle primary care centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30392/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 583 and 584 together.

As these question(s) relate to service matters, I have arranged for them to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

**Primary Care Centres Provision**

585. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if he or the HSE have plans to develop a new health centre or community health facility in an area (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30393/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the HSE has responsibility for the provision, along with the maintenance and operation of Primary Care Centres and other Primary Care facilities, the Executive has been asked to reply directly to the Deputy.

**Medical Card Drugs Availability**

586. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to remove the requirement for medical card holders to obtain a prescription from their general practitioner to access nicotine replacement therapy for free under the general medical services scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30397/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** There are no plans to remove the requirement for medical card holders to obtain a prescription from their general practitioner to access nicotine replacement therapy.

**Disabilities Assessments**

587. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Health when needs assessment recommendations will be put in place for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30399/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Govern-
ment is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

**Hospital Complaints Procedures**

588. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a complaint by a person (details supplied) in respect of their child; the outcome of the review of the case that was undertaken; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30409/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I am aware of the complaints raised by the individual concerned.

I understand from the HSE that management at Our Lady’s Children’s Hospital Crumlin agreed to carry out a peer review. I have requested that the hospital makes direct contact with this individual to inform them of the status of this review.

**Medical Products Supply**

589. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the reason children in counties Cork, Galway and Dublin can receive orthotics within months; the further reason that in County Limerick the waiting time is four years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30426/18]

**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.

**Cross-Border Health Initiatives**

590. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the funding provided in 2017 and to date in 2018 for the cross-border directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30434/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

**Nursing Staff Data**

591. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the number of nurses employed by the HSE in hospitals in County Cork in each of the years 2014 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30436/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to
the Deputy on this matter.

**Nursing Staff Recruitment**

592. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the number of new nurses hired by the HSE in hospitals in County Cork in each of the years 2014 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30437/18]

**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.

**Nursing Staff Data**

593. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the number of nurses who retired from the HSE in hospitals in County Cork in each of the years 2014 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30438/18]

**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.

**Home Help Service Data**

594. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the number of home help hours provided to persons in County Cork in each of the years 2014 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30439/18]

**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.

**Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

595. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) is waiting one year for a hearing aid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30444/18]

**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**

596. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 168 of 14 June 2018, the process for the release of funding for the allocation of home support services for the remainder of 2018; the reason waiting lists for these services exist in view of the fact that the number of home support hours provided to date is less than the target hours budgeted for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30498/18]

**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.

Ministerial Travel

597. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the cost of travel expenses for him and those that travel with him since his appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30513/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The information requested by the Deputy is currently being collated by my Department and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Proposed Legislation

598. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health whether there will be a review of the recent Court of Appeal judgment regarding a person who was prevented from leaving the hospital that was caring for them where in the view of the hospital, this was in the person’s best interest; if the lack of legislation covering detention other than for infection or under the Mental Health Care Act 2017 will be addressed; his views on the best way to address the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30541/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department is actively developing legislation to provide procedural safeguards to ensure that people in residential settings are not unlawfully deprived of their liberty.

The Government approved draft Heads of Bill on this matter for public consultation last December. This draft legislation sets out procedural safeguards to ensure that people in residential settings who lack capacity are not unlawfully deprived of their liberty. The approach taken in the draft legislation makes use of the decision-making procedures, supports and safeguards that already exist under the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 and also includes some additional safeguards specific to deprivation of liberty. The proposals build on the machinery of the Decision Support Service, which is provided for under this Act. The 51 submissions that were received are currently being analysed.

An Advisory Group comprised of key stakeholders has been formed to consider the findings of the public consultation, advise on appropriate amendments to the draft Heads of Bill and ensure that the approach taken integrates effectively with existing legislation.

Every effort is being made to progress the legislation as quickly as possible and the implications of the recent Court of Appeal judgment will be considered as part of this process. My Department is also liaising with the HSE regarding the implications of the judgment.

Hospital Appointments Status

599. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30543/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its be-
half, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

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In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

**Project Ireland 2040**

600. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the number of times he has met his officials regarding Project Ireland 2040 since its launch; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30554/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The National Development Plan 2017 - 2028 is an integral element and support for the future development and reform of our public health services.

I meet officials of my Department each and every day in respect of public health service provision, policy and reform and the issue of capital investment under the National Development Plan 2018 - 2027 is regularly discussed at meetings with members of the Department’s Management Board.

**Freedom of Information Requests**

601. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the number of FOI requests his Department has received since January 2018; the number of refusals; the number that have been appealed and that are ongoing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30571/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The information requested by the Deputy is contained in the following table.

The figures for 2018 are provided. For completeness the number of appeals ongoing for 2017 FOI requests are also provided.

For the first six months of 2018 the number of requests has increased by 32%.

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<td>Freedom of Information Requests received</td>
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<td>2</td>
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602. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacancies on State boards under the remit of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30588/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The nomination and appointment process for statutory boards 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 the information requested by the Deputy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Board</th>
<th>Current Vacancies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beaumont Hospital Board</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultative Council on Hepatitis C</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental Council</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dietitians Registration Board</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Safety Authority Of Ireland</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health and Social Care Professionals Council</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Information and Quality Authority</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irish Blood Transfusion Service</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Cancer Registry Board</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Haemophilia Council</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Paediatric Hospital Development Board</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapists Registration Board</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optical Registration Board</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiotherapists Registration Board</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radiographers Registration Board</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speech and Language Therapists Registration Board</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James’s Hospital Board</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tallaght Hospital Board</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voluntary Health Insurance Board</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

My Department in conjunction with PAS is currently advertising for position of Chair of the HSE board. The legislation establishing the board of the HSE is being drafted as a priority and I hope to bring the legislation through as soon as possible in 2018.

**Nursing Homes Support Scheme Applications**

603. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a nursing
10 July 2018

home placement for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30598/18]

**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.

**Hospitals Capital Programme**

604. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE has abandoned plans to complete a new 50-bed elderly care unit by 2021 at St. Joseph’s Hospital, Ennis in favour of a facility at an unknown greenfield site to be completed at some time in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30607/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, my Department has asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly in relation to the current position regarding the development of a community nursing unit in Ennis.

**Hospitals Capital Programme**

605. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 388 of 3 July 2018, if a capital submission plan for the upgrade of St. Joseph’s Community Hospital, Stranorlar, Lifford Community Hospital and Ramelton Community Hospital was received in March 2018 from area 1 of the HSE; if a final decision has been made regarding the proposals contained within the submission; if the capital plan has been amended to allow for the new proposals contained within the March 2018 submission; the timeline to address the proposals; if he will clarify the matter in view of the fact that it directly relates to departmental policy and is not solely a matter for the HSE as indicated the reply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30608/18]

606. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 389 of 3 July 2018, if a copy of the March 2018 submission regarding three community hospitals in County Donegal was received from area 1 of the HSE; the timeframe to address the proposals within the existing lifetime of the current capital plan; if a supplementary budget has been prepared in order to deal with the proposals of the submission within the capital plan; if he will clarify a matter in view of the fact that it directly relates to departmental policy and is not solely a matter for the HSE as indicated the reply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30609/18]

607. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 390 of 3 July 2018, the proposals contained within the capital submission plan forwarded by HSE area 1 for Lifford Community Hospital; the proposals contained within the existing plan; the timeline for the hospital in terms of the current capital plan; the new or additional proposals contained within the March 2018 submission from HSE area 1; if he will clarify a matter in view of the fact that it directly relates to departmental policy and is not solely a matter for the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30610/18]

608. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 390 of 3 July 2018, if the current capital plan for community hospitals is sufficiently funded and can meet the proposals contained within the additional capital plan
submission from the HSE area 1 as applied for in March 2018; if not, his plans for additional funding; if he will clarify the matter in view of the fact that it directly relates to departmental policy and is not solely a matter for the HSE as indicated the reply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30611/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 605 to 608, inclusive, together.

The Capital Investment Programme for Community Nursing Units provides the framework to allow for an enhanced programme to replace, upgrade and refurbish, as appropriate. The programme includes a number of facilities in Donegal. Significant work was undertaken to determine the most optimum scheduling of projects within the phased provision of funding to achieve compliance and registration with the Health Information and Quality Authority. Furthermore, the National Development Plan, published earlier this year as part of the Ireland 2040 policy initiative, acknowledges the need for additional capacity requirements and it is expected that 4,500 additional short-term and long-term beds will be required across the public system in Community Nursing Units and other step-down facilities, as identified by the Health Capacity Review.

Under the NDP, health capital projects and programmes currently underway will continue - including the Capital Investment Programme for Community Nursing Units. These major priority projects and programmes will require the bulk of the notified capital allocation over the initial period of the Plan, 2018-2022. It is important to recognise that the NDP is a long-term plan, which will roll out over ten years and includes provision for a large number of developments across the country.

The Minister for Mental Health and Older People Jim Daly TD is aware of local concerns that have been raised relating to the future of long-stay residential care provision in the East Donegal area. There is a process in place for the agreement and prioritisation of capital projects. Since his visit to Donegal earlier this year officials from the Department have engaged with the HSE to ensure that investment in facilities in the area will meet the needs of the community. The Minister is pleased to note that additional dementia beds are now available within St Joseph’s Hospital.

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

609. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Health the consultant urologist vacancies across all hospitals in the Saolta University Healthcare group; the length of time for which these posts have been vacant; when it is anticipated that these posts will be filled, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30613/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to the Deputy directly.

EU Directives

610. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health when the EU safety standards for protection against dangers arising from exposure to ionising radiation regulations 2018 will be signed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30616/18]

611. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health the status of discussions that
have taken place between the representatives of or representative body for chiropractors regarding the EU safety standards for protection against dangers arising from exposure to ionising radiation regulations 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30617/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 610 and 611 together.

My Department is working to finalise the transposition of the medical provisions of the Directive and officials will submit final proposed regulations to me soon.

Officials from my Department met with the Chiropractic Association of Ireland (which represents most chiropractors) earlier this year regarding the new regulations. There are no discussions currently under way.

I expect to be in a position to sign the new regulations shortly.

Hospital Appointments Status

612. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30624/18]

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 Waiting Lists

613. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Health if a post-surgery assessment will be carried out for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30625/18]

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, as soon as possible.

Hospital Appointments Status

614. Deputy Timmy Dooley asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will receive an appointment for knee surgery at Croom Orthopaedic Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30626/18]
**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.

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**Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

615. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Health the status of the reimbursement of the drug Ocrevus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30665/18]

**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 have been informed that Ocrelizumab for the treatment of adult patients with early primary progressive multiple sclerosis (PPMS) and for the treatment of adult patients with relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis (RMS) is currently undergoing a full pharmacoeconomic assessment by the NCPE.
616. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a procedure for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30667/18]

**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.

*Question No. 617 answered with Question No. 555.*

**Work Permits Eligibility**

618. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the outcome of discussions held with the nursing home sector regarding difficulties in recruiting staff and possible changes to employment permits; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30681/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Responsibility for the employment permit system rests with my colleague, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation. In order to amend the policies underpinning the current system, it must be demonstrated that recruitment difficulties are due to shortages and not to factors such as pay and/or working conditions. It is important therefore that a detailed business case, which sets out the necessary data and evidence to justify the need for the nursing home sector to go outside the EEA to find workers, is provided.

Officials from my Department have agreed to meet with Nursing Homes Ireland, along with officials from the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (who are currently reviewing the policies underpinning the current employment permits system) to focus on this matter. A date will be agreed shortly.

**Elder Abuse**

619. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the reason there is no statutory protection for old and vulnerable persons with regard to adult neglect (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30694/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In relation to the health sector a number of measures are in place, or are being developed, to protect adults at risk of abuse and neglect.

The HSE published its national safeguarding policy and procedures, Safeguarding Vuln-
able People at Risk of Abuse, in December 2014. This provides clear guidelines and procedures for staff to follow both in cases of suspected abuse and of neglect of vulnerable adults (including older people). This safeguarding policy was the first such HSE policy to encompass both elder abuse and neglect as well as concerns of abuse and neglect relating to people availing of disability services.

The HSE has established a number of structures to implement its national safeguarding policy. This includes a National Safeguarding Office, an advisory National Safeguarding Committee, Specialist Safeguarding and Protection Teams in each of the 9 CHO Areas, more than 1,500 designated safeguarding officers, and over 41,000 attendances at safeguarding policy and procedures training.

In December 2017 the Government approved the development of a national adult safeguarding policy for the health sector. The policy will apply across the wide spectrum of the health sector, i.e. in the public, private and voluntary sectors, and will be supported by any necessary legislation.

A detailed review of the operation of the HSE’s operational safeguarding policy is at an advanced stage and is expected to be completed soon. The findings of the HSE’s safeguarding review will assist the Department of Health’s development of appropriate policy approaches for the wider health sector.

HIQA and the Mental Health Commission are currently in the process of jointly developing National Standards for Adult Safeguarding, with advisory input from the Department of Health among others.

Together these initiatives should greatly improve the safeguarding of adults at risk of abuse and neglect in the health sector.

**Mental Health Services Provision**

620. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of CBT assistance for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30700/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible

**Health Services Provision**

621. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if the case of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30702/18]

**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

**Mental Health Services Expenditure**

622. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health the average cost of providing a
single non-specialised mental health nursing position for out-of-hours care on an annual basis [30703/18]

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

Primary Care Services Provision

623. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health the number of children on the waiting list for primary care physiotherapy in County Louth; and the length of time these children have been waiting [30711/18]

624. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health the approximate waiting time for primary care physiotherapy in County Louth [30712/18]

625. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health the number of whole-time equivalent physiotherapists employed in primary care physiotherapy in County Louth; and the locations in which they treat patients [30713/18]

626. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health if there are staff vacancies within primary care physiotherapy in County Louth; and if so, the recruitment that has taken place [30714/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 623 to 626, inclusive, together.

As these question(s) relate to service matters, I have arranged for them to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Occupational Therapy Waiting Lists

627. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health the number of children on the waiting list for primary care occupational therapy in County Louth; and the length of time these children have been waiting [30715/18]

628. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health the approximate waiting time for primary care occupational therapy in County Louth [30716/18]

629. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health if there are staff vacancies within the area of primary care occupational therapy in County Louth; and if so, the recruitment that has taken place [30718/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 627 to 629, inclusive, together.

As these question(s) relate to service matters, I have arranged for them to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Occupational Therapy Staff
630. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the qualifications of the HSE staff who are delivering occupational therapy courses for parents [30719/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

**Mental Health Services Funding**

631. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of providing a minimum of one crisis house in each catchment area [30724/18]

**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.

**Mental Health Services**

632. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health the number of mental health catchment areas in place nationally by CHO. [30725/18]

**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.

**Mental Health Services**

633. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health the estimated annual cost of providing 24/7 crisis intervention cover for mental health; and the estimated cost of staff, additional staff required and other additional expenditure. [30726/18]

**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.

**Mental Health Services**

634. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health the HSE funding provided to the Jigsaw mental health service in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30732/18]

**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.

Mental Health Services

635. Deputy Pat Buckley asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for counselling at primary care by CHO; the percentage waiting for in excess of 1, 3, 6 and 12 months, respectively. [30733/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Mental Health Services

636. Deputy Pat Buckley asked the Minister for Health the primary care teams operating across the State; and the details of all mental health roles in place. [30734/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Mental Health Services

637. Deputy Pat Buckley asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of providing a minimum of one mental health role on each primary care team. [30735/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Mental Health Services

638. Deputy Pat Buckley asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of the establishment of a dedicated advocacy service for mental health patients; and the estimated annual running costs thereafter. [30736/18]

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.

National Maternity Hospital

639. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health his plans to provide funding to a reconstituted national maternity hospital that will be a subsidiary of a group (details supplied) of which the ultimate owner will be an entity that will report to the Vatican Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. [30737/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the redevelopment and reloca-
tion of the new maternity hospital at Elm Park, I can confirm that the terms of the Mulvey agreement provide for the establishment of a new company which will have clinical and operational, as well as financial and budgetary independence in the provision of maternity, gynaecology and neonatal services.

At present, a draft legal framework is being finalised which will ensure that the State’s significant investment in the new maternity hospital will be protected; this framework will also further underpin the operational and clinical independence of the new hospital.

Disabilities Assessments

640. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to an application by a person (details supplied) for an assessment of need which was received by the HSE on 15 June 2017. [30742/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Disabilities Assessments

641. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health the number of assessments of need in County Louth that have not been begun three months following receipt of complete applications. [30743/18]

642. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health the number of assessments of need in County Louth that have been commenced more than three months ago but are not complete. [30744/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 641 and 642 together.

The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services
643. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health if the case of a person (details supplied) will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30748/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### Medical Card Eligibility

644. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of providing a full medical card including general practitioner, medical and surgical service, drugs, medicines and medical and surgical appliances for persons in receipt of a carer’s allowance or carer’s benefit. [30751/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In December 2017, the Government announced that additional funding would be provided to enable all carers in receipt of Carer’s Allowance to qualify for a GP visit card. Following detailed financial analysis the Minister decided to extend this Scheme to all persons in receipt of Carer’s Benefit. The legislation to provide this service, the Health (General Practitioner Service) Bill 2018 has been passed by the Seanad on 05 June 2018.

The provision of medical cards to this particular cohort is not intended under this Bill.

A detailed costing of the actual additional cost of providing a medical card to persons in receipt of either Carer’s Allowance or Carer’s Benefit, whom do not already hold a medical card, is not available as it would require an examination of the HSE and Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection datasets.

However, the estimated total cost of providing a medical card to all recipients of Carer’s Benefit and Carer’s Allowance could be in the region of €80 million. This figure is based on the figures current in December 2017 for the number of recipients of Carer’s Benefit and Carer’s Allowance and the 2018 average cost of a medical card. It should be noted that a significant majority of persons in receipt of Carer’s Allowance will already hold a Medical Card.

### Hospital Appointments Status

645. **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. [30756/18]

**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.

**Nursing Home Accommodation Provision**

646. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if suitable inpatient accommodation and a step-down facility will be provided for older persons in counties Carlow and Kilkenny in view of the fact that the census figures show a significant increase in this cohort of the population; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30760/18]

**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.

**Child Protection**

647. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the person or body monitoring assessment and therapy services for children, young persons and their families in circumstances in which sexual abuse is a concern; the measures being taken to ensure best international standards of practice are being followed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30773/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Department of Children and Youth Affairs is responsible for developing the policy and legislative framework in relation to child welfare and protection. The Department also has oversight of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, regarding the implementation of policy and the effective delivery of child welfare and protection services.

Tusla has a primary responsibility to promote the safety and well-being of children.

Earlier this year the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) set up a cross Department steering group to assess the feasibility of setting up child advocacy centres in Ireland with the objective of reducing trauma being experienced by children and their families as a result of child sexual abuse. The Department of Health is represented on this group. The group expects to report by the end of the year.

**HSE Properties**

648. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Health if a building will be signed over to a school (details supplied). [30774/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the management of the health care property estate, my Department has asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly in relation to this matter.

**Data Protection**

649. **Deputy Patrick O’Donovan** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter.
Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Deputy’s query relates to the HSE’s response to a data subject seeking access to personal data I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply. The Deputy may also wish to advise his constituent that she can obtain further information from and/or make a complaint to the Data Protection Commissioner.

Nursing Home Services

650. Deputy Imelda Munster asked the Minister for Health the service level agreement in place with the HSE, HIQA and public nursing homes in relation to entitlements to services, treatment and therapies for persons who are medical card holders; and the relevant legislative framework for same. [30785/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Nursing Home Services

651. Deputy Imelda Munster asked the Minister for Health the services, therapies and treatment available for persons in public nursing homes who are medical card holders. [30786/18]

652. Deputy Imelda Munster asked the Minister for Health if speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and wound dressing are available to persons in public nursing homes who are medical card holders. [30787/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 651 and 652 together.

As these question(s) relate to service matters, I have arranged for them to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Hospital Services

653. Deputy Billy Kelleher asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive necessary medical treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30789/18]

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 sched-
uled 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.

**Orthodontic Services Provision**

654. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if a matter regarding the case of persons (details supplied) will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30791/18]

**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.

**Services for People with Disabilities**

655. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health his plans for investment in disability services at a site (details supplied) in County Cavan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30792/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

**Psychological Services**

656. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of whole-time equivalent paediatric psychiatrists approved for funding from the HSE for Waterford city and county for 2018. [30799/18]

**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 to you directly as soon as possible.

**Psychological Services**

657. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of whole-time equivalent child psychologists approved for funding from the HSE for Waterford city and county for 2018. [30800/18]

**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 to you directly as soon as possible.
Occupational Therapy Data

658. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of whole-time equivalent child occupational therapists approved for funding from the HSE for Waterford city and county. [30801/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Speech and Language Therapy Data

659. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of whole-time equivalent child speech and language therapists approved for funding from the HSE for Waterford city and county. [30802/18]

**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.

Psychological Services

660. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of whole-time equivalent child psychologists approved for funding from the HSE for Waterford city and county for 2018. [30804/18]

**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.

Occupational Therapy Data

661. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of whole-time equivalent child occupational therapists approved for funding from the HSE for Waterford city and county. [30805/18]

662. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of whole-time equivalent child speech and language approved for funding from the HSE for Waterford city and county. [30806/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 661 and 662 together.

The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabili-
ties which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Home Care Packages

663. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health the way in which care companies contracted by the HSE to fill care packages are regulated; the standards they must adhere to; the mechanisms available for persons to make complaints independently; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30807/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Health Care Professionals

664. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether a FETAC level 5 qualification is sufficient for carers employed by care companies contracted by the HSE to care for persons with severe disabilities; the extra training they must undergo to ensure they are competent with clients with a high level of need such as those with Alzheimer’s disease or a severe disability; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30808/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** For employment in the HSE, Health Care Assistants are required to hold the FETAC/QQI Health Care Support Level 5, Major Award. This broad training base provides an education in person centred care as well as a wide variety of aspects in patient care. Health Care Assistants perform a significant role as part of the multi-disciplinary team in various services throughout the HSE. Health Care Assistants work under the supervision and direction of nursing staff. This is a very rewarding and enjoyable role but it is also a challenging role given the diversity of the patient health care needs.

The Deputy asks about qualifications for carers employed by care companies contracted by the HSE. Section 39 of the Health Act 2004, provides that the HSE may ‘..give assistance to any person or body that provides or proposes to provide a service similar or ancillary to a service that the Executive may provide.’. Financial assistance is provided in the form of a grant. Any individuals employed by these organisations are not HSE employees. Consequently, it is a matter for the care companies concerned to ensure that the care workers possess the necessary qualifications, skills and attributes required to fully and effectively carry out the functions of the role.

Hospital Appointments Status

665. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30816/18]
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.

Palliative Care Facilities

666. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Health if a timeframe has been set out for the delivery of a facility (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30817/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): At present, St. Christopher’s Hospice provides three palliative care support beds as well as residential care for 10 local people with profound disabilities. However, because of increased demand and an expansion of services provided the local specialist palliative care team, there is a need to provide for a dedicated specialist palliative care unit in Cavan.

An options appraisal for St. Christopher’s Hospice is taking place and a report is due in the next two weeks. A meeting between the Head of Primary Care in CHO1, the HSE National Lead for Palliative Care and St Christopher’s Hospice is scheduled to take place later this month to discuss the findings of the report. A project board will be established by the HSE and St. Christopher’s Hospice once the options appraisal is completed.

St. Christopher’s Hospice is included on the national development plan for new specialist palliative care inpatient units with a view to opening in 2021. The HSE is committed to developing the specialist palliative care unit and will continue to work with St. Christopher’s Hospice to ensure that the development takes place. Question No. 667 answered with Question No. 373. Question No. 668 answered with Question No. 555.

Health Care Policy

669. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Health when the national dental health plan will be published; the reason it has taken so long to update the 1994 dental health programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30849/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): A new National Oral Health Policy is currently being finalised and I expect it will be published later this year.

The aim of the policy is to develop a model of care that will enable preventative approaches to be prioritised, improve access, and support interventions appropriate to current and future oral health needs.
The development of the policy has involved a number of working groups and detailed research and surveys and analysis of research findings. It has included a needs assessment, a review of resources and involved consultation with stakeholders, including dental professionals and the public.

**Medicinal Products Availability**

670. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health when the medical supplement Kuvan will be approved for persons with phenylketonuria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30850/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement decisions, in accordance with the 2013 Act. The Act specifies the criteria for decisions on the reimbursement of medicines. The 2013 Act does not give the Minister for Health any powers in this regard. The HSE does not require approval or consent from the Minister or Government when making a reimbursement decision.

This process ensures that treatments that are clinical and cost effective are reimbursed. In circumstances where a company has failed to demonstrate the clinical benefit to support the price that they are seeking for their treatment, the HSE reaches a decision not to reimburse the medicine.

Kuvan (Sapropterin) is a medicinal product for the treatment of PKU Phenylketonuria. It is an expensive medicine and treatment once initiated would be expected to be lifelong.

The NCPE health technology assessment of Sapropterin was completed on the 15th September 2017 and they did not recommend reimbursement as it was not deemed cost effective.

The application was considered in detail by the HSE Drugs Group in January 2018 and it was referred to the Rare Diseases Technology Review Committee for more detailed consideration and consultation with expert clinicians and patients’ groups.

This engagement process is still on-going. It is expected that the Rare Diseases Technology Review Committee will report back to the HSE Drugs Group by July 2018. Following on from these final recommendations, a decision will be made on the reimbursement of Kuvan.

**Hospital Waiting Lists**

671. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list to see a consultant cardiologist at Beaumont Hospital; the average waiting time to see the consultant; the steps being taken to reduce waiting times to see the consultant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30868/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In relation to the particular queries raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

**Hospital Equipment**

672. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the average age of lithotripsy machines in use in public hospitals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30874/18]
Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the management of the health care infrastructure estate and equipment, my Department has asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Services

673. Deputy Mary Butler asked the Minister for Health if planning permission was necessary for the recent upgrade of cardiac catheterisation laboratory works at St. Vincent’s University Hospital; the nature of the work; the timeframe involved; the timeframe in relation to the tendering process; the timeframe in relation to the project design work; the timeframe in relation to the building and construction work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30880/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, my Department has asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly in relation to this matter.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Review

674. Deputy Michael Moynihan asked the Minister for Health the status of the review of the nursing home support scheme in relation to the financial assessment of farms and businesses; when he expects these proposed changes to take effect; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30889/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): A review of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS) was published in July 2015. Arising out of the review, a recommendation was made to examine the treatment of business and farm assets for the purposes of the financial assessment element of the scheme. The Programme for a Partnership Government also committed to reviewing the NHSS to remove any discrimination against small businesses and family farms.

At present, the capital value of an individual’s principal private residence is only included in the financial assessment for the first three years of their time in care. This is known as the three year cap. This cap does not apply to productive assets such as farms and businesses, except in cases of sudden illness or disability where specific conditions are met.

It is proposed to amend the scheme to treat farm and business assets in the same manner as the principal private residence where a family successor commits to working the farm or business, i.e. to cap contributions at three years.

The Department of Health has been examining the potential for changes to the treatment of business and farm assets under the Nursing Homes Support Scheme.

A Memorandum for Government setting out the details of the proposed policy change and seeking Government approval to draft the General Scheme of a bill to amend the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act 2009 was circulated to other Government Departments for observations in the last few weeks and is expected to be submitted to Government shortly.

Health Services Staff Recruitment
675. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if a matter (details supplied) will be reviewed; his plans to implement change in this sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30890/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My colleague, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation recognises the fact that there are pressures in the labour market and has asked her Department to review the policies underpinning the current employment permits system. The report of the review group is due shortly. Following on from this Report, it is expected that a review of the ineligible and eligible list of occupations for employment permits will be conducted in the second half of this year.

To remove a skill from the ineligible list, it must be demonstrated that recruitment difficulties are due to shortages and not to factors such as pay and/or working conditions. It is important therefore that a detailed business case, which sets out the necessary data and evidence to justify the need for the nursing home sector to go outside the EEA to find workers, is provided.

Within my own Department, my colleague, Minister Daly, with special responsibility for Older People has already indicated that he is willing to work with the Nursing Home industry on this matter so that the Department of Health, as the lead Department for the sector, can in turn make the case to the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

Officials from my Department have agreed to meet with Nursing Homes Ireland, along with officials from the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. A date will be agreed shortly.

**Primary Care Centres**

676. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health the capacity of the psychiatric day hospital in the primary care unit in Balbriggan; the area it serves; and the number of persons waiting to access its services. [30894/18]

**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 Services**

677. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health the capacity of the Ashlin Centre in Beaumont Hospital; the area it serves; and the number of persons waiting to access its services. [30895/18]

**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 Availability**

678. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health if he will engage with an organisation (details supplied) and the pharmaceutical industry with a view to ensure new medicines become available to persons with multiple sclerosis without delay. [30900/18]
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.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Review

679. Deputy Pat Deering asked the Minister for Health when he will publish the review of the fair deal pricing mechanism; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30903/18]

680. Deputy Pat Deering asked the Minister for Health his plans to introduce an independent appeals process under the fair deal scheme (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30904/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 679 and 680 together.

The Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS), commonly referred to as Fair Deal, is a system of financial support for people who require long-term residential care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their means while the State pays the balance of the cost. The scheme aims to ensure that long-term nursing home care is accessible and affordable for everyone and that people are cared for in the most appropriate settings.
The Report of the NHSS Review published in 2015 identified a number of issues for more detailed consideration, including a review of the pricing mechanism used by the NTPF, with a view to:

- Ensuring value for money and economy, with the lowest possible administrative costs for clients and the State and administrative burden for providers;
- Increasing the transparency of the pricing mechanism so that existing and potential investors can make as informed decisions as possible; and
- Ensuring that there is adequate residential capacity for those residents with more complex needs.

The terms of reference for the review of the pricing mechanism also includes consideration of the appeals mechanism available to nursing homes.

A steering group was established to oversee this review, chaired by the NTPF and including representatives from my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The NTPF are close to completing the review and will bring a draft of report to the steering group shortly.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

681. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health his plans to review the position of the role of healthcare assistants from the ineligible categories of employment for employment permits list and their removal from this list on a controlled basis (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30905/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** My colleague, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation recognises the fact that there are pressures in the labour market and has asked her Department to review the policies underpinning the current employment permits system. The report of the review group is due shortly. Following on from this Report, it is expected that a review of the ineligible and eligible list of occupations for employment permits will be conducted in the second half of this year.

To remove a skill from the ineligible list, it must be demonstrated that recruitment difficulties are due to shortages and not to factors such as pay and/or working conditions. It is important therefore that a detailed business case, which sets out the necessary data and evidence to justify the need for the nursing home sector to go outside the EEA to find workers, is provided.

I have indicated my willingness to work with the Nursing Home industry on this matter so that the Department of Health, as the lead Department for the sector, can in turn make the case to the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

Officials from my Department have also agreed to meet with Nursing Homes Ireland, along with officials from the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. A date will be agreed shortly.

Health Services

682. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health his plans to review the decision not to implement a full courier service for collection of blood samples from general practitio-
Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Meals-on-Wheels Services

683. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Health the funding available for a meals-on-wheels service (details supplied) in order to acquire new equipment to provide this service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30918/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Appointments Status

684. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Health if a hospital appointment will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30921/18]

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.

HSE Funding

685. Deputy Alan Kelly asked the Minister for Health the outcome of the review of HSE funding to an organisation (details supplied) that was announced in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30942/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and...
plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

**HSE Funding**

686. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the amount that has been refunded by an organisation (details supplied) in response to his public call on it to do so in July 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30943/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

**HSE Funding**

687. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the reason the HSE has funded an organisation (details supplied) to provide therapies at a school, but has allowed it to not do so; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30944/18]

688. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the purpose for which an organisation (details supplied) spent the money allocated to it for therapies in a school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30948/18]

689. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health if an organisation (details supplied) will be refused permission to provide therapies when the forthcoming in-school therapy project is rolled out in view of the fact that it was involved in denying therapies to pupils; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30950/18]

690. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE therapist will be allowed access to a school (details supplied) for the purpose of providing therapy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30952/18]

691. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether in view of the failure to provide therapies by an organisation (details supplied) at a school as contracted it should continue to receive funding as a section 38 organisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30955/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 687 to 691, inclusive, together.

The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabili-
ties which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

692. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if the drug ixazomib for a person (details supplied) will be covered by the HSE; if permissions that may be needed to cover the cost and use of the drug will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30959/18]

**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.

In Ireland the majority of patients’ access medicines through the publicly funded Community Drug Schemes.

In line with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, if a company would like a medicine to be reimbursed by the HSE and available through the community drugs schemes, the company must first submit an application to the HSE to have the new medicine added to the reimbursement list.

As outlined in the Framework Agreement with industry, 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, 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 moneys involved, it must ensure that the best price is achieved, as these commitments are often multi-million euro investments on an ongoing basis. This can lead to a protracted deliberation process.

Following receipt and consideration of a rapid review dossier in January 2017, the NCPE recommended that a full HTA take place. The HSE commissioned a full health assessment on 23rd January 2017.

The company HTA dossier was received by the NCPE on 1st June 2017. The NCPE has published the details of its engagements on the HTA on its website and these are available at:
The NCPE health technology assessment report was received by the HSE on 18 December 2017 and it was reviewed by the HSE Drugs Group in March 2018 and again in June 2018.

Discussions with the manufacturer in relation to this application are ongoing.

**Hospital Charges**

693. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that persons with haemochromatosis require several venesections per year and are paying €80 per venesection; his plans to provide free venesections to persons that have haemochromatosis (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30976/18]

695. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Health if he will request those hospitals which have introduced an €80 charge for venesection procedures for hemochromatosis patients to cancel this charge in view of the fact that no such charge applies for dialysis and chemotherapy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31016/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 693 and 695 together.

The Health Act 1970 (as amended) provides that all people ordinarily resident in the country are entitled, subject to certain charges, to public in-patient hospital services including consultant services and to public out-patient hospital services. Under the Health (Amendment) Act 2013, a person who has been referred to a hospital for an in-patient service, including that provided on a day case basis, will have to pay the statutory daily charge, currently €80 per day, up to a maximum of €800 per year. On this basis, where venesection is classed as a day case procedure and is not carried out in an out-patient setting, the public in-patient charge applies.

There are a number of exemptions to the in-patient charge (including that provided on a day-case basis), as listed in the Health (Amendment) Act 2013:

- A person with full eligibility;
- A woman receiving services in respect of motherhood;
- A child who is no more than six weeks of age;
- A child receiving services in respect of a defect identified as a health examination held pursuant to the service provided under section 66;
- A person receiving services for the diagnosis or treatment of infectious diseases prescribed under Part IV of the Health Act 1947;
- A person receiving services in respect of which service the person is deemed pursuant to section 45(7) to be a person with full eligibility;
- A person who pursuant to section 2 of the Health (Amendment) Act 1996, in the opinion of the Health Service Executive, has contracted Hepatitis C directly or indirectly from the use of Human Immunoglobulin Ant-D or the receipt within the State of another blood product or a blood transfusion.

My Department met with the HSE recently to discuss the provision of venesection services for hereditary haemochromatosis patients. A further meeting is scheduled for later this month.
Emergency Departments Services

694. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the importance of the provision of emergency care being available at Monaghan Hospital particularly in the case of a person (details supplied); his plans to enhance emergency services on site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31010/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The establishment of Hospital Groups has enabled a better configuration of hospital services with benefits relating to safety, quality, access, cost and sustainable medical staffing. The structure ensures that Hospitals working together in a Group will be able to support each other, providing a stronger role for smaller hospitals in delivering less complex care, and ensuring that those who require emergency or complex planned care are managed safely in larger hospitals. The Smaller Hospitals Framework focuses in particular on the future role of smaller hospitals and outlines the wide range of services that can be provided within these smaller hospitals.

As a Model 2 hospital, Monaghan does not have a 24/7 Emergency Department, however, in line with the Smaller Hospitals Framework, Monaghan Hospital has a Minor Injuries Unit located on site which provide an important service to the local community.

I am committed to securing and further developing the role of our smaller hospitals with the expansion of services delivered in these hospitals, especially in services such as day surgery; ambulatory care; medical services and diagnostics.

The Programme for Partnership Government commits to a review of Medical Assessment Units, Urgent Care Centres and Minor Injuries Units, including the Unit at Monaghan Hospital. Work on this review is progressing in 2017.

The National Ambulance Service (NAS) has been undertaking a significant and ongoing reform programme, to reconfigure the management and delivery of pre-hospital care services. This programme will ensure a clinically driven, nationally co-ordinated system, supported by improved technology. The Programme for a Partnership Government commits to additional annual investment in terms of ambulance personnel and vehicles. In that regard additional funding of €10.7m has been made available to the NAS in 2018. This includes €2.8m to fund new developments.

With regards to the individual named, as this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

*Question Nos. 695 answered with Question No. 693.*

Hospital Appointments Status

696. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will receive an early date for an assessment and scopes at St. Luke’s Hospital, Kilkenny, based on the referrals made by their general practitioner, who described their case as urgent. [31017/18]

**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.

Nursing Staff Recruitment

697. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health if there have been changes to the recruitment process for public health nurses in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31037/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on this matter.

Ports Facilities

698. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the fact that Rosslare Port is not a designated port for food imports from outside of the EU; his plans to make such a designation at the port; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30113/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Rules relating to the import of food products from outside the EU are laid down in European legislation. Imports of such products can be divided into three categories; products of animal origin, products of plant origin and composite products (may contain materials of both animal and plant origin). Imports of food products coming from countries outside the European Union are subject to checks to verify compliance with European legislation.

In Ireland these checks are required to be carried out at ports or airports approved or designated for this purpose. The decision to seek approval or designation for this purpose is a commercial decision to be made by port and airport authorities, balancing the income to be derived from such imports against the costs of providing the necessary facilities required by the legislation.

My Department is always available for discussions with any port or airport authority interested in having such a facility. The outcome of Brexit negotiations may have implications for the volume of non-EU products imported through ports, including Rosslare. My Department is examining the potential implications of this in the context of its preparatory work for Brexit.

Afforestation Programme

699. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if, in reviewing the effects of the heatwave with the local authorities, the planting of greater numbers of shade giving, soil protecting trees in public parks and in newer public parks especially will be promoted; if public bodies such a Waterways Ireland and the transport companies
will be encouraged to co-operate with local authorities to encourage more tree planting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31013/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In the context of the current climatic conditions, the microclimate beneath a canopy of trees is typically cooler and moister than that in the open, and this makes woodlands and forests attractive places to visit during the current hot weather. Ideally, such places should be part of the neighbourhood, and it is for these (and other) reasons that my Department operates the NeighbourWood Scheme.

The NeighbourWood Scheme, which is funded by the Government under the Forestry Programme 2014-2020, offers financial support for community groups working with local authorities, to develop attractive woodland amenities close to where people live. Funding is available towards the establishment of new neighbourwoods on open ‘greenfield’ sites, the silvicultural enhancement of existing woodland already used as neighbourwoods (or proposed for development as neighbourwoods), and the installation and upgrade of appropriate recreational facilities within certain areas.

These neighbourwoods vary greatly in size and location, from forests in the countryside and on the outskirts of villages, towns and cities, to woodlands located in more built-up areas. The resulting benefits are numerous and far-reaching. Neighbourwoods provide accessible opportunities for recreation and regular exercise, and offer people ‘time-out’ and contact with the natural world and the changing seasons. They also deliver a wide range of environmental benefits, providing vital habitats for wildlife, removing atmospheric carbon, promoting air quality and improving the visual landscape, to mention just a few.

The new neighbourwood amenity at Vartry, Roundwood, Co Wicklow, which was officially opened last month by the Taoiseach and my colleague, Minister of State Andrew Doyle, highlights the opportunities available to local communities to avail of financial support under the NeighbourWood Scheme. Further details on the Neighbourwood scheme can be found on my Department’s website.

**GLAS Payments**

700. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if all farm payments which are due to a person (details supplied) will issue in full without further delays; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30025/18]

**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.

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 outstanding payments will be made. GLAS payments are issuing on a weekly basis.

The person named submitted their 2017 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) application on the 8th May 2017. Payments due under the 2017 BPS issued to the person named in October and December of 2017.

**Agriculture Scheme Payments**

701. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the
status of an appeal against a decision related to a recent cross-compliance inspection in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30026/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Under the terms and conditions of the Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme, an applicant as well as meeting scheme criteria, must comply with the EU regulatory requirements relating to Cross Compliance.

The 2017 Scheme Year application of the person named was selected for a Full Cross Compliance inspection, which includes checks across a range of Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) and Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC).

This inspection identified breaches relating to Bovine Identification and Registration resulting in a final penalty of 5% being applied against the 2017 Direct Payments. The person named was notified of this decision by letter on 27th February 2018.

The person named sought a review of this decision and this matter is currently being examined by the District Inspector for the region. The person named will be notified directly of the outcome as soon as possible.

In the event that the person named is dissatisfied with the outcome of this review the decision can be appealed to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office, within three months.

**Rural Development Programme**

702. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason Ireland opted to take forestry out of its rural development programme (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30056/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Ireland’s Forestry Programme 2014-2020 was approved by the Government and secured State Aid approval from the European Commission in 2015. The programme was developed in accordance with a number of EU and National policy and regulatory requirements:

1. European Union Guidelines on State Aid for agriculture and forestry and in rural areas 2014 to 2020 addressing in particular the Common Assessment Principles;

2. Regulation (EU) no 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD);


4. Foodwise 2025;

5. COFORD’s Forests, products and people – Ireland’s forest policy – a renewed vision;

Ireland’s forestry schemes were co-financed by the EU until 2006 under the CAP Rural Development Programme, but since then have been 100% funded by the Exchequer. The 2007 to 2013 RDP only allowed a reduced establishment grant rate (max 80% of costs) which represented a significant shift in policy and in payment levels from what was historically available.

Ireland has the second lowest level of forestry cover in the EU at 11% where the average cover is 38%. Given this low level of forest cover in Ireland, our need to expand our forest estate and the need to make available incentives that would convince farmers to plant their land
it was decided that the type of scheme implementable through RDP 2007-2013 would not be capable of delivering an effective afforestation programme in Ireland. Accordingly it was decided to seek State Aid approval to deliver an exchequer-funded forestry programme in Ireland from 2007.

The Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 limited forestry premiums paid for planting to 12 years compared to the 20-year premiums paid in the preceding programme. This would have had a significant impact on forestry planting levels in Ireland. Accordingly the State Aid approval route was used again for the 2014-2020 Programme in order to provide sufficient incentives for landowners to plant trees on their land.

Poultry Industry

703. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the licensed hauliers who are approved to transport poultry litter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30064/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The transportation of animal by-products (ABP) including poultry litter is governed by the EU Animal By-Product Regulation (EC) No. 1069 of 2009 and Regulation (EU) No. 142 of 2011 which are given legal effect by The European Communities (Animal By-Product) Regulations 2014 (SI No. 187/2014). The list of hauliers registered in accordance with these regulations can be found on my Department’s website at the link below:

https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/agri-foodindustry/animalbyproducts/euapprovedabpplants/

In addition to the general conditions that a haulier is required to meet, poultry litter hauliers are issued with a specific guidelines titled “Legal obligations and good practice guidelines for poultry litter hauliers”. This document is attached for information and can also be accessed at this link.

Land Issues

704. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the protections in place to prevent the monopolisation of farm or agricultural land that has the effect of significantly limiting the capacity of small and medium sized farms to expand (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30090/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** There are no statutory restrictions in place on the sale of land. The former Irish Land Commission was abolished under the Irish Land Commission Dissolution Act, 1992 and there are no plans to re-establish such a commission.

Legislative Measures

705. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department has identified laws which are dependent on, or in place as a consequence of, Article 41.2 of the Constitution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30092/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Depart-
ment has not identified any laws which are dependent on, or in place as a consequence of, Article 41.2 of the Constitution.

Veterinary Qualifications

706. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps that can be taken by a person (details supplied) to have international qualifications recognised here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30125/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In accordance with the Veterinary Practice Act 2005, the Veterinary Council of Ireland (VCI) is the competent authority for the recognition of qualifications of veterinary nursing.

The assessment of a veterinary nursing qualification is determined on a case by case basis by the VCI. The applicant should contact the Veterinary Council of Ireland at info@vci.ie for further information on the recognition procedure which must be successfully completed prior to registration as a veterinary nurse in Ireland.

Fodder Crisis

707. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers who availed of the fodder transport subsidy in numerical terms and expressed as a percentage of the overall number of farmers. [30270/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In response to weather conditions experienced by farmers over a number of months,

my Department put in place a range of supports for farmers facing fodder shortages. The Fodder Transport Scheme was one of these supports, and was introduced in order to make a financial contribution towards forage transport costs in certain circumstances.

Under the Fodder Transport Scheme 606 applications were received. There are some 139,000 farm in Ireland, and approximately 130,000 farms apply to my Department for support under a range of schemes available to them. The 606 applicants for the Fodder Transport Scheme represent 0.46% of these 130,000 farmers. Payments under the Scheme are scheduled to commence shortly.

Laboratory Facilities

708. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the proposed redeployment and redevelopment of his Department’s laboratories; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30305/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Following a competitive tender process, my Department has commissioned a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) of options that have been proposed for the future development of the Regional Veterinary Laboratories (RVLs). The team conducting the CBA includes internationally recognised, independent experts in economic analysis and animal disease surveillance. It is currently finalising its work, after which a report and recommendations will be presented to me.
To date no decision has been taken in respect of the options proposed for the RVLs. My Department completed an initial consultative process with all relevant stakeholders on the options for the RVLs during the course of last year. Any decision that is made on the RVLs will be informed by both that consultative process and the outcome of the CBA.

**TAMS Administration**

709. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if there is a risk of clawback on grants or payments under TAMS drawn down in the last two years if a partnership or sole trader is converted to a limited company (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30316/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** For the purposes of the TAMS Schemes where a registered farm partnership is dissolved after payment of a TAMS grant, the former partner(s) that has control of the land on which the investment is located must give an undertaking to use that investment for its intended purpose for a minimum of 5 years from the date of issue of the final payment in respect of the investments grant-aided.

The dissolution of a partnership can potentially result in the following:
- The reduction of payment;
- The reduction of investment ceilings;
- The recoupment of payments made;
- Adjustment of investment balances for ex-partners.
- Force Majeure will be taken into consideration before any recoupment/reduction takes place.

Where a partnership dissolves in any period between the submission of an application and up to five years after the date of final payment, notification of the dissolution must be sent to TAMS II section, Johnstown Castle Estate, Wexford, within four working weeks. Each case will be examined on its own merits.

There are no issues if a sole applicant who applied as an individual subsequently forms a company as the grant rate and ceiling are not affected.

Where partnerships are dissolved and a company is formed there will potentially be a recoupment of grant aid if the relevant investment ceiling was over €80,000. If a young farmer was involved in the partnership there will also be a recoupment of the difference between the 40% and 60% grant rate.

**Animal Diseases**

710. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an outstanding payment will be made to a person (details supplied) without further delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30343/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department provides financial support measures for farmers under the Bovine Viral Diarrhoea programme (BVD). Payment is contingent on disposal of all PI animals born in the herd within
timeframes set down in the Terms and Conditions. An application for compensation under the scheme was submitted to my Department by the herdowner concerned, however as he did not satisfy all the terms and conditions, it was not possible to process the payment.

The herdowner subsequently submitted an appeal, this is being processed at present and he will be informed of the decision shortly.

Animal Sales

711. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the public consultation on the sales of animals and the pet shop code of conduct to 31 July 2018 will be extended to facilitate those that wish to make submissions. [30459/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I launched a public consultation on the advertisement and sale of pet animals on 23rd May and encouraged all interested parties to contribute.

My Department is seeking, through this consultation, views on two matters:

- the introduction of a voluntary Code of Practice for pet shops, and
- whether further legislation is needed for the advertisement and sale of pet animals and if so, what issues need to be considered.

I am pleased with the level of engagement on this consultation to date, and in view of the importance of the subject, would be happy to extend the deadline for further responses until 31st July 2018.

Documents relating to the consultation can be accessed on my Department’s website at https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/customerservice/publicconsultations/.

Submissions can be sent by email to: AHWD.Consultation@agriculture.gov.ie, or by post.

Herd Data

712. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of dairy cows in the national herd in each of the years 2010 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30461/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The following table details the number of dairy cows in Ireland as extracted from the December Livestock survey from the Central Statistics Office from the period 2010 to 2017. The figure for December 2018 will not be available until 2019.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Dairy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1,006,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1,035,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1,060,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1,082,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,127,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1,239,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 2017, Ireland exported dairy products to approaching 140 countries with a value exceeding €4.6 billion, an increase of over 17% compared to 2016, representing high-quality value-added produce.

Irish milk production in 2017 approached 7.5 billion litres, up from 6.8 billion litres in 2016 and an increase of almost 50% on 2007-2009 average (Food Harvest target).

The long-term fundamentals of the global dairy market are strong, with growing global demand projected from fast developing countries with increasing middle classes and more westernised diets. Whilst significant challenges have continued throughout recent years, I am confident that the Irish and EU dairy sector is well placed to gain from the opportunity presented by expanding global demand whilst simultaneously addressing the aforementioned challenges with a particular focus on the challenges of price volatility. Ireland must of course continue to ensure that any increase in the output of the Irish dairy herd is carried out in both an economic and sustainable manner.

**Herd Data**

713. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of suckler cows in the national herd in each of the years 2010 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30462/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The requested information for the years 2010-2017 is provided below as obtained from the Department’s Animal Identification Movement system (AIM). The classification is based on the definition of suckler cows as the number of beef cows who have calved at least once in their lifetime at the end of December of each year. 2018 data is not yet available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Suckler Cows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1,063,238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1,060,866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1,104,619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1,056,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,012,507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1,019,561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1,009,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>986,877</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Herd Data**

714. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of ewes in the national herd in each of the years 2010 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30463/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** EU Regulation 21/2004 requires all sheep flock keepers to complete a sheep census, at least annually, on a date determined by my Department. To date, all annual sheep censuses have been carried out in December. This information is collected and collated on the Department’s Animal Identification Movement system (AIM).

The number of ewes in the national herd is recorded as part of this census, where a ewe is described as a ‘breeding ewe over 12 months of age on the date of the census’. Ewe lambs are recorded under the category of other sheep. The 2018 census will be conducted on 31 December 2018, when an inventory of all sheep kept on registered holdings will be undertaken.
The number of breeding ewes recorded in the Annual Sheep Censuses 2010 – 2017 are provided in the following table:

### Number of Breeding Ewes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,200,526</td>
<td>2,335,881</td>
<td>2,473,871</td>
<td>2,458,600</td>
<td>2,420,374</td>
<td>2,503,011</td>
<td>2,640,048</td>
<td>2,646,078</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Live Exports**

715. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of live cattle exports in each of the years 2010 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30464/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I am keenly aware of the vital role that live exports play in stimulating price competition and providing an alternative market outlet for farmers.

Live exports will continue to play a part in informing the third country destinations selected for trade negotiations and missions in 2018 as it did in 2017.

I am pleased that live cattle exports are continuing to flourish in 2018. Exports of live cattle in the first half of this year came to nearly 170,000 head, an increase of 22% compared to the same period last year. The largest export market during this period was Spain with 62,372 head of cattle, followed by Netherlands with 45,854 and Italy with 15,343, a significant increase compared to 2016. Exports to Great Britain increased slightly to 3,100 head from January to June 2018, while this period saw a decrease in exports to Northern Ireland (8,600 head). The largest third country export market during this period was Turkey with 7,948 head of cattle, with cattle also exported to Libya, Tunisia and Morocco.

In February 2017, I reduced the veterinary inspection fee payable on live exports of calves under three months of age to €1.20 per animal, to bring greater equity in fees payable per consignment in respect of calves, weanlings and adult cattle. The first half of 2018 saw exports of 138,000 calves, an increase of over 40% compared to the same period for 2017.

The prospects for live cattle exports remain very good. Irish exporters have a good track record in recent years in securing contracts for the export of fattening and breeding animals to Turkey and there is continued strong interest from Turkish buyers. Demand for livestock in North Africa and the Middle East is influenced by the political environment and our relative cost competitiveness.

Animal welfare during transport is a key concern, and inspections by my Department ensure that rigorous and robust animal welfare standards are strictly complied with during transport of live cattle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Live Cattle Exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>338,966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>214,502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>160,407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>208,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>236,833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>178,048</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Herd Data

716. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of fallen cattle recorded in each of the years 2010 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30465/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The following table below provides details of On Farm Deaths in each of the years 2010 to 2017 and for the period January to April 2018. The data was extracted from the Department’s Animal Identification and Movement Database (AIM).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Bovine Animals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>244,132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>215,828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>247,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>290,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>235,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>241,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>275,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>262,864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January to April 2018</td>
<td>156,877</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Farm Data

717. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of dairy farmers in County Cork in 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30466/18]

718. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of dairy farmers in County Cork in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30467/18]

719. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of dairy farmers in County Kerry in 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30468/18]

720. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of dairy farmers in County Kerry in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30469/18]

721. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of dairy farmers in County Clare in 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30470/18]

722. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of dairy farmers in County Clare in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the
723. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of dairy farmers in County Limerick in 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30472/18]

724. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of dairy farmers in County Limerick in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30473/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 717 to 724, inclusive, together.

The following table provides the number of dairy herds in each of the counties of Clare, Cork, Limerick and Kerry for the year 2018, as provided by my Department’s Animal Health Computer System. Similar data is not available for 2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Clare</th>
<th>Cork</th>
<th>Limerick</th>
<th>Kerry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>4226</td>
<td>1590</td>
<td>1477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further information on farm structures is available from the Central Statistics Office, particularly the CSO Farm Structures Survey 2016, which was published earlier this year, and is available at the following link.

**GLAS Data**

725. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers participating in the GLAS scheme in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30474/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** There are currently 49,266 participants in the GLAS scheme. This figure can change as the scheme develops reflecting the fact that participants can withdraw from the scheme, are rejected from the scheme due to non-compliance or participants are re-instated into the scheme as a result of the appeals process.

**Animal Welfare**

726. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers who have applied for help with animal welfare to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30475/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department assisted 4 farmers in the purchase of fodder, and a further 4 were assisted with a transport subsidy under Animal Welfare Emergency arrangements.

In addition it should be recalled The Early Warning Intervention System (EWS) for animal welfare under the auspices of the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council (FAWAC) continues to provide a beneficial service to the farming community. The EWS is made up of Veterinarians, Farming and Welfare Bodies and Department representatives. The core objective of the system is to provide a framework within which animal welfare problems can be identified and dealt with before they become critical.
727. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of penalties that have been overturned or reduced on appeal in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30476/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The breakdown of the outcome of appeals that were dealt with by the Agriculture Appeals Office in the years 2015 to 2017 and in 2018 up to 5 July 2018 is included in the Table provided. The Agriculture Appeals Office has advised that, in specific regard to the outcome of appeals that can result in a penalty being overturned or reduced, such outcomes include appeals that are allowed by an Appeals Officer, appeals that are partially allowed by an Appeals Officer, and appeals for which the penalty included in my Department’s decision, which is the subject of appeal, is overturned or reduced following intervention by the Appeals Office before an appeal decision is finalised.

In regard to Appeals Officer decisions that were changed by the Director of Agriculture Appeals to allow or partially allow appeals and which are not included in the Table provided, the position is that in 2015, 3 appeal decisions were revised to partially allow the appeals, 1 appeal decision was changed in 2016 to fully allow the appeal, 2 decisions were changed in 2017 to fully allow the appeals and in 2018 to date, 4 decisions were changed to fully allow the appeal. Following receipt of an appeal decision, my Department ordinarily overturns the penalty when appeals are fully allowed and determines what penalty reduction may be required in the case of partially allowed appeals.

**Outcome of Appeals closed by the Agriculture Appeals Office**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total cases closed (all years)</th>
<th>Allowed, Partially Allowed, Revised by DAFM following intervention by Appeals Office</th>
<th>% of total closed cases allowed, partially allowed, revised by DAFM following intervention by Appeals Office</th>
<th>% of cases Disallowed</th>
<th>% of cases Withdrawn, Not Valid or Out of Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>44.5% (298)</td>
<td>14.5% (96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>45% (274)</td>
<td>14% (88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>52% (369)</td>
<td>11% (77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 to 5 July 2018</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>40.1%</td>
<td>49.6% (125)</td>
<td>10.3% (26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GLAS Data**

728. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the area of land in hectares designated as traditional hay meadow under the GLAS scheme in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30477/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The area of land under the GLAS Traditional Hay Meadow action stood at 61,600 hectares in April 2018.
Payment per hectare for this action is €315. The number of participants in GLAS can vary as farmers withdraw or are rejected from the scheme with consequent impacts on planted areas.

GLAS Data

729. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the area of land in hectares designated as low impact pasture under the GLAS scheme in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30478/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine** (Deputy Michael Creed): The area of land under the GLAS Low Input Permanent Pasture action stood at 262,500 hectares in April 2018. Payment per hectare for this action is €314. The number of participants in GLAS can vary as farmers withdraw or are rejected from the scheme with consequent impacts on planted areas.

Electronic Tagging

730. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the mandatory introduction of electronic identification, EID, tagging of sheep; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30479/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine** (Deputy Michael Creed): I made the announcement on 2 May 2108 on the extension of electronic identification to all sheep.

The rationale for the introduction of new rules on sheep identification is very solid as it clearly allows for a more robust sheep traceability system that will further support the development and sustainability of the sheep industry. It will ultimately simplify the sheep tagging system and will significantly reduce the record keeping requirements for farmers and producers alike. The extension of EID to all sheep has the capacity to allow for greater market access to third countries, including the USA, as well as considering the potential of sheepmeat access to Japan and other markets.

The current national sheep identification system (NSIS) was introduced in 2010 in an effort to address specific concerns across different sectors. It is widely acknowledged as being very complex, with an over-reliance on the transcription of individual numbers through all stages of production. The system is not functioning optimally and must be improved.

Acknowledging that the new sheep identification rules will impose an additional cost on farmers, I have announced a tag subsidy scheme, whereby keepers will be eligible for a payment of up to €50 on the first electronic tag order processed after a date to be specified. In addition, while not required for the implementation of the new rules, I have included sheep tag readers and associated software as eligible investments under the TAMS Scheme. This will greatly assist keepers in their on-going flock management and improvement. TAMS is a scheme that farmers are familiar with and which also offers other sheep-related investment opportunities.

In operational terms, when the new system comes into force, marts and factories will operate as Central Points of Recording (CPRs), approved by my Department. As provided for under Council Regulation 21/2004, CPRs will provide the presenting keeper with a printed list of tag numbers scanned in association with a particular batch of sheep presented at a mart or factory, thereby removing the requirement for the keeper to separately list the individual tag number of each animal in that batch. The printed list will then be associated with the related dispatch
document for the keeper’s records. In the case of mart movements, the CPR will provide a
similar printout to the purchasing keeper, for association with his/her records.

Only movements to premises that are not operating as approved CPRs (e.g. farm-to-farm,
farm-show etc.) will require the listing of full animal identification numbers on the associated
dispatch document.

The operation of marts and factories as CPRs means that no farmer will be required to pur-
chase tag reading equipment, although this is an option for those who wish to record and moni-
tor animal data with a view to improving flock management and optimising yield.

I have led a number of trade missions in the last number of years, where every effort is be-
ing made by organisations throughout the country to secure additional markets for Irish sheep
meat. Increasingly, these new markets require the electronic identification of sheep as a pre-
requisite to discussions. While it is the case that New Zealand has access to Asian markets in
the absence of electronic identification, as alluded to in the supplied detail, these are historic
markets, where access was granted many years ago when technology had not advanced to the
standards of today. New, higher standards are now required for entry into these markets and
Ireland has no choice but to reach the standards set out if we are to expand our market base into
these countries.

Since the announcement of the introduction of EID in sheep, either myself or my officials
have met with the stakeholders in the sheep industry and engaged in consultation on the imple-
mentation of EID.

A number of submissions have also been made on the matter of implementation of EID
and I will consider the views of all stakeholders and expect to respond soon on the matter.

Ministerial Travel

731. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the cost
of travel expenses for him and those who travel with him since his appointment; and if he will
make a statement on the matter. [30503/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The relevant
information can be accessed on my Department’s website at https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/
aboutus/ministers/.

Veterinary Practice

732. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the
reason a regulatory vacuum has been allowed to exist in the context of the decision by the
Veterinary Council of Ireland, made in January 2018, to deregulate on a unilateral basis the
ownership of veterinary practices here (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the
matter. [30522/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The regulation
of the practice of veterinary medicine in accordance with the Veterinary Practice Act 2005
is a matter for the Veterinary Council of Ireland (VCI).

My Department has communicated with the VCI in relation to the ownership of veterinary
practices. The VCI have indicated that they intend to clarify the position following consultation
with stakeholders.

**Project Ireland 2040**

733. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of times he has met his officials regarding Project Ireland 2040 since its launch; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30544/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I meet with my officials on a regular basis on important issues such as Project Ireland 2040. This includes in the run-up to the launch of the National Development Plan and National Planning Framework on 16 February 2018 and the subsequent preparations for the Cabinet discussion and adoption of the four Project Ireland 2040 funds on 29 May 2018. On this latter occasion, I discussed details of the Funds as they relate to the work of my Department. My most recent engagement with Department officials on this issue was on 20 June to discuss preparations for this Friday’s event in Westport to mark Project Ireland 2040’s contribution to the development of rural Ireland which I am co-hosting with Minister Ring.

Under Project Ireland 2040, the Government is committed to a €116 billion plan to invest in our public infrastructure, take the entire country forward, balance rural and urban investment, and prepare us for future economic challenges and opportunities. I fully support the plan which will bring a renewed focus to the strengthening of rural communities and rural economies.

**Freedom of Information Requests**

734. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of FOI requests his Department has received since January 2018; the number of refusals; the number that have been appealed and that are ongoing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30561/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Freedom of Information (FOI) data requested is set out in the table that follows.

In relation to your request for data concerning appeals, I have included data on both internal reviews carried out within my Department and on appeals to the Office of the Information Commissioner (OIC). If a requester is not satisfied with the response of my Department to any aspect of his/her request for information he/she can seek to have the decision re-examined. The internal review of an FOI decision is carried out by a more senior member of staff within my Department. Following the outcome of the internal review, if a requester is unhappy with that decision, he/she has the right to appeal the decision to the OIC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of FOI.....</th>
<th>1 January 2018 to 5 July 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Requests received</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions reviewed internally</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions appealed to OIC</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figure in the “ongoing” column arises as, under the FOI Act, my Department has in most cases four weeks to make a decision and issue a response. There are also a number of provisions in the FOI Act which allow for the completion of requests outside of the standard four
week time frame, including where the request is for a large number of records and the requirement for third party consultation.

Vacancies on State Boards

735. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of vacancies on State boards under the remit of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30578/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The vacancies in the boards of State bodies falling under the aegis of my Department are set out in the table attached.

I propose to fill these positions on the basis of nominations from third party organisations for specified vacancies as set out in legislation and through the Public Appointments Service (PAS) on www.stateboards.ie.

Department: Agriculture, Food and the Marine Current State Board vacancies as of 10 July 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Board</th>
<th>No of vacancies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Bord Bia</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bord Iascaigh Mhara</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bord na gCon</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coillte</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse Racing Ireland</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish National Stud</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Institute</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Milk Agency</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea Fisheries Protection Authority</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teagasc</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary Council of Ireland</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Farm Partnerships

736. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason an application for partnership by persons (details supplied) was refused; if the file will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30614/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** A Registered Farm Partnership (RFP) shall consist of at least two people, one person from category (i) below and one or more person(s) from categories (i) or (ii):

(i). a person who has been engaged in the trade of farming on farm land owned or leased by that person, consisting of at least 3 hectares of useable farm land, for at least 2 years immediately preceding the date of formation of the partnership, and

(ii). A natural person with an appropriate agriculture qualifications whose contribution to the farm partnership entitles him/her to at least 20% of the profit sharing arrangement; and who
works in the farm partnership for at least 10 hours per week.

Following consideration of the application, to which the Deputy refers, it was decided that this application did not meet the criteria for going on the Department’s register of RFPs. This information was clearly conveyed to the applicants.

Young Farmers Scheme

737. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if guidance will be offered on a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30695/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Under the TAMS Young Farmer Capital Investment Scheme payment claim in question, there were a number of receipts deemed ineligible for grant approval as they did not comply with the Terms and Conditions of the scheme as outlined below:

1. The applicant had claimed for grant approval on a receipt that was not paid.
2. The applicant had claimed a receipt that was not paid at the time he lodged his payment claim.
3. The applicant had claimed a discount which was given.

The applicant has detailed these issues in the appeal letter submitted and his reasons for claiming these amounts. The appeal letter will be considered by a Regional Inspector. The applicant will be notified in due course of the findings.

GLAS Applications

738. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a GLAS payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30698/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The above named was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1st October 2015 and has received all payments in respect of 2015 and 2016.

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 continuing to work proactively to complete the checks in this case. Once this case clears validations the 2017 advance payment will be made. GLAS payments are being made on a weekly basis.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Eligibility

739. Deputy Paul Kehoe asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the process for a landowner and dry stock farmer to apply for a disadvantaged area payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30779/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Applications
for the Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme (formerly the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme) are made annually via the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) application process. For each year that a farmer wishes to apply they must tick the appropriate box on the online BPS application system. The application process for 2018 opened in early February with a closing date of 15 May. Applications are made via my Department’s online application system at www.agfood.ie.

In order to apply for the ANC scheme the applicant must meet a number of eligibility criteria, such as holding a valid herd number and farming at least 3 ha of eligible disadvantaged lands.

Coillte Teoranta

740. Deputy Bobby Aylward asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if funding will be made available through Coillte for required repair and maintenance of paths at an amenity (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30788/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Coillte was established as a private commercial company under the Forestry Act, 1988 and day-to-day operational matters, such as the management of its forest estate, are the responsibility of the company.

The matter was, however, raised with Coillte who advise that funding is available to carry out minor repairs following the recent harvesting operation. The company added that the repair and maintenance works will be scheduled once harvesting in the area is complete.

Animal Welfare

741. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 726 of 20 March 2018, if China and Pakistan are on the list of export destinations that Bord na gCon considers to provide the expected levels of greyhound care and management as defined within Bord na gCon’s code of practice; the number of greyhounds exported directly or indirectly to these countries in the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30824/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Bord na gCon is a commercial State Body established in 1958 under the Greyhound Industry Act, 1958, chiefly to control greyhound racing and to improve and develop the greyhound industry. Bord na gCon is a body corporate and a separate legal entity to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

As outlined in the previous reply to the Deputy, Bord na gCon has no control of events outside the jurisdiction of Ireland and has no statutory function regarding the regulation of greyhound exports. Bord na gCon has repeatedly stated that it does not support the export of greyhounds to destinations where the standard of care for greyhounds falls below that required under the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013, and the Welfare of Greyhounds Act 2011 and its associated Code of Practice.

Information received from my department’s local offices indicates that health certificates have been issued for the direct export of greyhounds to China as follows:

2014 - 2; 2015 - 0; 2016 - 9; 2017 - 0; 2018 - 0.

No health certificates have been issued for the export of greyhounds to Pakistan.
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It is not possible to supply numbers of greyhounds exported indirectly.

Food Exports

742. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will report on efforts to expand markets for Irish food production in China, India and south east Asia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30870/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The pursuit and development of new markets for Irish agrifood exports is of course an ongoing and central component of the strategic development of the agrifood sector, as evidenced by its placement right at the centre of Food Wise 2025, the industry’s strategy for development over the coming decade. Indeed, this is all the more relevant after the UK’s decision to leave the EU, which presents significant new challenges for the agrifood sector in particular.

Food Wise 2025 outlines the huge potential for growth in agrifood exports to new and emerging markets, particularly in Asia, Africa and the Gulf region.

In keeping with the priorities outlined in Food Wise 2025, I led a very successful Trade Mission to Japan and South Korea in November 2017. This was a very opportune time to bring a delegation of Ireland’s food leaders to this part of the world, given that the EU has concluded a Free Trade Agreement with South Korea as well as concluding an Economic Partnership Agreement with Japan in December 2017. Japan and South Korea are markets of high potential for beef, pigmeat and sheepmeat exports, and so it is important that we raise the profile of Irish agrifood enterprises that already have access to these markets, and make progress in negotiating access for others.

Following a further Trade Mission to the US and Canada last February, I led a Trade Mission to China in May. This was an extremely successful mission in the development of our ever-growing partnership with China. For example, being present at one of the World’s largest food trade exhibitions in Shanghai allowed me to reinforce the positive messages about the quality and sustainability of Irish agrifood exports to Asian buyers. I also met with three senior Chinese Ministers and three Vice-Ministers over the course of the week. The value of our agrifood exports to China in 2017 reached just under €800 million. There is a clear ambition on both sides to further build co-operation between Ireland and China on many levels, including trade, and I will continue to do all I can to maximise this potential.

These and the other missions that my Department are planning for the latter half of 2018 will serve to enhance and improve our existing levels of market access in these destinations. They will also help to promote Ireland’s reputation as a producer of high quality, safe and sustainably produced meat and dairy products.

The destinations are also in keeping with the market prioritisation exercise that was completed by Bord Bia in December 2017, at my request. This exercise identified opportunities in new and more mature markets, and will provide valuable market intelligence both for industry operators and policy makers as we continue to navigate the very uncertain environment created by Brexit.

The Indian market is traditionally seen as a difficult market for Irish food and drinks exports to penetrate, due to restrictions in quotas, high tariffs and non-tariff barriers. However, I am pleased to note that Irish exports have increased in recent years. In 2013 total Irish agrifood exports amounted to just over €1m, while in 2017 this has increased to €5.2m. I also note that the Kerry Group opened a facility in India in 2012 producing consumer food ingredients for the
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Indian market. The potential revival of the EU-India FTA could also see opportunities increasing for Irish product with the removal of tariffs.

My Department will continue to monitor this and of course seek out and identify new markets, and I am also ready to respond as appropriate to other opportunities that may arise.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

743. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason persons (details supplied) did not receive a payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31025/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person(s) named were beneficiaries under the 2006 Capital Investment Scheme for Marketing and Processing of Certain Agricultural Products. The beneficiaries were amongst 76 applicants to emerge from a highly competitive selection process covering six sectors.

The selected beneficiaries were required to formally accept the offer of grant aid and to indicate the project completion date to my Department. The beneficiaries concerned indicated a completion date of September 2009 in their ‘Acceptance of conditions of Grant to Beneficiary’ letter. Time extensions to the company were granted during the economic downturn.

Following this extension, on 10th July 2013, my Department issued written confirmation for the beneficiaries to proceed with the original project regarding the purchase of equipment, provided that the project was completed and claimed for by 31st October 2013 and that the accompanying ‘Declaration of Undertaking’ was signed and returned to my Department. No signed undertaking was received.

Subsequently, my Department wrote again to the beneficiaries on 12th November 2013, advising that the Department would presume that no additional claim for grant would be made by the beneficiaries as no undertaking had been received. At the request of the beneficiaries, officials from my Department, met with them to discuss the possibility of modifying the remaining element of the original plan. At that meeting, the beneficiaries gave an undertaking to revert to my Department with clarification on whether they ultimately planned to complete their investment. No such clarification was received and on 20 February 2016 officials from my Department issued a revocation letter to the beneficiaries, indicating that monies already paid, amounting to €172,477.50 would not be recovered but that the remaining unclaimed grant aid would be revoked.

In March 2017, the beneficiaries wrote to my Department, stating that they were not appealing the decision as indicated in the letter of 20 February 2016 but seeking a review of the decision to revoke the remainder of the grant aid award.

In April 2017, officials from my Department carried out an inspection of the beneficiaries premises, where the inspecting officer confirmed that the remaining elements of the original project were not completed and therefore not eligible for payment.

In May 2017, officials from my Department wrote to the beneficiaries, indicating that the remaining elements of the original project had not been completed and advised them of their right to appeal this decision to the Office of the Ombudsman. My Department’s records show that the beneficiaries did not avail of this option to appeal to the Ombudsman.
Departmental Staff Recruitment

744. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of public sector jobs offered as internal competitions or restricted to existing Civil Service or public service staff in his Department in 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31541/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In 2017, 318 new staff joined my Department. Of those staff, 64 were existing Civil/Public Servants joining my Department as a result of promotion competitions run by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) and 45 were existing Civil/Public Servants who transferred to my Department on request at their current grade. 94 staff were promoted following internal competitive processes.

To date in 2018, 149 new staff have joined my Department. 28 of these were existing Civil/Public Servants joining my Department as a result of promotion competitions run by the Public Appointments Service and 36 were existing Civil/Public Servants who transferred to my Department on request. 14 staff have been promoted following internal competitive processes this year.

Waste Management Regulations

745. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the section in the legislation which gives powers to local authorities to demand proof from residents that they are using an authorised waste disposal service or have another method in place for dealing with their waste; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30289/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** My role, as Minister, is to provide the legislative and policy framework under which both local authority and Environmental Protection Agency enforcement action is initiated. Enforcement action against illegal waste activity is a matter for the local authorities and the Office of Environmental Enforcement of the EPA as appropriate. Each local authority is responsible for the supervision and the enforcement of the relevant provisions of the Waste Management Act 1996 in relation to the holding, recovery and disposal of waste within its functional area. Local authorities have specific powers under the Act to require measures to be taken, or to take measures directly, to prevent or limit environmental pollution caused or likely to be caused by the holding, recovery or disposal of waste, and to mitigate or remedy the effects on the environment of such activity. Part 19 of the Local Government Act 2001 sets out the powers conferred on Local Authorities to make bye-laws. In addition, section 35 of the Waste Management Act 1996 states that a Local Authority may make a bye-law for the purpose of the proper management of waste or the prevention or control of environmental pollution should it be considered necessary to do so.

Underpinning waste enforcement is state funding for waste enforcement officers. I have made €9 million available from the Environment Fund this year to support the Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authorities and the recruitment and continued employment of a network of local authority waste enforcement officers. This investment is critical in providing an enhanced response on the ground to other infractions of the waste code.

In terms of monitoring how households manage their waste, certain local authorities have already introduced bye-laws which require householders to sign up to a household waste collection service.
The Regional Waste Management Planning Offices have prepared a template to help standardise bye-laws on the presentation of waste. The draft template bye-laws place the onus of proof on the householder to prove that they are managing their waste correctly by signing up to a waste collection service or providing receipts for the deposit of waste in authorised facilities.

In addition, the Regional Waste Management Plans contain further measures to identify areas of low collection and to work with communities and collectors to address this issue.

**Inland Fisheries**

746. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the action he plans to take after an organisation (details supplied) reported a significant loss of eel elvers at Ennistymon, County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30872/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is the State agency responsible for the protection, management and conservation of Ireland’s inland fisheries and sea angling resources. I have been informed by IFI that they have no records on this matter and no communication was received in relation to a loss of eels or elvers at the Ennistymon falls in County Clare.

IFI operate an elver monitoring trap at the falls that is serviced by local staff on a regular basis. No elver mortality was observed by staff during these operations. A large migration run was observed around the 19 May this year with the distribution of elvers in line with previous years.

I would like to reiterate that if people witness a fish kill or fish in distress to please contact the IFI 24-hour Hotline on 1890 34 74 24 (1890 FISH 24) or email the details and any photographs to the info@fisheriesireland.ie email address.

**Inland Fisheries Ireland**

747. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to address a problem (details supplied) regarding the lack of tags for salmon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30891/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is the state agency responsible for the protection, management and conservation of Ireland’s inland fisheries and sea angling resources. IFI manages salmon stocks on an individual river basis as each of Ireland’s 147 salmon rivers (including river sections and estuaries) has its own genetically unique stock of salmon. IFI is supported in its management role by scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) and Ireland’s independent Standing Scientific Committee (SSC).

The annual Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Scheme Regulations, made under the Inland Fisheries Act 2010, provide for the management of Ireland’s wild salmon and sea trout fisheries by IFI. Specifically, the Regulations provide for the quotas of fish (surplus to the conservation limits) that can be harvested either commercially or by rod and line from those rivers identified in the Schedule to the Regulations. These Regulations are revised each year taking account of advice from IFI, the Standing Scientific Committee and any submissions received.
during a 30 day statutory public consultation period.

I have been informed by IFI that commercial draft net fishermen have a quota to harvest salmon at the location specified by the Deputy. This quota is managed by IFI local officers who attend the shoreline daily to ensure that any tags required are issued once the logbooks confirm the catches and previous tags used.

The quota available for commercial draft net fishermen on this river for the 2018 season is 428 fish. Once the quota has been reached fishing will cease. There is no further available quota. The season runs from 1st June to 31st July 2018.

**Bord na Móna**

748. *Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan* asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if Bord na Móna will be repurposed as a dedicated carbon sequestration utility in view of recent weather events (details supplied) and Ireland’s projected failure to meet carbon reduction targets; his plans to increase employment there together with elements of other commercial semi-State companies as appropriate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31012/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** Bord na Móna operates as a diversified utility operating in multiple sectors, including power generation, bioenergy, resource recovery, horticulture and fuels. The dual imperatives to finish energy peat production and contribute to economy-wide decarbonisation have had a major impact on the company’s business model and have become the primary drivers of Bord na Móna’s strategic direction over the next decade. Bord na Móna aims to maintain its substantial employment profile as it transforms into a more sustainable business model with a significantly lower carbon footprint. As part of Bord na Móna’s plans to leverage their land bank to provide employment opportunities, wind and solar projects are being developed in conjunction with other commercial State companies on sites formerly used for peat harvesting. In addition, Bord na Móna are expanding their operations in the biomass sector which is expected to provide further employment opportunities.

**National Broadband Plan Implementation**

749. *Deputy Pat Deering* asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when a broadband service will be available in Ballydarton, Fenagh, County Carlow. [30049/18]

**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 which is available at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://www.broadband.gov.ie). This Map shows the areas targeted by commercial operators to provide high speed broadband services and the areas that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the NBP. The Map is colour coded and searchable by address and eircode.
- The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP and are the subject of an ongoing procurement process.

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

- The LIGHT BLUE areas represent eir’s commercial rural deployment plans to rollout high speed broadband to 300,000 premises as part of a Commitment Agreement signed with me in April 2017 and available on my Department’s website www.dccae.gov.ie

The map shows that the townland of Ballydanton Co Carlow comprises 21 premises, 17 premises represented as AMBER on the map fall within the NBP Intervention area and 4 premises are in a BLUE area and will therefore be covered by commercial operators. Individuals can access information on the categories of specific premises by visiting my Department’s website, www.broadband.gov.ie, and entering the relevant eircode into the High Speed Broadband Map.

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. This process is now in its final stages.

For those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

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

Legislative Measures

750. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his Department has identified laws which are dependent on or in place as a consequence of Article 41.2 of the Constitution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30095/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** In January this year the Department of Justice and Equality requested my Department to examine whether or not any legislation existed under my Department’s responsibility which could be impacted by any change to Article 41.2 of the Constitution. Following that request my Department did not identify any laws which are dependent on or in place as a consequence of Article 41.2 of the Constitution.

Broadband Service Provision

751. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when a premises (details supplied) will receive high-speed broadband; if this will
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 which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. This map shows the areas targeted by commercial operators to provide high speed broadband services and the areas that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the National Broadband Plan.

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

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

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

- The LIGHT BLUE areas represent eir’s commercial rural deployment plans to rollout high speed broadband to 300,000 premises as part of a Commitment Agreement signed with me in April 2017.

The premises referred to by the Deputy is in an AMBER area on my Department’s High Speed Broadband Map, which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. It is therefore included in the State Intervention Area under the NBP.

My Department is in a formal procurement process to select a company who will rollout a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area. That procurement process is now in its final stages.

In the interim practical initiatives will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services. My officials have carried out a desk top survey of the referenced premises and have determined that there is an existing eir 4G tower some 1.89km from the premises in question and this tower provides a good clear line of sight to this premises. The possibility of 4G data coverage might therefore be explored by the premises owner while the NBP process is being finalised.

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

EU Directives
752. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a complaint has ever been made to the European Commission by agencies within its remit in respect of a breach of the habitats directive on the Munster Blackwater at Fermoy, County Cork. [30132/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne):** My Department will bring the Deputy’s query to the attention of the agencies under the aegis of the Department asking them to reply directly to the Deputy.

**Telecommunications Services Provision**

753. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to the ongoing issue regarding the lack of mobile phone signal and broadband signal in areas (details supplied), his plans to improve the services in these areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30441/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** 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 which 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, that will lead to improvements for consumers across Ireland.

The sixth meeting of the Taskforce Implementation Group was held on 4 July 2018, and the Quarter 2 2018 Progress Report has since been published on my Department’s website. This report offers progress updates on all Q2 actions.

In terms of addressing mobile coverage black-spots, 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 black-spots. This pilot exercise has been completed, with all local authorities having been asked to map local black-spots 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 black-spots. 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 recently introduced a new scheme allowing the use of accredited mobile phone repeaters to help address the issue of indoor coverage, particularly in rural areas.

- 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 such as West Wicklow.

**Energy Efficiency**

754. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the implementation of the public sector energy efficiency action plan. [30481/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** Ireland has a national target to improve energy efficiency by 20% by 2020. The public sector has a critical leadership role to play, with a more ambitious 33% energy efficiency target in the same period. Very significant efficiency gains have already been made with a 20% improvement in energy efficiency achieved in the public sector by the end of 2016. This equates to €133m of energy spend savings and a 520,000 tonne CO2 equivalent savings mitigated by the public sector in 2016 alone. This is set out in the *Annual Report on Public Sector Energy Efficiency Performance* compiled by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), and available on their website.

Nevertheless, a significant scaling up of effort is now required if the 33% is to be met. This is why I published the first Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy, with the approval of Government, in January 2017. It introduced new governance structures and enhanced support measures, and provided clarity on the retention of financial savings achieved by public sector bodies from the energy efficiency measures they implement.

To realise the potential for energy efficiency in the public sector, there must be senior leadership and accountability for energy performance in Government Departments and public sector bodies. All Government Departments have now appointed Energy Performance Officers (EPO) at a senior level to provide the necessary strategic leadership to their departments and bodies in their sectors on energy management.

Since the publication of the Strategy, my Department, along with the SEAI and OPW, have continued to engage with the EPO network and their energy management teams through workshops and individual advisory sessions. This engagement process is then supported on an on-
going basis by the specialist energy advisors assigned to each Department by SEAI. The next step is for my Department, again working with SEAI and OPW, to support EPO’s to work with the bodies in their sector to identify and develop energy efficiency projects, and avail of the financial and advisory supports, funded by my Department and available from SEAI.

In 2017, I secured €5m for two pilot partnership programmes between the SEAI and the OPW, and SEAI and Department of Education and Skills. €3 million was allocated to the SEAI/OPW pilot to deliver energy upgrades in central government buildings and €2 million was allocated for a SEAI/DES pilot for medium to deep retrofit upgrades to 10 primary and secondary schools. The purpose of these pilot programmes was to develop a scalable model for energy retrofit investment in our central government building stock and school. I have secured a further €9m this year to extend those pilot initiatives and to further invest in energy efficiency projects and initiatives in the wider public sector. The progress gained and learnings from last year are currently informing the development of standard retrofit approaches that will be effectively and efficiently deployed throughout the entire public sector building stock.

A project pipeline is currently being developed to identify projects of significant scale that can close the remaining gap to target. Along with the pilot schemes, the SEAI is working with the higher education, State laboratory and healthcare sectors to develop significant projects and continues, along with my Department, to support the City & County Management Association in its development of its National Public Lighting upgrade programme, which will halve local authority electricity use.

Furthermore, the Strategy is now providing the basis for realising the commitment in the National Development Plan, to upgrade the public sector built environment under a comprehensive €750 million retrofit programme. This will place the public sector built environment on a sound trajectory for 2050 and lead the way in developing Ireland’s sustainable energy supply chain.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

755. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the implementation of the national broadband plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30482/18]

**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 which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. This Map shows the areas targeted by commercial operators to provide high speed broadband services and the areas that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the NBP. The Map is colour coded and searchable by address and eircode.

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

- The BLUE represent those areas where commercial providers are either currently delivering or have plans to deliver high speed broadband services.
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. This process is now in its final stages.

For those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

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

Digital Hub Development Agency

756. Deput y Timmy Dooley asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if there are vacancies on the board of the Digital Hub Development Agency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30483/18]

757. Deput y Timmy Dooley asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of staff employed by the Digital Hub Development Agency; if these staff members are funded by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30484/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deput y Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 756 and 757 together.

The Digital Hub Development Agency Act 2003 provides that the Agency shall consist of a maximum of 14 members. There are currently 9 members on the Board of the Agency. In June of this year I made three appointments to the Board of the Agency and I have no plans to make further appointments at this time.

In relation to staffing, the DHDA currently employs 12 people. While the Agency exploits commercial opportunities arising from its functions, this is not currently adequate to meet its full costs. The Department continues to part fund the Agency’s costs and for 2018 a grant of €530k is forecast as a contribution towards its staff costs.

Sporting Rights

758. Deput y Timmy Dooley asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the review of designated sports events for free-to-air broadcasting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30485/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deput y Denis Naughten):
The Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) provides that Member States may designate sporting and cultural events of major importance to society as free-to-air. At a national level, the Broadcasting Act 2009 sets out the statutory process for designating events as free-to-air.

Under the 2009 Act, I, as Minister, am obliged to review the list of designated events every three years. The purpose of the review is to consider the appropriateness of the current list of designated events and to examine whether to add any events of major importance to society.

The most recent review was finalised in 2017. Approval was received from the European Commission to designate the All Ireland Senior Ladies Football and Camogie Finals as events of major importance in May 2017. Cabinet approval was received in June 2017 and the decision was subsequently laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas.

The current list of designated events will be reviewed again in 2020.

The events currently designated by Order (S.I. 465 of 2017) are as follows:

**Live:**
- The All Ireland Senior Ladies Football Final
- The All Ireland Senior Camogie Final
- The Summer Olympics
- The All-Ireland Senior Inter-County Football & Hurling Finals
- Ireland’s home and away qualifying games in the European Football Championship and the FIFA World Cup Tournaments
- Ireland’s games in the European Football Championship Finals Tournament and the FIFA World Cup Finals Tournament
- Ireland’s games in the Rugby World Cup Finals Tournament
- The Irish Grand National and the Irish Derby
- The Nations Cup at the Dublin Horse Show

**Deferred:**
- Ireland’s games in the Six Nations Rugby Football Championship.

**EU Directives**

759. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has transposed the cost of the broadband directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30486/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** Directive 2014/61/EU on measures to reduce the cost of deploying high-speed electronic communications networks requires operators of communications, district heating, electricity including public lighting, gas, transport and waste water networks to negotiate agreements to share their network physical infrastructure with public communications networks operators, if requested, unless there are objective reasons not to do so in any particular case.
The Directive provides, among other things, for infrastructure sharing requirements and a requirement to establish a dispute settlement body to adjudicate in disputes regarding access to other networks and the terms and conditions of such access. The European Union (Reduction of Cost of Deploying High Speed Public Communications Networks) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 391 of 2016) transposing these requirements of the Directive were signed into law by me on 20 July 2016.

A further provision of the Directive - to ensure that all newly constructed buildings at the end-user’s location, with certain exceptions, or buildings undergoing major renovation works, for which applications for building permits have been submitted after 31 December 2016, are equipped with a high-speed-ready in-building physical infrastructure - requires an amendment to the Building Control Acts in order to effect transposition. My officials have been working with officials in the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government on the necessary measures to transpose this provision, which are now being finalised.

Metropolitan Area Networks Programme

760. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the review of metropolitan area networks has been completed; if the outcome of the review will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30487/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Review of pricing and access arrangements of the Metropolitan Area Networks has been completed by Analysys Mason Consultants. My Department is finalising its consideration of the Review and is currently engaging with the Management Services Entity (enet) in relation to the Review’s recommendations. It is my intention to publish the Review in the near term.

Environmental Policy

761. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a national energy forum has been established; if so, the number of times it has met; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30488/18]


The primary objective of the National Dialogue will be to ensure an inclusive process of engagement and consensus building across society towards enabling the transformation to a low carbon and climate-resilient future. To do this, the Dialogue will seek to create awareness, engagement and motivation to act (locally, regionally and nationally) in relation to the challenges presented by climate change and to establish, on a long term basis, appropriate networks for people to meet periodically to consider evidence-based inputs on the economic, social, behavioural, environmental and public aspects of climate and energy policy. This is also in line with the objectives for the National Energy Forum envisaged in the Energy White Paper.

National Dialogue initiatives already being implemented include the Green Schools Na-
tional Climate Change Action and Awareness Programme, incorporating Climate Action Week, the Green Schools Climate Expo, and the Climate Ambassador Programme; the EPA Climate Lecture Series; the Tidy Towns Climate Award; and the Regional Gatherings.

I hosted the first Regional Gathering in Athlone on 23 June last, and this event was targeted at community organisations and individuals from the counties of Offaly, Westmeath, Meath, Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Longford, Roscommon, and Leitrim. A report on the outcomes of this event will be published shortly on my Department’s website at www.dccae.gov.ie. I intend that a number of further Regional Gatherings will take place in other regions across Ireland in the coming months.

Energy Efficiency

762. Deputy Timmy Dooley asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount provided for capital investment in energy efficiency in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [30489/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): A significant programme of capital expenditure for energy efficiency programmes in the residential, commercial and public sectors is funded by my Department and implemented through the SEAI. In addition to achieving energy savings, these Programmes realise benefits for air quality, health, social inclusion, business competitiveness and better public services, all of which make a real and positive impact on people’s lives. Such investments focus on supporting the transition to a circular, climate resilient and resource efficient economy and protecting our environment, while ensuring the sustainable management of our natural resources.

The amount spent on capital investment in energy efficiency in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to June 2018 is set out below. The capital allocation for energy efficiency programmes in 2018 is €107m. This is a doubling of the allocation since 2016 - evidence of the importance of energy efficiency for action on climate change. The bulk of spend on energy efficiency programmes has historically taken place in the second half of the year and I expect this to be the case this year also.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount (€m)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>€95.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>€66.7</td>
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<td>2018 (Jan to June)</td>
<td>€30.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</table>

Better Energy Programme

763. Deputy Timmy Dooley asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount spent on schemes (details supplied) in each of the years 2014 to 2017 and to date in 2018, by county. [30490/18]
Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Better Energy Programme is funded by my Department and administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). The Programme consists of three main schemes: Homes, Warmer Homes and Communities.

Better Energy Homes provides a financial incentive to private homeowners who wish to improve the energy performance of their homes. Better Energy Warmer Homes delivers a range of energy efficiency measures free of charge to low income households who meet the defined eligibility criteria and who are vulnerable to energy poverty. Better Energy Communities supports energy efficiency upgrades to mixed projects of homes, community facilities and businesses in a local community; projects under this scheme can cross county boundaries and therefore a breakdown of costs per county is not available.

These schemes are supplemented by the Warmth and Wellbeing Scheme which was launched as a Pilot scheme under the Government’s Strategy to Combat Energy Poverty and the Healthy Ireland Framework. The aim of the scheme, a joint policy initiative between my Department and the Department of Health, which began in 2016, is to demonstrate the positive effects that making homes warmer and more energy efficient can have on the health and well-being of people in energy poverty who are living with a chronic respiratory condition. As a pilot scheme, it is currently available only in certain areas of CHO 7.

Table 1: Spend across the Better Energy Communities and Warmth and Well-being schemes 2014-2018YTD.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>2014 Spend</th>
<th>2015 Spend</th>
<th>2016 Spend</th>
<th>2017 Spend</th>
<th>2018 Spend to date</th>
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<td>Better Energy Communities</td>
<td>€15.3m</td>
<td>€13.57m</td>
<td>€16.71m</td>
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<td>Warmth &amp; Well-being</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>€0.5m</td>
<td>€6.5m</td>
<td>€4.39m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>€45.86m</td>
<td>€46.04m</td>
<td>€54.92m</td>
<td>€68.15m</td>
<td>€26.41m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: County by County breakdown of spend for Better Energy Homes scheme 2014-2018YTD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018 YTD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlow</td>
<td>€95,230</td>
<td>€160,320</td>
<td>€143,950</td>
<td>€148,350</td>
<td>€41,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>€114,560</td>
<td>€165,730</td>
<td>€175,300</td>
<td>€140,650</td>
<td>€61,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare</td>
<td>€201,120</td>
<td>€247,300</td>
<td>€361,550</td>
<td>€361,000</td>
<td>€119,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork</td>
<td>€1,339,860</td>
<td>€1,943,185</td>
<td>€2,261,175</td>
<td>€1,957,964</td>
<td>€938,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegal</td>
<td>€166,317</td>
<td>€248,230</td>
<td>€271,950</td>
<td>€244,075</td>
<td>€86,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>€3,765,393</td>
<td>€5,493,691</td>
<td>€5,956,419</td>
<td>€5,959,279</td>
<td>€2,861,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>€497,521</td>
<td>€692,565</td>
<td>€777,052</td>
<td>€815,100</td>
<td>€321,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry</td>
<td>€313,520</td>
<td>€456,768</td>
<td>€608,800</td>
<td>€551,800</td>
<td>€288,288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>€412,330</td>
<td>€600,170</td>
<td>€711,130</td>
<td>€735,300</td>
<td>€393,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilkenny</td>
<td>€117,540</td>
<td>€125,370</td>
<td>€206,550</td>
<td>€148,800</td>
<td>€45,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laois</td>
<td>€73,200</td>
<td>€137,727</td>
<td>€194,300</td>
<td>€185,350</td>
<td>€67,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leitrim</td>
<td>€45,780</td>
<td>€56,310</td>
<td>€44,200</td>
<td>€55,150</td>
<td>€15,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick</td>
<td>€394,417</td>
<td>€478,034</td>
<td>€916,553</td>
<td>€833,900</td>
<td>€370,524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longford</td>
<td>€43,690</td>
<td>€58,800</td>
<td>€35,350</td>
<td>€89,700</td>
<td>€27,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3: County by County breakdown of spend for Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme 2014-2018 YTD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018 YTD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlow</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€523,961</td>
<td>€200,344</td>
<td>€250,051</td>
<td>€95,913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€409,985</td>
<td>€272,327</td>
<td>€380,766</td>
<td>€407,289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€209,070</td>
<td>€335,272</td>
<td>€652,857</td>
<td>€69,646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€1,045,762</td>
<td>€1,463,903</td>
<td>€1,622,243</td>
<td>€1,588,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegal</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€985,560</td>
<td>€865,165</td>
<td>€1,011,083</td>
<td>€866,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€2,432,752</td>
<td>€1,333,654</td>
<td>€3,167,986</td>
<td>€2,434,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€895,184</td>
<td>€774,751</td>
<td>€1,763,729</td>
<td>€487,595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€442,009</td>
<td>€421,904</td>
<td>€3,167,986</td>
<td>€2,434,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€1,176,300</td>
<td>€693,232</td>
<td>€347,646</td>
<td>€399,786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilkenny</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€279,677</td>
<td>€660,772</td>
<td>€165,509</td>
<td>€116,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laois</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€201,613</td>
<td>€765,453</td>
<td>€280,083</td>
<td>€136,058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leitrim</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€218,732</td>
<td>€157,928</td>
<td>€204,544</td>
<td>€128,407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€209,665</td>
<td>€495,583</td>
<td>€743,277</td>
<td>€99,381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longford</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€298,805</td>
<td>€206,281</td>
<td>€144,708</td>
<td>€178,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louth</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€393,031</td>
<td>€1,168,614</td>
<td>€433,733</td>
<td>€82,439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayo</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€885,292</td>
<td>€860,383</td>
<td>€1,704,754</td>
<td>€344,267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meath</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€484,551</td>
<td>€1,547,615</td>
<td>€497,041</td>
<td>€222,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monaghan</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€187,811</td>
<td>€129,735</td>
<td>€209,127</td>
<td>€209,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offaly</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€297,959</td>
<td>€936,966</td>
<td>€277,491</td>
<td>€169,721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€316,828</td>
<td>€257,299</td>
<td>€303,279</td>
<td>€249,264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€187,010</td>
<td>€400,866</td>
<td>€703,149</td>
<td>€135,309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tipperary</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€389,003</td>
<td>€513,979</td>
<td>€870,511</td>
<td>€179,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€364,183</td>
<td>€327,691</td>
<td>€1,078,988</td>
<td>€373,317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmeath</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€936,282</td>
<td>€510,733</td>
<td>€462,076</td>
<td>€317,129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wexford</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€799,089</td>
<td>€849,173</td>
<td>€1,518,067</td>
<td>€883,848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicklow</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>€322,083</td>
<td>€977,271</td>
<td>€427,931</td>
<td>€171,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>€19,800,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>€14,892,199</strong></td>
<td><strong>€17,126,896</strong></td>
<td><strong>€19,756,172</strong></td>
<td><strong>€11,460,730</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**North-South Interconnector**

303
764. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the two studies commissioned on the North-South interconnector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30491/18]

777. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the reason for the delay in publishing the studies on the North-South interconnector; the timeframe for publication of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30618/18]

782. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the reason the publication of the reports on the North-South interconnector has been delayed; the date for publication; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31044/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 764, 777 and 782 together.

In 2017 I commissioned two studies designed to address the main points of the motions passed in Dáil and Seanad Éireann as well as key concerns expressed by the parties opposed to the development of the North South Interconnector as an overhead line. The first is an independent study to examine the technical feasibility and cost of undergrounding the interconnector. The second study is focused on the levels of compensation provided to land and property owners in proximity to high-voltage transmission lines in a European context.

I indicated previously that the Consultants undertaking the two studies have finalised their reports and it is my intention that these will be brought to Government and made publicly available. I expect to bring both reports to Government shortly.

**Broadcast Spectrum Management**

765. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the reallocation of the 700 MHz spectrum; the amount spent on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30492/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** A Decision was adopted at EU level in order to co-ordinate the release of the 694-790MHz (700MHz) spectrum band in all Member States by 30 June 2020.

In Ireland, the 700MHz band is currently used by digital terrestrial television services (DTT) and my Department and ComReg have been working to ensure the necessary measures are taken to facilitate a clearance of the spectrum to meet the timeline of June 2020. This work is being carried out with the co-operation of RTÉ (as owner and operator of the two DTT public service multiplexes) and its subsidiary, 2rn, as the owner and operator of the national broadcasting transmission network.

A project plan and related expenditure estimates have been finalised by 2rn and reviewed by independent consultants on behalf of the Department and ComReg. Ireland will compensate RTÉ for the changes to the DTT network which relate to the re-engineering of their DTT network to facilitate its migration out of the 700MHz band.

A compensation agreement between my Department, RTÉ and 2rn was signed in February 2017. As part of this agreement, a Cost Recovery Mechanism (CRM) has been developed to ensure that only appropriate expenditure is compensated and that this is carried out in a fully transparent manner.
2rn received two separate payments in 2017, Phase 1 payment of €5.16m in February and €2.8m in December under Phase 2. A further payment will be made under Phase 3 in 2020 once the migration is complete.

Further information and documentation is available on my Department’s website at this link.

**Biofuel Obligation Scheme**

766. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the biofuel obligation scheme; the steps he will take to ensure compliance in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30493/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The Biofuels Obligation Scheme was introduced in 2010 and requires suppliers of motor fuel to ensure that biofuels make up a certain percentage of annual fuel sales. It is a certificate based scheme with two certificates awarded per litre of sustainable biofuel if that biofuel is produced from wastes or residues and one certificate per litre for all other sustainable biofuels. The Biofuels Obligation Scheme is administered by the National Oil Reserves Agency, which is a body established under the 2007 National Oil Reserves Agency Act.

For each calendar year, a fuel supplier must hold sufficient biofuel obligation certificates to demonstrate compliance. The number of certificates required is determined by the biofuel obligation rate, which is currently set at 8%. This means that at the end of 2018, a fuel supplier must hold 8 biofuel certificates for every 92 litres of fossil fuel they place on the road transport fuel market this year. If a fuel supplier does not have sufficient certificates, it can purchase certificates from other obligated parties who hold surpluses and/or pay a ‘buy out charge’ of 45 cent per certificate for the shortfall. The level of compliance with the obligation is high and there has been very limited necessity for the buy-out charge to be levied since the scheme was introduced.

In 2017 the Biofuels Obligation Scheme resulted in over 225 million litres of biofuel being placed on the market in Ireland leading to over 7% renewable energy use in the transport sector compared to the 10% target for 2020 under the Renewable Energy Directive.

In December 2017, my Department held a consultation seeking views in relation to implementing a phased increase to the biofuel obligation rate and on how the scheme could be developed in the future. A key theme to emerge from responses to the consultation was the need to provide certainty to industry and stakeholders to facilitate longer term planning for future blending obligations.

In April 2018, I published a Biofuel Obligation Scheme Policy Statement which set out six key actions that will be undertaken in the development of the scheme. This included an increase in the biofuel obligation rate to 10% by volume from 1 January 2019 and 11% by volume from 1 January 2020. The first of these changes has been enacted by S.I. No. 169 of 2018.

Further changes to the Biofuels Obligation Scheme are likely for the period post-2020 to conform to the recently agreed changes to the Renewable Energy Directive. In this regard, it is my intention that a further public consultation be held next year.

**EU Directives**

767. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and
Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Commission’s proposals around amendments to Directive 2009/119/EC, known as the Oil Stocks Directive, are currently being considered by the Oil Stocks Directive Committee, set up under Article 23 of the Directive, in which Ireland is participating.

As things stand the amendments proposed by the Commission are as follows:

- To change the date on which member states are obliged to have in place oil stocks reserves corresponding to 90 days of net imports from 1st April to 1st July annually. Ireland’s position is that while we are consistently able to meet the 1st April deadline, we recognise that it does pose difficulties for other member states in terms of their administration. For this reason we support this amendment.

- To change the rules under which an allowance is made for naphtha yield when calculating the stock holding obligation of member states. Naphtha is a by-product of the refining process which may be used as a feedstock for further refining or in the petrochemical industry. The current methodology for taking into account naphtha yield is leading to large fluctuations in some member states stockholding obligations from one year to the next. Ireland’s annual naphtha yield of approximately 3% does not subject the State to such fluctuations in its obligations. Given that the proposed technical changes in the methodology will have no impact on Ireland’s stock holding obligation and in recognition of the difficulties experienced by some member states, Ireland supports the Commission’s proposal in this area.

Bioenergy Strategy

768. Deputy Timmy Dooley asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the delivery of a joint venture between Bord na Móna and Coillte to capture synergies in the bioenergy sector. [30495/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Bord na Móna and Coillte Teoranta continue to work together on areas of joint interest, in line with a Memorandum of Understanding that was agreed by the two companies in 2016. The two companies are co-operating closely in a number of areas including:

1. Indigenous biomass supply;

2. Regional tourism development; and

3. Wind energy.

Bord na Móna is working with a number of stakeholders, including Coillte, on the development of an indigenous biomass supply chain. It is envisaged that these will include sawmill residues from a number of sources, willow from local growers and pulpwood logs mainly supplied by Coillte.

Bord na Móna launched a new division named Bord na Móna BioEnergy in 2017, which aims to be the largest supplier of biomass in the State. Bord na Móna BioEnergy will be using agri crops (principally willow) and forestry by-products including thinnings, brash, pulpwood as the main sources of biomass material. This material is currently being sourced in Ireland and abroad. The company will continue to work with the farming community and State agencies to
10 July 2018

develop a willow growing industry.

Energy Policy

769. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the renegotiation of a revised gas security of supply regulation. [30496/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The renegotiation of EU Regulation 994/2010 concerning measures to safeguard the security of gas supply concluded with the adoption of EU Regulation 2017/1938.

The revised regulation came into effect on 1 November 2017. The revised regulation further strengthens regional cooperation in the field of security of gas supply.

EU Directives

770. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the implementation of the EU third energy package; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30497/18]


Implementation of the legislation is a matter for various bodies in the energy sector so tasked in the aforementioned legislation, including Ireland’s energy regulator, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities, the Transmission System Operator (EirGrid), and the Distribution System Operator (EBSN).

As the Deputy will be aware, substantial elements of the 2009 Third Energy Package are set to be amended by the EU’s Clean Energy Package for All Europeans, negotiations of which are ongoing under the Austrian Presidency of the European Council, which aims to complete negotiations by the end of 2018, with subsequent dates from 2019 for adoption and entry into effect.

Ministerial Travel

307
771. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the cost of travel expenses for him and those who travel with him since his appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30506/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The costs incurred in relation to my travel (comprising mileage, flights, trains and taxis), and that of my Private Secretary and two special advisers amounted to €98,385.26 in the period since my appointment in May 2016 to date, and are detailed in the Table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Minister €</th>
<th>Rúnaí Aire/Advisers €</th>
<th>Total €</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mileage</td>
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<td>3,106.70</td>
<td>41,479.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flights</td>
<td>15,354.90</td>
<td>39,110.08</td>
<td>54,464.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trains</td>
<td>225.40</td>
<td>450.80</td>
<td>676.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxis</td>
<td>777.56</td>
<td>986.58</td>
<td>1,764.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54,731.10</td>
<td>43,654.16</td>
<td>98,385.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Broadband Service Provision**

772. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the rural broadband scheme will be extended to areas (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30521/18]

**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 which is available at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://www.broadband.gov.ie). This map shows the areas targeted by commercial operators to provide high speed broadband services and the areas that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the National Broadband Plan. The Map is colour coded and searchable by address/Eircode:

- The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP and are the subject of an ongoing procurement process.
- The BLUE represent those areas where commercial providers are either currently delivering or have plans to deliver high speed broadband services.
- The LIGHT BLUE areas represent eir’s commercial rural deployment plans to rollout high speed broadband to 300,000 premises as part of a Commitment Agreement signed with me in April 2017.

All 96 premises in the townland of Ballynacarrigy are LIGHT BLUE and fall to be served by eir’s planned rural deployment.

There are 136 premises in the townland of Ballymore. 134 of these are LIGHT BLUE and fall to be served by eir’s planned rural deployment. 2 are AMBER and will be served under the State led Intervention.
My Department is in a formal procurement process to select a company who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area. That procurement process is now in its final stages.

In April 2017, I signed a Commitment Agreement with eir in relation to its plans to provide high speed broadband to 300,000 premises in rural areas on a commercial basis. Information on eir’s planned rural deployment is available at http://fibrerollout.ie. A copy of the Commitment Agreement is available on my Department’s website www.dccae.gov.ie.

Data for Q1 2018 submitted by eir to my Department indicated that the company has passed some 145,000 premises nationwide as part of its ongoing deployment. eir has signalled that there would be some knock-on effects to 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.

For those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

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

Project Ireland 2040

773. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of times he has met his officials regarding Project Ireland 2040 since its launch; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30547/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): On 20 June, I launched the ‘Transition to a Low-Carbon and Climate-Resilient Society’ Strategic Investment Priority of Project Ireland 2040. This event, which was also attended by An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar TD, and other members of the Cabinet, had the theme of Empowering Communities for Climate Action.

Recognising the key role of communities as enablers and drivers of the low carbon transition in society, this event also included two panel discussions exploring how to engage society with climate change and how, once engaged with the challenge, citizens can be empowered to act, focusing especially on the role of Government expenditure policy, taxation measures and regulation in underpinning climate action. These panel discussions will, in turn, further inform the development of initiatives under the National Dialogue on Climate Action. A recording of the 20 June event is available to view on my Department’s website at www.dccae.gov.ie

Building on the National Mitigation Plan, the publication in February of the National Development Plan will lead to a significant step change in funding available for climate action in the next decade. Reflecting the strong commitment of the Government on this issue, almost €22
billion will be directed, between Exchequer and non-Exchequer resources, to addressing the transition to a low-carbon and climate resilient society. In addition, the National Development Plan allocated a further €8.6 billion for investments in sustainable mobility. This means that well over €1 in every €5 spent under the National Development Plan will be on climate mitigation and this capital investment will enable us to deliver a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the period to 2030.

The key investment priorities in the National Development Plan that my Department will take forward include:

- energy efficiency upgrades of 45,000 homes per annum from 2021 and providing support for a major roll-out of heat pump technologies;
- delivering energy upgrades to BER ‘B’ level in all public buildings and a minimum of one third of commercial buildings;
- implementing the new renewable electricity support scheme to deliver an additional 3,000-4,500 MW of renewable energy, with the initial focus on shovel ready projects which could contribute to meeting our 2020 renewable energy targets;
- the roll-out of the support scheme for renewable heat and national smart metering programme;
- transitioning the Moneypoint plant away from coal by the middle of the next decade;
- having at least 500,000 electric vehicles on the road by 2030 with additional charging infrastructure to cater for planned growth; and
- a €500 million Climate Action Fund to leverage investment by public and private bodies in climate action measures, which I launched for applications on 9 July.

Both the National Mitigation Plan and the National Development Plan explicitly recognise that the reliance solely on Exchequer expenditure schemes is neither affordable nor adequate to meet the scale of the challenge to be addressed, and that climate mitigation action will require a targeted balance between Exchequer-supported expenditure, taxation measures, regulation and behavioural change.

In certain cases, taxation policy may have a stronger role to play in changing individual or business behaviour and investment decisions, including harnessing non-Exchequer finance. Carbon tax, in particular, has a critical role in climate mitigation policy and the national mitigation plan commits the Department of Finance to completing a review in 2018, with a view to setting a long-term trajectory for the evolution of this tax. Clear long-term signalling by the Government on the future evolution of the tax is vital, as well as an examination of what other changes to the taxation regime could be considered that would assist with the achievement of climate targets. The low emission vehicle task force is bringing forward proposals in this regard.

As regards significant regulatory change, the National Development Plan commits the Government to no new non-zero emission cars to be sold in Ireland post-2030, with no NCT certificates to be issued for non-zero emission cars post-2045. There is also to be a transition to a low emission urban bus fleet, including electric buses, with no diesel only buses purchased from 1 July 2019.

Given the significant role for my Department in the development and implementation of policies and programmes envisaged in the National Development Plan to advance our transition
to a low-carbon, climate-resilient society, as well as other programmes for which I am responsible, I am in constant contact with my officials regarding the implementation of various elements of the Project Ireland 2040 commitments and I also meet with the Management Board of the Department each month to review progress on the full suite of business priorities for which the Department is responsible.

Freedom of Information Requests

774. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of FOI requests his Department has received since January 2018; the number of refusals; the number that have been appealed and that are ongoing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30564/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Details of the FOI requests received by my Department in the period 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2018, as requested by the Deputy is set out in the Table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total no. of requests received</th>
<th>No. of requests dealt with outside of the FOI process</th>
<th>No. of requests processed</th>
<th>No. of requests refused</th>
<th>No. of appeals</th>
<th>No. of requests that are ongoing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The basis for the refusal of the 32 FOI requests in the relevant period is as follows:

Section 15 - Records do not exist (19 cases)

Section 33 - Matters relating to the defence or security of the State (5 cases)

Sections 29 & 30 – Deliberative process of FOI Bodies (4 cases)

Section 15 - Information already in the public domain (2 cases)

Section 42 - Record relating to private papers of a member of the Oireachtas (1 case)

Vacancies on State Boards

775. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of vacancies on State boards under the remit of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30581/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The table below outlines the vacancies on the State boards under the remit of my Department as at 30 June 2018. The detail of all State boards vacancies is available at www.stateboards.ie.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Board</th>
<th>Vacancies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An Post</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Hub Development Agency (DHDA)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The vacancies on the SEAI and An Post boards are currently advertised on the State boards website, with closing dates of 1 August and 2 August 2018 respectively. The vacancies on the NORA and RTÉ boards were advertised on the State boards website with closing dates of 7 June and 4 July 2018 respectively and are currently undergoing an assessment process.

It is not proposed to fill the vacancies on the DHDA given the proposals to merge DHDA with Dublin City Council.

Energy Policy

776. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his policy on fossil fuel divestment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30597/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill seeks to amend the NTMA Acts to have the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund divest from fossil fuels. The Bill is progressing through the legislative process and is due before the Dáil this Thursday, 12 July. It is being brought to the Dáil by Department of Finance.

The Government and I are committed to reducing Ireland’s greenhouse gas emissions. Our 2015 Energy White Paper on Ireland’s Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future sets out a vision of a low-carbon energy system where emissions from the energy sector will be reduced by between 80% and 95% by 2050, compared to 1990 levels. The reduction will require a significant increase in the share of renewables in primary energy supply. The government has made a definitive decision to take coal out of power generation by 2025 and peat out before 2030. Ireland will be one of the first countries in Europe to do so. We will be one of the first countries in the world to ban smoky coal later this year.

This time last year I published Ireland’s first statutory National Mitigation Plan, an initial step to set Ireland on a pathway to achieve the deep decarbonisation required by 2050.

The National Mitigation Plan covers greenhouse gas emissions in the Electricity Generation, Built Environment, Transport, and Agriculture, Forest and Land Use sectors. For each sector, the Plan sets out the sectorial policy context, the greenhouse gas emissions trends for each sector, the opportunities and challenges, mitigation measures currently in place and under development, and specific actions to take forward work within each sector. The National Development Plan specifies that €1 in every €5 spent over the next decade in public funding is to be spent on climate-related activity.

Work is also being carried out to examine the potential economic impact of various carbon tax scenarios. A report is due to be published on this in advance of the forthcoming budget. The National Development Plan sets out the Government’s ambition that no new non-zero emission cars would be sold in Ireland post 2030. In addition, Budget 2018 introduced a range of mea-
sures to drive uptake in electric vehicle ownership including continuation of Electric Vehicle Purchase Grant and VRT reliefs, grants for home chargers and a 0% rate of benefit in kind for battery electric vehicles. My colleague, the Minister for Tourism, Transport and Sport has introduced grant incentives for the uptake of electric vehicles in the Small Public Service Vehicle sector and discounted tolling charges for electric vehicles. Government continues to increase support to extended energy efficiency programmes managed by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), resulting in less reliance on imported fossil fuels.

Question No. 777 answered with Question No. 764.

Waste Disposal Charges

778. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the basis on which a company (details supplied) can introduce a monthly service charge to customers who specifically choose to use a pay-per-lift service. [30710/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** As Minister for Communications, Climate Action & Environment, I have no role in relation to the terms and conditions of private contracts, or in enforcing consumer protection legislation. The charges applied by waste management companies are matters for those companies and their customers, subject to compliance with all applicable environmental and other relevant legislation, including contract and consumer legislation.

Notwithstanding the above, I established a Household Waste Collection Price Monitoring Group (PMG) last year to monitor pricing developments for household waste collection services during the phasing out of flat rate fees. The PMG has met each month since September 2017 and has considered nine months of pricing data trends. The PMG has indicated that, in the vast majority of cases to date, prices have remained stable. Detailed data on the price offerings for the months of December to June is available on www.dccaie.gov.ie

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) is also currently conducting a separate study on the operation of the household waste collection market which it will complete in 2018.

The results from the PMG in conjunction with the study being undertaken by the CCPC will provide an evidence base for future policy decisions in relation to the household waste market.

Asbestos Remediation Programme

779. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to provide assistance to persons to dispose safely of historical asbestos that they have on their land or in their property; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30871/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** There is no funding available from my Department for the removal of asbestos from lands or residential properties.

The prevention of exposure to the harmful effects of asbestos is the focus of occupational safety and health legislation concerning asbestos in the workplace. Specific Regulations regarding the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to asbestos fibres while at work have been in place since 1989. The current Regulations are the Safety, Health and Welfare at
Work (Exposure to Asbestos) Regulations 2006, which are enforced by the Health and Safety Authority, which comes under the remit of the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

The primary responsibility for the management of any waste, including costs for removal or disposal, lies with the holder of the waste, i.e. the natural or legal person in possession of the waste, or the producer of the waste. The Waste Management Act 1996 imposes a general duty of care on holders of waste. A person may not hold, transport, recover or dispose of waste in a manner that causes or is likely to cause environmental pollution. In addition, in the case of hazardous waste, a holder of waste is required, without delay, to inform both the local authority concerned and the Environmental Protection Agency of any loss, spillage, accident or other development concerning that waste which causes or is likely to cause environmental pollution.

It is recommended that expert advice should be sought in dealing with asbestos materials and if removal is necessary it should only be done by a competent contractor with the required training and appropriate authorisations. Advice on the proper disposal of asbestos is available from the website of the Environmental Protection Agency at this link.

**Waste Disposal**

780. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the precise role of each State organisation in the enforcement of conditions attached to waste licences, waste permits, illegal dumping and other related waste laws; and the way in which he plans to strengthen enforcement in this area. [30893/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** Issues concerning the enforcement of waste legislation are statutory matters for local authorities or the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as appropriate, who both have significant powers under waste regulations to secure compliance by waste operators. The role of my Department is to provide a comprehensive legislative and waste policy framework through which the enforcement authorities operate.

Under section 60(3) of the Waste Management Act 1996, as Minister, I am precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to the performance by the Agency or a local authority, in particular circumstances, of a statutory function vested in it.

The primary objective of local authorities in terms of waste enforcement is to achieve regulatory compliance in relation to waste activities in the local authority’s functional area. This covers a wide range of roles, including regulatory enforcement, undertaking inspections and taking appropriate measures to bring relevant parties into compliance, addressing unauthorised waste activities and responding to environmental complaints.

It is a matter for each individual local authority in the first instance to deal with any instances of illegal disposal of waste in their area and to take the appropriate enforcement action. Local authorities have significant powers available to them under the Waste Management Act, to enable them to tackle illegal waste activity. This includes the power to investigate complaints, prosecute offences, apply to the Courts for the imposition of fines, enter onto and inspect premises where there are reasonable grounds for believing that there is a risk of environmental pollution, direct a holder of waste to dispose of it in a certain way within a specific timeframe and monitor and inspect waste holding, recovery and disposal facilities.

Local authorities are assisted by three Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authorities (WER-LAs), covering the Southern, Eastern and Midlands, and Connacht/Ulster Regions, which were established in 2015. The WERLA offices have responsibility for coordinating waste enforce-
ment actions within regions, setting priorities and common objectives for waste enforcement, ensuring consistent enforcement of waste legislation while still leaving local authority personnel as first responders on the ground. The work of the WERLAs is overseen by a National Steering Committee which includes representatives from a wide range of regulatory and law enforcement authorities.

The Environmental Protection Agency carries out its waste enforcement functions through the Office of Environmental Enforcement (OEE), and the Office of Climate, Licensing, Resource and Research (OCLRR). The OEE has a mandate to deliver enhanced environmental compliance through enforcement of EPA licences issued to waste, industrial and other activities. It also exercises a supervisory role in respect of the environmental protection activities of local authorities. In this regard, the OEE acts as a resource to members of the public who have exhausted all other avenues of complaint. Further enforcement responsibility is assigned to the OCLRR, including producer responsibility enforcement related to WEEE, batteries and tyres.

The National Transfrontier Waste Shipment (TFS) Office was established in 2007 as part of Ireland’s transposition of Regulation (EC) No. 1013/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council (the waste shipment regulation). All transfrontier shipments of waste originating in any local authority area in the State that are subject to prior written notification procedures must be notified to and through the National TFS Office who have a dedicated enforcement team in place to tackle the illegal shipment of waste abroad.

The National Waste Collection Permit Office processes waste collection permit applications and review applications for all local authorities. It maintains the Waste Collection Permit register, revokes Waste Collection Permits as appropriate, and provides data reports to relevant stakeholders- including enforcement authorities where required.

My commitment to supporting waste enforcement activities is demonstrated through continued investment in the network of local authority waste enforcement officers, increased resources for the EPA and the development of the WERLA Offices. My Department is at an advanced stage of reviewing the €7.4 million annual waste enforcement grant provided to local authorities in order to ensure that resources are placed where they are needed most. A further €1 million is being invested in the WERLA offices on an annual basis while my Department has also provided €3.3 million to support the national anti-dumping initiative in the past two years. Notwithstanding this support it is a matter for local authorities to ensure that the statutory functions that they are charged with delivering are adequately resourced, that they engage proactively with the other supports which are available to them through the EPA’s NIECE Enforcement network and that staff avail of the training and development opportunities available to them as professional waste enforcement practitioners.

Broadband Service Provision

781. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the installation of broadband at a location details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31015/18]

**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 a Commitment Agreement signed in April 2017.

The premises referred to by the Deputy is in an AMBER area on my Department’s High Speed Broadband Map, which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. It is therefore included in the State Intervention Area under the National Broadband Plan (NBP).

My Department is in a formal procurement process to select a company who will rollout a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area. That procurement process is now in its final stages.

The rollout of broadband infrastructure close to this premises is a commercial undertaking by eir. Decisions made by private telecommunication operators relating to the rollout and siting of high speed broadband infrastructure are made 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 will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

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

*Question No. 782 answered with Question No. 764.*

**Renewable Energy Projects**

783. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if there is a service level agreement, in number of days, for the planning process for renewable energy projects from design through to operation (details supplied); and the way in which these service level agreements compare with the UK and Germany. [31050/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** Renewable electricity projects are subject to a number of separate processes relating to planning requirements, grid connection and financial support. These processes differ across jurisdictions in Europe where planning laws, grid access rules and funding arrangements are not necessarily comparable.

Planning applications in Ireland are generally made to the relevant local planning authority with a right of appeal to An Bord Pleanála (the Board). Applications for larger wind energy
projects (with 25 turbines and above or having a total output greater than 50 megawatts) are made directly to the Board under Strategic Infrastructure Development system. Planning authorities normally decide planning application within 8 weeks. Where an appeal is lodged with the Board in relation to a planning decision by a local authority, the Board has a statutory objective to determine the matter within 18 weeks. For Strategic Infrastructure Development generally, the Board has an objective to make a decision on applications within a period of 18 weeks.

Renewable electricity projects that are eligible for financial support under the Renewable Energy Feed-in Tariff that is administered by my Department must adhere to applicable timelines in relation to the furnishing of relevant permissions and consents, as well as deadlines for connecting to the electricity grid.

The processing of applications to the electricity grid is a matter for the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU). The CRU, ESB Networks and EirGrid are working to develop a programme for issuing new connection offers under the revised Enduring Connection Policy (ECP-1) rules. This programme includes the scheduling of individual and grouped grid connections.

The scheduling of grid delivery for specific projects is dependent on parameters such as geographical location, network capacity, operational conditions and the requirement for network reinforcements, which is assessed on a case by case basis. I understand that, insofar as possible, ESB Networks co-ordinates its connection works with developer project timelines, to align generator delivery schedules with proposed energisation dates. The timelines for works associated with an individual generator’s connection to the grid depends on the connection method and associated works required for that connection.

Finally, timescales for the funding of renewable energy projects are a commercial matter for project developers.

Electricity Grid

784. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will consider using the Kilbarry project in Waterford city as a pilot scheme to reassess planning restrictions regarding the ESB grid access. [31052/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** I am not aware of the details regarding grid access for the Kilbarry development, however if the Deputy has further information in that regard and can forward the details I will ask my officials to examine the matter further if there are any relevant policy issues arising.

I have no function in relation to planning requirements for connections to the electricity grid. Planning applications are generally made to the relevant local planning authority with a right of appeal to An Bord Pleanála (the Board). Applications for larger wind energy projects (with 25 turbines and above or having a total output greater than 50 megawatts) are made directly to the Board under the Strategic Infrastructure Act.

The regulation of the electricity network (including the management of the grid connection process) is a matter for the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) which is an independent statutory body.

Renewable Energy Incentives
785. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the timeline for the roll-out of the renewable energy support scheme. [31053/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** My Department is progressing the design of the proposed new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) which is being developed to assist Ireland in meeting its renewable energy contributions out to 2030.

A final high-level design proposal on the RESS is being brought to Government shortly for approval, and subsequent to this a formal application for State Aid clearance with the European Commission will commence in line with EU State Aid Guidelines. The new scheme is expected to open in 2019.

**Departmental Staff Recruitment**

786. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of public sector jobs offered as internal competitions or restricted to existing Civil Service or public service staff in his Department in 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31542/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** In July 2015, following negotiations between the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the relevant unions, agreement was reached in deciding the sequences of promotions for general service grades in the Civil Service outlining the number of positions that should filled through open recruitment, interdepartmental competitions and internal competitions. My Department fills vacancies according to the sequences set out in this agreement. My Department, as part of its workforce plan, offers promotional opportunities for staff through its internal competitions programme. The selection processes for all competitions run by my Department are in accordance with the “Code of Practice for the Appointment to Positions in the Civil Service and Public Service” published by the Commission for Public Service Appointments.

The information requested by the deputy is outlined in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>No. of Positions 2017</th>
<th>No. of Positions 2018 to date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9 (1 temporary post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Question No. 787 withdrawn.*

**Legislative Programme**

788. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his priorities for traffic legislation, especially in the areas of excessive speed and dangerous driving, and in the co-ordination of key driver records between the Road Safety Authority, the courts system and An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30852/18]
Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his priorities for a road traffic Bill 2018, especially in the areas of excessive speed and dangerous driving and in the co-ordination of key driver records between the Road Safety Authority, the courts system and An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30851/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 788 and 819 together.

My Department is currently working on a general scheme for a Road Traffic (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2018.

Among my priorities are to look at the areas of graduated penalties for excessive speeding, whereby drivers who speed more receive higher penalties. Measures such as these are designed to be preventative in nature; ensuring that drivers are incentivised to obey the speed limit and thereby make our roads safer for all.

The Road Traffic (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill will also contain enabling legislation for the Master Licence Record (MLR) project, which will, for the first time, match driver and vehicle records. The MLR will facilitate the accurate endorsement of penalty points, including those imposed following conviction in court, on driver records.

Both these and other provisions in the upcoming Bill will be subject to legal advice and feasibility study, and my Department will be consulting will all major stakeholders including my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality, an Garda Síochána and the Road Safety Authority.

Public Service Vehicles

Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the documentation being checked by the NTA from northern operators, particularly for occasional licences at concert venues and sporting events at which operators state they are being hired privately; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30054/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The regulation of the large public service vehicle industry, including the licensing of bus passenger services, is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the Public Transport Act 2009. Information regarding convictions would be a matter however for my colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality.

I have referred your question to the NTA for direct reply to you regarding the licensing of bus passenger services. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

Road Safety Authority

Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a matter (details supplied) regarding prosecutions in relation to tachograph regulations will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30055/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.
791. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to develop and enhance the provision of additional bus services throughout rural County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30070/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport.

However, the National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for securing the provision of public transport passenger services nationally, including the provision of bus services in County Clare. The NTA also has responsibility, since 2012, for managing the Rural Transport Programme, which now operates under the Local Link brand.

The Deputy raised this issue with me by way of Topical Issue on 5 July last and I refer him to my response on that occasion. I undertook to revert to the Deputy on certain matters and I have referred those to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

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**Electric Vehicles**

792. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will report on the work under way on preparing for the expansion of the application of hydrogen for cars and other energy uses in view of the difficulties with the need to recharge batteries in electric cars prohibiting their use for long journeys. [30078/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Traditionally, most vehicles in use have been fuelled by either petrol or diesel. However, over the coming years, a transition to alternatively fuelled vehicles will be required in order to effect a substantial reduction in Ireland’s overall transport emissions. My Department published the National Policy Framework on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland, in May of last year, which supports the deployment of alternative fuels in Ireland and assists in removing any infrastructural barriers that may prevent greater uptake of low emissions vehicles (LEVs).

While remaining technology-neutral in the context of promoting greater uptake of LEVs, the full electrification of the car fleet represents a feasible option in Ireland, where supporting grid infrastructure is developed. Advances in battery technology, increasing competition in the market and falling vehicle costs would suggest that electrification will be the predominant low emission choice for private car, taxis and commercial vans in the short to medium term. Biofuels will also continue to play a key role in decarbonisation while natural gas, along with some electrification, will provide an interim alternative solution for larger vehicles such as trucks and buses.

Transition to a hydrogen-based transport system is not expected over the short term as, for that fuel type, the costs of the refuelling infrastructure and associated vehicles are likely to remain prohibitive until the middle of the next decade; investing in costly infrastructure too far ahead of the market could lead to early infrastructure becoming obsolete as the technology advances. Nonetheless, fuel and vehicle technologies generally are evolving rapidly, so the feasibility and potential for supporting hydrogen infrastructure and incentivising fuel cell vehicles will be kept under review.
In this regard, the Deputy may recall that, in 2016 a dedicated LEV Taskforce was established to consider the range of measures and options available to Government to accelerate the uptake of low emitting alternatives. Having initially focussed on electric vehicles, the Taskforce is now moving to broaden its scope for the second phase of its work, which will consider measures to promote fuels such as natural gas, liquid petroleum gas and hydrogen.

**Legislative Measures**

793. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department has identified laws which are dependent on or in place as a consequence of Article 41.2 of the Constitution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30108/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** My Department has not identified any legislation that is dependent upon, or in place as a consequence of, Article 41.2 of the Constitution.

**Greenways Development**

794. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the greenway project between Castleknock, Dublin 15, and Maynooth, County Kildare, on a phased basis; the progress made to date on each phase; the estimated completion date for each phase; the amount of funding that was made available for each phase of the project in 2018; if further funding will issue in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30135/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport.

I am pleased however to inform the Deputy that over €110m in capital funding is directly allocated to develop cycling and walking infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford over the period 2018-2021. This programme will provide active travel routes to help alleviate congestion by providing viable alternatives and connectivity with existing public transport infrastructure. In addition to this, €55m will be spent in this same four year period on Greenways outside of the 5 cities.

However, I am not involved in the day-to-day operations of public transport, including the building and maintenance of cycling infrastructure. This falls to the NTA who is responsible for the development and implementation of public transport and sustainable transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, including the greenway between Castleknock and Maynooth. My Department allocates funding to the NTA who provide this funding onwards to the Local Authorities to implement cycling/walking infrastructure.

Noting that the allocation of funding and details of individual projects are managed by the NTA in conjunction with the relevant local authorities, I have referred your question to the NTA for a more detailed reply with regard to this particular project. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

**Greenways Development**
795. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of plans for a Grand Canal greenway between Hazelhatch, County Kildare, and Grange Castle, Dublin 22, in view of the fact there is reference to the project as an objective in a number of local area plans (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30140/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. However, I am not involved in the day-to-day operations of public transport, including the building and maintenance of cycling infrastructure. In relation to cycling infrastructure, my Department allocates funding to the NTA who provide onward funding to local authorities to progress the design and implementation of cycling schemes.

As outlined in my response to the Deputy under Dáil Question No. 254 in February, 2018, the National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for the development and implementation of public transport and sustainable transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). The Grand Canal Greenway, including the section between Hazelhatch and Grange Castle, forms part of the Greenway Network of the GDA Cycle Network Plan. Accordingly, I understand that the NTA continue to work closely with the relevant authorities, including Kildare County Council and Waterways Ireland, to deliver improved cycling infrastructure including greenway schemes.

Noting the NTA’s previous response to the Deputy on the 19th February and their responsibility in the matter, I have referred your question to the NTA for a more detailed reply with regard to this particular project. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

**Greenways Development**

796. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a third part approval agreement has been secured with Irish Rail in respect of the Royal Canal greenway; if the Commission for Railway Regulation has completed a review of certain aspects of the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30145/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA), in conjunction with a number of other state bodies, and I have forwarded the Deputy’s question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

**National Car Test Data**

797. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of private vehicles that undertook the national car test in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018; the number of vehicles that required one or more full retests; the number that required a visual test; the number that were issued with a “do not drive away from test centre” order following a failed test; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30267/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.
798. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the construction and opening of the M11 service station at Ballyellin, Gorey, County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30334/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and operation of individual national road projects (including service areas) is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy’s question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don’t receive a reply within 10 working days.

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799. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the spend by Fáilte Ireland in each of the years 2015 to 2017; the breakdown of the spend; and the expected spend in 2018 for each county in tabular form. [30344/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** Details (at subhead level) of the annual funding allocations provided by my Department to Fáilte Ireland are available in the annual Revised Estimates Volume published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The subheads of relevance to Fáilte Ireland are E3, E6 (capital) and E5 (shared with Tourism Ireland).

I have referred the Deputy’s question to Fáilte Ireland to provide further details on expenditure in 2015-2017 and planned expenditure in 2018, including a regional breakdown where possible, for direct reply to the Deputy. Please contact my private office if you have not received a reply within 10 working days.

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800. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to provide additional funding to Kerry County Council to carry out works on the Dale Road, County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30414/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of the relevant County or City Council, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from the Council’s own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the Council.

Prior to the financial crisis, applications for funding for projects such as Dale Road would have been considered as part of the Specific Improvement Grant Scheme for regional and local roads. However, the extent of the cutbacks in grant funding during the crisis meant this grant scheme had to be curtailed after 2013 because expenditure on maintenance/renewal was falling well short of what was required to adequately maintain the regional and local road network.

The NDP does provide for the gradual build up in funding for the road network but it will
take some years yet to reach the level required for the adequate maintenance and renewal of the network. For this reason there is limited scope at present for funding projects under the Specific Grant Programme.

Any projects proposed by local authorities for consideration under the Specific Grant Programme are assessed by the Department on a case-by-case basis. All projects put forward by local authorities for consideration must comply with the requirements of the Public Spending Code and my Department’s Capital Appraisal Framework and it is important for local authorities to prioritise projects within their overall area of responsibility with these requirements in mind. In this context Kerry County Council has been informed that it should submit a Preliminary Appraisal in relation to the upgrade of the road. Once this is received it will be assessed by the Department.

Tourism Funding

801. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the level of support given to a festival (details supplied) in each of the past five years. [30418/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** My Department’s role in relation to tourism lies primarily in the area of national tourism policy. While it provides funding to Fáilte Ireland to invest in festivals and participative events, my Department has no involvement in the management of the related funding programmes.

Accordingly, I have asked Fáilte Ireland to provide the Deputy with the requested information. Please contact my private office if you have not received a reply within ten working days.

Road Projects Status

802. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of plans to address a dangerous junction (details supplied) at Ballymacquirk, County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30449/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and operation of individual roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy’s question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don’t receive a reply within 10 working days.

Roads Maintenance Funding

803. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding allocation for the maintenance of national routes in County Cork in each of the years 2014 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30450/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the
national roads programme. The planning, design and operation of individual national roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy’s question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

**Driver Test Waiting Lists**

804. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the waiting times for driver tests in each of the testing centres in County Cork; the steps he is taking to reduce the waiting times; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30451/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The average waiting times for driving tests at all centres around the country are available on the Road Safety Authority (RSA) website [www.rsa.ie](http://www.rsa.ie). This information is updated weekly.

The RSA is undertaking initiatives in order to increase capacity to deliver extra driving tests. These initiatives include the delivery of 120 extra overtime tests per driver tester who participates, and systems to reduce the number of no-shows and non-conducted driving tests. The Authority plans to introduce a new test booking system that will give test applicants much more control over their booking and appointment choice.

The overall average wait time for driving test has reduced from 13.9 weeks earlier in the year to 11.9 weeks at present. I am assured that the measures being put in place are having the desired effect of reducing waiting times for the public.

**Ministerial Travel**

805. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the cost of travel expenses for him and those that travel with him since his appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30519/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Information relating to travel expenses since my appointment as Minister is available on the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport website, under the heading of Ministerial Expenses, at this link.

**Project Ireland 2040**

806. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of times he has met his officials regarding Project Ireland 2040 since its launch; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30560/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Deputy will be aware that I recently launched Linking People and Places which outlines the investment planned in the transport, tourism and sport sectors over the lifetime of the National Development Plan.

As detailed at that launch, my Department and its agencies have a key role to play in delivering on the ambition contained within Project Ireland 2040 and I look forward to its implementation in the coming years.
Given this key role, it is the case that almost all areas of my Department are impacted by different projects and programmes contained within Project Ireland 2040. As an example, I recently launched the next phase of consultations on the BusConnects programme while in the coming weeks I expect to launch a new Greenways Strategy and a new Sports Policy all of which are referenced within Project Ireland 2040.

As the Deputy can appreciate I meet with my officials on a continuous basis. Delivery of the projects and programmes contained within Project Ireland 2040 is inherent in all discussions I have with my officials in relation to capital expenditure.

**Freedom of Information Requests**

807. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of FOI requests his Department has received since January 2018; the number of refusals; the number that have been appealed and that are ongoing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30577/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The number of FOI Requests received in my Department this year is 222.

51 of these requests were refused in full and 57 included refusal of some records or parts of records, (with others released).

14 requests are ongoing, that is, subject to the making of a final decision.

4 decisions were appealed and subject to an Internal Review as provided for by the Act. Of those four, three were consequent upon full refusal decisions and one upon a partly refused decision.

**Vacancies on State Boards**

808. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of vacancies on state boards under the remit of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30594/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The information requested by the Deputy is available on my Department’s website at the following link State Boards.

It should be noted that there a number of competitions currently nearing completion which will result in appointments being made in the coming weeks.

**Road Safety**

809. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be provided towards the implementation of essential safety measures at a location (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30680/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and operation of individual roads is a matter
for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy’s question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don’t receive a reply within 10 working days.

Roads Maintenance

810. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding roadworks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30707/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and operation of individual roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy’s question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don’t receive a reply within 10 working days.

Rural Transport Programme

811. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason transport coordination units must be tendered for. [30722/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The National Transport Authority (NTA) has national responsibility for integrated local and rural transport, including, since 2012, management of the Rural Transport Programme which now operates under the “Local Link” brand.

In light of the NTA’s responsibilities regarding Local Link services, including the issue raised by the Deputy, I have referred the Deputy’s question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Sports Capital Programme

812. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address a matter raised in correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30738/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme (SCP) attracted a record 2,320 applications. In November and December last, the Minister, Deputy Ross, and I announced allocations to a record 1,800 projects under the 2017 round. A review of the 2017 round of the programme has now been finalised and published on my Department’s website (www.dttas.ie). This review highlights aspects of the 2017 round of the SCP that worked well but also suggests some further improvements which are being considered prior to the next round of the programme opening for applications. Some of these changes require amendments to the Department’s online application system and work in this regard has now commenced.
I have received sanction from the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for a new round and I expect to make an announcement in relation to the timing and the amount available shortly. All clubs and organisations registered on the Department’s online application system will be notified at that time.

Under the terms and conditions of the SCP, work which has already commenced (or equipment which has already been purchased) before grants are announced is not eligible for funding. If an application is successful under the SCP, the organisation is given a provisional allocation. Certain terms and conditions must be met to secure formal approval. The organisation should not sign any contracts or start any work on the facility until the Department has issued formal approval. Once formal approval has been secured the organisation can start work and draw down the grant.

Driver Test

813. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of a driver test for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30754/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

Climate Change Policy

814. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there will be project trials funded under the Carbon Reduction Programme in 2018 other than vehicle trials; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30763/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** In order to place the transport sector on a decarbonisation pathway a diverse range of mitigation measures must be employed. Key among them being investing in public and sustainable transport to expand capacity and provide attractive alternatives to private car use where feasible; incentivising the transition from fossil fuels to alternative fuels and technologies; and making the conventional fuel mix more sustainable by incrementally increasing the blend ratio under the Biofuel Obligation Scheme. The suite of transport’s emission mitigation measures - both in-use and under consideration - are described in the National Mitigation Plan at this link.

A series of measures announced in Budget 2018 clearly reflected this Government’s determination to make progress on decarbonising transport. I am pleased to have secured significant funding commitments to actively address the climate challenge on three key fronts. Firstly, we are working to enhance the capacity and quality of public transport to ensure that, as far as possible and practical, our increased transport demand is met by greener public transport (over €400 million will be invested in public transport infrastructure in 2018 alone with a four year capital envelope of over €2.5 billion). Secondly, we will invest over €100 million in a multi-annual cycling and walking programme to support greater uptake of active travel. And, as recommended by the Low Emissions Vehicle Taskforce, a suite of tax and expenditure measures was announced to clearly indicate the Government’s commitment to a low-carbon electric vehicle future. In addition, €5.5 million was assigned in Budget 2018 under the Carbon Reduction Programme.
In 2018 it is envisaged that the Carbon Reduction Programme will be mainly employed to: support alternatively fuelled urban bus trials to help inform purchasing decisions for new buses over the coming years; support the transition of the national car fleet towards electrification through a reduced EV toll regime (launched 1 July) and an EV SPSV Grant Scheme (launched in February); and begin to support research projects in areas such as modal shift and reducing emissions in the Heavy Duty Vehicle sector.

**Climate Change Policy**

815. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of funding available under the green public transport fund in 2017 and 2018; the projects funded under this programme in 2017 and 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30764/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Within my Department’s overall funding allocation, €5.5m was assigned in Budget 2018, and €29 million from 2019-2021, specifically to provide for a Carbon Reduction Programme to support measures which aid in decarbonising the transport sector. From within this allocation, funding is sourced for the Green Public Transport Fund which was established to support the uptake of low carbon, energy efficient technologies within the public transport sector. The Fund is intended to support piloting and uptake of energy efficient and alternatively fuelled technologies for PSO operators within the bus fleet and small public service vehicle (SPSV) sector, as well as bridging the price differential between such technologies and conventionally fuelled vehicles.

In 2017, no funding was drawn down; later this year an up-to-date and comprehensive set of vehicle trials is being planned to commence to help inform purchasing decisions for new buses over the coming years. It is envisaged that in 2018 the NTA will employ the Fund to support these urban bus fleet trials. In addition, the Fund is also supporting the transition of the national SPSV fleet to alternative technologies through the establishment of a new Electric Vehicle SPSV Grant Scheme. By the end of May 2018, €45,221 had been drawn down from the Fund to pay grants under this scheme.

**Road Projects Expenditure**

816. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated amount the M7 upgrade will cost upon completion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30767/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and operation of individual roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy’s question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don’t receive a reply within 10 working days.

**Road Projects**

817. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if
work is carried out outside of normal working hours on the M7 road upgrade; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30768/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and operation of individual roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy’s question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don’t receive a reply within 10 working days.

Road Projects Expenditure

818. Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost to have work continue throughout the night and weekends to facilitate the M7 upgrade at a faster rate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30769/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and operation of individual roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy’s question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don’t receive a reply within 10 working days.

Question No. 819 answered with Question No. 788.

Bus Services

820. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the full estimated costs of the BusConnects programme; the actual cost of the Dublin BusConnects redesign of the Dublin Bus network less than a decade ago; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30853/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, the National Development Plan (NDP), published in February as part of Project Ireland 2040, identifies the delivery of the full BusConnects programme for Ireland’s cities (inclusive of ticketing systems, bus corridors, additional capacity, new bus stops and bus shelters etc.) as a key investment priority over the period of the plan. The plan provides an outline provision of €2.4 billion for the entire programme, €2 billion for BusConnects in Dublin and €0.4 billion for BusConnects programmes in our regional cities. The costs of the various elements of the overall BusConnects programme will be confirmed as part of the appropriate appraisal and procurement processes required under the Public Spending Code.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for the planning and implementation of public transport projects and programmes in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), including the BusConnects programme.

The NTA recently published a discussion document focussed on the 16 core bus routes, pathways and cycle tracks/lanes that are emerging as the likely core bus corridors in and out
of Dublin city. A second document “Dublin Area Bus Network Redesign Public Consultation Report” was published by NTA last week.

This report notes that the existing bus network in Dublin is very complex and is designed primarily around overlapping and long radial routes taking people into the city centre, but with very few orbital routes. Recent improvements to the rail and tram networks require changes to the bus services to exploit the full potential of these investments. Finally the city is growing and changing as are the bus journeys people are taking.

The report identifies 4 key strategies to address the issues with the current network: standardise service categories; simplify radial services; build frequent orbitals and grow suburban feeder networks. While there will be concerns with any change, these strategies will deliver the following benefits for the customer; much simpler city services; much simpler fare structure; provide more frequent all day services through new and frequent strong orbital services interchanging with local services and high frequency radial spines.

Full public consultation on the network redesign proposals, involving Dublin Bus, using local brochures, local face to face events, digital imaging of the network, on-line surveys and consultation with user groups will commence from the 16th July. NTA will launch a full public consultation process on the proposed core bus corridors later this year.

More information on estimated costs will be available as the various strands of the programme are progressed.

The Network Direct programme to which the Deputy refers, launched by Dublin Bus in 2010 and completed in 2013, delivered an increase in the number of high frequency routes; greater use of Quality Bus Corridors (QBC); less route variations making the network easier to understand; a new network of more direct orbital services; an increase in cross city routes to minimise customer interchange; and improved connections with Rail and Luas transport modes. Network Direct resulted in cost savings to the Exchequer as a result of the introduction of major efficiencies.

In light of the NTA’s responsibility in this area, I have referred the Deputy’s question to the Authority for a more detailed reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Light Rail Projects Status

821. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps under Project Ireland 2040 being taken by Transport Infrastructure Ireland in 2018 and 2019 to deliver metro north and other crucial fixed metro and Luas systems in Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30854/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As the Deputy is aware, the National Development Plan (NDP), launched earlier this year by the Government as part of Project Ireland 2040, includes a clear commitment to develop MetroLink with €3 billion budgeted for its delivery (subject to tender processes). MetroLink will provide Dublin with a high capacity, high frequency cross-city rail corridor, serving critical destinations such as Swords, Dublin Airport, Dublin City University, Ballymun, the Mater Hospital, City Centre and existing destinations along the Luas Green Line to Sandyford. It will provide faster reliable journey times to and from these key destinations while offering interchange with other rail, DART Expansion, light rail and bus services. MetroLink will comprise of a total of 25 stations (including 15 new stations), 3,000 additional Park and Ride spaces, and a journey time of ap-
proximately 50 minutes from Swords to Sandyford.

The National Transport Authority (NTA), in conjunction with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) recently launched a public consultation process on the Emerging Preferred Route (EPR) for the MetroLink.

Currently TII and NTA are assessing the submissions received (c. 8,000). Once the assessment process is completed, TII and NTA plan to publish a consultation report and a preferred route option in the coming weeks. This preferred route option will be subject to a further stage of public consultation over the period mid-to-end August & September with a view to finalising the details of the MetroLink route by year-end.

Building on the success of Government’s continued investment in building capacity and expanding the Luas network, the NDP will also provide funding to undertake appraisal, planning and design of Luas network expansion to Finglas, Bray, Lucan and Poolbeg. This is to ensure that we will be ready to expand Luas to where and when it is needed in line with sustained development in these areas.

The NTA has worked in partnership with a number of local authorities in Ireland’s cities to prepare transport-related strategies or implement transport related projects. An example of this is the Galway Transport Strategy which was developed in 2016 by Galway City Council and Galway County Council in partnership with the NTA. The strategy concluded that bus-based public transport represents the most appropriate system for Galway.

A Cork Transport Strategy is also being finalised by the relevant Local Authorities in partnership with the NTA which includes proposals for a revised bus system for Cork and enhancements to the commuter rail service in Cork including additional stations and rail fleet. This transport strategy will also evaluate the potential of a Bus Rapid Transit or Light Rail corridor to serve the increased population growth as envisaged by the National Planning Framework.

**State Bodies Mergers**

822. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has given consideration to merging Transport Infrastructure Ireland and the National Transport Authority in view of the serious overlap in functions of these bodies and his own long-standing policy to reduce pressure on taxpayers by cutting the number of overlapping State agencies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30855/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The National Transport Authority (NTA) is a statutory non-commercial body tasked with undertaking strategic planning of transport, investing in all public transport infrastructure and developing the effective management of traffic and transport demand for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA).

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) was established through a merger of the National Roads Authority and the Railway Procurement Agency under the Roads Act 2015, with effect from 01/08/15. TII’s primary function is to provide an integrated approach to the future development and operation of the national roads network and light rail infrastructure throughout Ireland.

The NTA has extensive powers which reflect the importance of public transport service integration. The mechanism for cooperation and coordination between the various transport stakeholders including the TII is a matter for the individual stakeholders but I am satisfied that there is appropriate cooperation and coordination between them and that there is no duplication...
of roles.

There are currently no plans to merge the NTA and TII.

**Driver Licences**

823. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he received a communication from the Department of Justice and Equality regarding the identity requirements of asylum seekers to obtain a driver licence; and when this communication will receive a response. [30896/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Currently, Ireland does not issue driving licences to asylum seekers.

I have received communications from the Department of Justice and Equality asking about the position in this regard. I have sought legal advice on this matter and will consider the options available before responding.

**Pension Provisions**

824. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason CIÉ pensioners have not received a post-retirement increase in their occupational pensions since 2008; when they will receive it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30988/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Issues in relation to Córas Iompair Éireann (CIÉ) pension schemes are primarily a matter for the trustees of the pension schemes, the CIÉ Group and their employees. Therefore, I have referred the Deputy’s question to CIÉ for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

**Road Safety Authority**

825. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will review a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30989/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

**Departmental Staff Recruitment**

826. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of public sector jobs offered through internal competitions or restricted to existing Civil Service or public service staff in his Department in 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31557/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** In order to respond to the Deputy’s question, a significant number of records will have to be checked. This process has
been commenced and a response will be sent to the Deputy as soon as possible.

**Child Support Payments**

827. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the child care supports available to lone parents; the criteria to access such supports; the costs involved; and the age limitations in place. [30843/18]

 **Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** My Department administers a wide range of subsidised childcare programmes which one parent families may avail of, depending on their circumstances.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE):

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme is a free pre-school programme available to all children within the eligible age range. From September 2018, all children meeting the minimum age requirement of 2 years and 8 months will be eligible for a full two programme years. It provides children with a formal early learning experience prior to commencing primary school. The programme is provided three hours per day, five days per week, 38 weeks per year over the two years.

Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) and Community Childcare Subvention Plus (CCSP):

These programmes provide childcare funding support, targeting low income families, in community childcare services and private childcare services, relative to the status of the parent/s with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. They are available to children from six months to 15 years of age. (Please see table 1 below). For example, a parent in receipt of One Parent Family Payment may received a maximum of €145 per week per child in subsidies towards childcare fees.

**Departmental Programmes**

828. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if a grant application by a person (details supplied) will be examined. [30042/18]

 **Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The number of applications for the Early Years and School Age Capital Programmes for 2018 was exceptionally high and therefore a number of high quality applications were not successful on this occasion. The appraisal phase of the 2018 programmes concluded in May 2018 and the budget has now been allocated in full.

All applicants who were unsuccessful under the 2018 Capital programmes had the opportunity to request a call-back conversation with Pobal to discuss their application and the appraisal process.

Applicants who remained dissatisfied with their outcome following this conversation, or felt that their application was appraised unfairly, were entitled to request that their application be reviewed by Pobal. Details of how to do this were provided in the correspondence sent to providers by Pobal upon the announcement of Capital decisions on 1st June 2018.

As part of this correspondence, all providers wishing to request a review were informed that
they had 20 working days following the announcement of Capital decisions within which to submit a review request. Like the Capital appraisal process, the review process is managed by Pobal on behalf of my Department to ensure fairness and impartiality.

I understand that the service in question requested a feedback conversation with Pobal, which was provided by phone on 14th June 2018. A follow up email was also sent to the service on this date with a full synopsis of the feedback provided and information on how to request a review.

According to Pobal records, the service in question has not submitted a request for their application to be reviewed. Unfortunately, the deadline for submitting a review request to Pobal passed on 2nd July 2018.

**Legislative Measures**

829. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her Department has identified laws which are dependent on or in place as a consequence of Article 41.2 of the Constitution; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30094/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has identified no legislation within its remit that is dependent on or in place as a consequence of Article 41.2 of the Constitution.

**Visiting Teacher Service**

830. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if consideration will be given to restoring the visiting teacher system for Traveller children; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30308/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** As the Deputy may be aware, the Visiting Teachers Service for Travellers was discontinued with effect from September 2011, in line with Department of Education and Skills policy on the phasing out of segregated Traveller provision.

The Child and Family Agency, established in 2014 under the aegis of my Department, has statutory responsibility in relation to school attendance and supports for young people at risk of educational disadvantage, including traveller children. Through its Educational Welfare Service, the Agency responds to instances where children, including children from the Traveller community, are not attending school regularly, leading to concerns for their educational welfare.

I am advised that the Department of Education policy in relation to Traveller Education is informed by the Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy which was launched in 2006 following wide ranging consultation with Traveller representative groups and other relevant stakeholders. The principle of inclusion is at the core of the Strategy. The focus of both current and future provision is on the development of an inclusive school environment through the whole school planning process, teaching practice, admissions policies, codes of behaviour and whole school evaluation. In keeping with this principle, additional resources provided in the education system for children are allocated on the basis of identified individual educational need. This includes Traveller children who require additional resources based on need and not on their identity as Travellers. Segregated Traveller specific programmes such as the Visiting Teacher for Travellers were phased out in line with the principle of inclusion.
School attendance is one of the critical building blocks of positive educational outcomes. While educational outcomes for Traveller children continue to improve, in most areas attendance still falls well behind the national average and we are aware that there are still areas where attendance and participation among Traveller children is not improving consistently. Following the launch of the 2017 National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, my Department is committed to working with the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Justice and Equality, Tusla Educational Welfare Services and Traveller and Roma representative groups to examine ways in which Traveller children’s attendance and participation may be further enhanced especially in areas where attendance is of greatest concern.

Illegal Adoptions

831. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the mechanisms that will be put in place or that are already in place to assist a person who was illegally adopted via St. Patrick’s, Navan Road, to trace their birth family; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30385/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** On foot of the recent discovery by Tusla of 126 cases of illegal registrations I moved immediately to inform the Cabinet. I also announced that a process has been put in place by Tusla to manage these cases. This is being led by experienced information and tracing social workers.

As an immediate step Tusla put in place a Helpline which is operating from 10am to 4 pm Monday to Friday. Tusla has also put relevant information on its website.

Each of the 126 cases has been assigned to a social worker and work has commenced on tracing the people concerned. These include the person who was illegally registered as a child, the birth mother and the people who participated in the illegal registration and subsequently raised these children as their own.

The majority of the files containing information are more than 50 years old. The implication of this is of course, that the information in the files is over 50 years old. Some of the information was deliberately falsified. People have changed addresses. Some have emigrated. Many are no longer alive.

Each file is being examined. Information is being checked and updated where possible. Some files will be more difficult to update than others but strenuous efforts are being made on every file.

The process of offering contact and support to those affected will be handled very carefully. It will take account of each individual’s requirements. Some people may not wish to have any contact. I expect that there are others who will accept contact and support at the earliest opportunity.

Offers of contact and support will begin at the end of the month in cases where there is sufficient information available to establish contact.

My focus in the first instance is the provision of information and support. People have a right to their identity. They have a right to honest answers and we have a duty to provide this if possible.

The Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016 has passed Second Stage in the Seanad. As I am sure you are aware, the Bill seeks to respect the rights to identity and privacy, which
sometimes conflict with one another.

Given the constitutional context, striking the balance between these rights is proving challenging. It is an important piece of legislation for many people. Attempts to introduce a Bill, as far back as 2001, have failed.

It is essential that the Bill progresses as quickly as possible, as it places the information and tracing service on a statutory footing for the first time.

It will also protect relevant records by bringing them into the custody of the Adoption Authority of Ireland. It will create offences for the concealment, destruction, mutilation or falsification of such records.

The Bill impacts on people who are the subject of illegal registrations, as well as adopted people. Officials are currently reviewing its provisions, in the light of the recent evidence emerging on illegal birth registrations, to ensure that it is robust in addressing this issue. If additional amendments to the Bill are required to ensure this, this can be addressed as the Bill goes through the Houses.

My intention is that the Bill will be enacted by the end of the year. Last month I met with advocacy groups, which was informative and helpful. I have also met my Oireachtas colleagues at a briefing session with a view to progressing the Bill to Committee Stage in the Seanad as soon as possible.

I look forward to working with members of this House and of the Seanad so that all of us who wish to see this bill implemented as soon as possible can work together to achieve this.

Foster Care

832. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the steps a person can take in circumstances (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30432/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** As the Deputy is aware, income and employment supports are matters for the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

I have requested further information on the case in question from the Deputy. Pending this information, I can only acknowledge the commitment and hard work that foster carers demonstrate by playing their critical role in our child care services. To assist them in this role, they receive the Foster Care Allowance, which is currently €325 per week per child under 12 years of age and €352 per week per child aged 12 and over. It is an allowance in respect of the child and is provided in order to allow foster carers to meet all of the child’s daily living needs including food, clothing, basic travel, education costs and hobbies and sporting activities. The allowance is not considered as means for Social Welfare purposes nor is it taxable.

In addition, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, provides funding to the Irish Foster Care Association, which offers a range of supports to carers, including advocacy, mediation, training and a phone advice service.

**Ministerial Travel**
833. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the cost of travel expenses for her and those who travel with her since her appointment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30505/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The overall cost incurred by my Department in respect of travel undertaken by me and officials who accompanied me while travelling, since my appointment as Minister in May 2016, amounts to €96,076.78.

The Deputy might note that this sum covers travel expenses including flights, accommodation, mileage and subsistence. In addition, all travel and subsistence claims in my Department are paid in line with the Travel and Subsistence Circulars as issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

**Project Ireland 2040**

834. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of times she has met her officials regarding Project Ireland 2040 since its launch; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30546/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I regularly meet with my officials on the policy, legislative and operational matters under my remit, and this includes ongoing commitments to improve the lives of children, families, and young people as referred to in the Plan.

**Freedom of Information Requests**

835. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of FOI requests her Department has received since January 2018; the number of refusals; the number that have been appealed and that are ongoing; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30563/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The information requested by the Deputy for 2018 is set out in the following table.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Received</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused (Of which Appealed/Part Appealed)</td>
<td>16 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeals Ongoing</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vacancies on State Boards**

836. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of vacancies on State boards under the remit of her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30580/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** In my role as Minister for Children and Youth Affairs I am responsible for the 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.

There are currently two board vacancies in respect of these bodies, one on the board of Tusla.
and the other on the Board of Management of the Oberstown Children Detention Campus.

With regard to the position on the Tusla Board I can confirm that it has been advertised and the closing date for submissions of interest was Monday 9th July. As part of the selection process an Assessment Panel will be convened by the Public Appointments Service to consider applications received. The vacancy on the Oberstown Board is due to the resignation of the Tusla representative, in June 2018. I have requested a nomination from the Chairperson of the Tusla Board to fill this vacancy.

Early Childhood Care and Education Expenditure

837. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of increasing the higher and lower capitation grants under the ECCE scheme by €5, €10, €15 and €20, respectively; and the further estimated cost of extending its duration by 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 weeks, respectively in tabular form. [30696/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Officials from my Department have based the below calculations on the capitation levels that will exist from September this year when the 7% increase in ECCE capitation promised in Budget 2018 will come into effect.

The estimates are based on the Department’s forecasted level of registrations in the 2018/19 academic year of 114,000 children.

The September 2018 estimated cost of ECCE is €309.7m. Each additional two weeks of ECCE, at September 2018 capitation rates, would cost €16.3m.

The additional cost of the maximum scenario presented in the question (an additional 12 weeks at an increase of €20 capitation per child per week) would be €207m.

The table below, Table A, describes what the September 2018 capitation is per child, per week, and what it would change to with €5, €10, €15 and €20 increases. (The final blended rate is used for calculations in the final table, Table B.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Existing/Sept 2018 Capitation Rate</th>
<th>Proposed increase in capitation rates €5</th>
<th>Proposed increase in capitation rates €10</th>
<th>Proposed increase in capitation rates €15</th>
<th>Proposed increase in capitation rates €20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard Cap</td>
<td>€69</td>
<td>€74</td>
<td>€79</td>
<td>€84</td>
<td>€89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Cap</td>
<td>€80.25</td>
<td>€85.25</td>
<td>€90.25</td>
<td>€95.25</td>
<td>€100.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blended rate</td>
<td>€74.40</td>
<td>€79.40</td>
<td>€84.40</td>
<td>€89.40</td>
<td>€94.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following table, Table B, sets out the cost of the four proposed enhanced capitation levels, together with the costs for additional weeks.

**Table B**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Plus 2 weeks</th>
<th>Plus 4</th>
<th>Plus 6</th>
<th>Plus 8</th>
<th>Plus 10</th>
<th>Plus 12</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weeks per year</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Early Childhood Care and Education Programmes

838. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 507 of 26 June 2018, if a callback will be arranged for the facility on its application (details supplied). [30721/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The number of applications for the Early Years and School Age Capital Programmes for 2018 was exceptionally high and therefore a number of high quality applications were not successful on this occasion. Applicants were notified of the outcome in May 2018 and the budget was allocated in full at that time.

All applicants who were unsuccessful under the 2018 Capital programmes had the opportunity to request a call-back conversation with Pobal to discuss their application and the appraisal process. They were also advised of the Review procedure.

I understand that the service in question received a feedback call from a member of Pobal’s capital team on the 19th of June 2018. During this call the service provider received feedback on their application including details of the scoring framework used to assess the application. They were also reminded about the formal review process that was available should they choose to access it.

I understand that the service in question did not seek a formal review. The process for requesting such a review is now closed but, if the service has a specific query regarding the appraisal of their application, I would advise that they contact Pobal to discuss this in more detail.

### Child Protection

839. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the person or body monitoring assessment and therapy services for children, young persons and their families in circumstances in which sexual abuse is a concern; the measures being taken to ensure best international standards of practice are being followed; and if she will make a statement on
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In regard to this issue this is a matter for the Minister of Health and the related services provided in this area through HSE service provision. My officials are working with the Department of Health to ensure that such responses are informed by best international practice standards in this area.

Public Sector Staff Recruitment

840. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated full year cost if Tusla recruited an additional 200 social workers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30863/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla has advised that the estimated full year cost of recruiting an additional 200 new professionally qualified social workers would be €13,548m.

The costing is based on the midpoint of the pay scale and includes employer PRSI and an overhead cost of 25% of basic pay to cover staff travel/office accommodation/other general costs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Pay</th>
<th>ER PRSI</th>
<th>Total Pay</th>
<th>Non Pay</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
<th>WTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PQSW</td>
<td>€ 49,901</td>
<td>€ 5,364</td>
<td>€55,265</td>
<td>€12,475</td>
<td>€67,740</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>€ 13,548,000</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Early Childhood Care and Education Programmes**

841. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the fact that children born in January will not be able to avail of their entitlement to two years of ECCE from 2 years and 7 months of age and then commence primary school at 4 years and 7 months of age in circumstances in which this is in the best interests of the child having regard to their social and emotional development and their school readiness; her plans to reform the ECCE programme in order that it is aligned with primary school enrolment policies and allows parents the flexibility to avail of their entitlement from the time a child reaches 2 years and 7 months of age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31014/18]

842. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on whether it is fair that children born in January will not be able to avail of their entitlement to two years of ECCE from the age of two years and seven months and then commence primary school at four years and seven months in which this is in the best interests of the child having regard to their social and emotional development and their school readiness; if she will reform the ECCE programme in order that it is aligned with primary school enrolment policies and allows parents the flexibility to avail of their entitlement from the time a child reaches two years and seven months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31045/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 841 and 842 together.

From September 2018, all children meeting the minimum age requirement of 2 years and 8 months will be eligible for a full two programme years on the Early Childhood Care and Education programme (ECCE). This measure refines the development previously introduced, whereby three intake dates were adopted (September, January and April), and will increase the
duration of each registered child on ECCE from a current average of 61 weeks, to a potential duration of 76 weeks (two programme years). This further enhancement delivers on a commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government that is good for children, families and Early Years providers.

The provision of a second year of ECCE required either an increase in the upper age limit for ECCE, or a reduction in the lower age limit. The latter was chosen and is consistent with the law in this country with regard to school start age and the associated policy of the Department of Education and Skills.

This minimum age was chosen based on national experience and a review of international practice. It also had regard to the regulatory environment for early years care and education in this country and issues such as child development readiness and adult-child ratios. The upper age limit will remain the same (i.e. a child is not eligible if they will be 5 years and 6 months before the end of the programme year).

This new measure will address the previous situation with regard to three entry points whereby there was a broad fluctuation in the number of free preschool weeks a child could avail of – (between 61 and 88 weeks depending on the date of birth of the child) – and will ensure a programme that is equitable for all children. As with any large scheme at national level, clear rules are required to ensure transparency and objectivity in administration. It is a feature however of such schemes that where cut off points relate to age, some applicants benefit more than others.

The number of entry points will revert to one at the beginning of September 2018. One enrolment period at the start of the pre-school year will help streamline the administration process and will make it easier for childcare providers to operate and budget for the programme year. This will also make it easier for parents to secure places on the ECCE programme for their children.

A child will not be able to commence their ECCE in September 2018 if they will not have reached the age of 2 years and 8 months on or before 31st August 2018. Their ECCE eligibility commences in 2019, and will continue for a further year from September 2020 until June 2021.

It must be noted that parents have the discretion to decide how much of ECCE to avail of for their child. A decision may be made to utilise only one year of the programme for various reasons. For example, some parents of children born in the first quarter of the year, as outlined by the Deputy, may prefer for their child to start school at 4 years of age rather than 5. These parents may therefore opt for 1 year of ECCE only.

The entry and exit points for ECCE for children with disabilities is currently being reviewed. The National Disability Authority has conducted some research on the matter and has led a national consultation process with parents and providers. It is due to report shortly. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Education and Skills continue to work together to ensure that early years and school age education policies are consistent and meet the best interest of children.

In terms of childcare costs, it should be noted that parents of children aged from 6 months to the age of eligibility for ECCE can avail of the new universal subsidy of up to €1040 per year, introduced in 2017.

Constitutional Amendments
342
843. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if his Department has identified laws which are dependent on or in place as a consequence of Article 41.2 of the Constitution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30106/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department has no legislation or legislation to be enacted which is dependent on or in place as a consequence of Article 41.2 of the Constitution.

*Rural Recreation Scheme*

844. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount of funding that was issued to groups in County Kildare under the rural recreation, infrastructure and the town and village renewal schemes in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018; the groups that drew down funding; the nature of the projects they requested funding for under each grant heading; the amount available overall under the headings in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30137/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure scheme (previously known as the Rural Recreation Scheme) provides funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure and for the maintenance and promotion of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in rural Ireland.

€7.4 million was allocated to 117 projects nationally under the scheme in 2016 and a total of €13.6 million was allocated to 251 projects under the 2017 scheme.

Only one application was submitted in respect of Co. Kildare under the 2016 scheme, but this application was unsuccessful. No applications were submitted under the 2017 scheme from Co. Kildare.

I launched the 2018 Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme on the 1st June last, with an indicative allocation of €12 million under three measures. The final closing date for applications is 27th July 2018.

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme is funded by my Department and administered by the Local Authorities. Community groups cannot apply directly to my Department for funding under the scheme. However, Local Authorities are required to consult with communities in identifying proposals for submission to my Department under the scheme.

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme scheme was introduced in 2016 with an allocation of €380,000 to each county. Funding totalling almost €10 million was provided to 170 projects across the country in 2016, of which 6 were in towns/villages in Co. Kildare.

In 2017, I approved a further €21.6 million in funding to 281 projects under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, of which €416,403 was allocated to projects in 5 towns/villages in Co. Kildare.

I launched a further round of the scheme this year with an indicative allocation of €15 million. The closing date for applications was 30th June 2018 and all applications received are currently being assessed. I can confirm that Kildare County Council submitted 8 applications for consideration under the 2018 scheme.

Details of the various schemes operated by my Department and the individual projects which received funding under these schemes are available on the Rural Development pages of
my Department’s website, www.drdc.gov.ie.

Local Improvement Scheme Applications

845. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if consideration is being given to an application (details supplied). [30356/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The case which the Deputy refers to would be entirely a matter for consideration by the relevant Local Authority under the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS). LIS is a programme for improvement works on small private/non-public roads and is currently funded by my Department and delivered through the Local Authorities.

I launched the 2018 LIS programme in February this year with an allocation of €10 million across the country. Co. Cork was allocated €1 million under the scheme. It is the responsibility of the relevant Local Authority to prioritise and select the road projects that will receive LIS funding in line with the scheme criteria.

I also requested each County Council to compile a secondary list of suitable LIS road projects which they could complete if additional funding becomes available for the scheme later in the year.

I understand that the road referred to by the Deputy was not included by Cork County Council on either its primary or secondary list of roads for prioritisation. The list of projects which the Local Authorities plan to undertake this year has now been published on the Rural Development pages of my Department’s website. Neither I, nor my Department, has any input into the Local Authorities’ selection process.

Ministerial Travel

846. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the cost of travel expenses for him and those that travel with him since his appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30517/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** Since the establishment of the Department of Rural and Community Development on 19th July 2017, the cost of travel and subsistence expenses to date in respect of myself, private secretary and ministerial driver amounted to €54,798.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

847. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the 2018 town and village renewal scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30542/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The 2018 Town and Village Renewal Scheme was launched on 27th April, with an indicative allocation of €15 million. Local Authorities were required to seek expressions of interest from communities for proposals under the scheme and select up to 12 proposals for submission to my Department for consideration.
The closing date for submission of applications to my Department was 30th June 2018.

Applications are currently being assessed and it is anticipated that successful projects will be announced in early September. Projects will be expected to commence before the end of the year and will run for up to 18 months.

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme is a key component in the revitalisation of our rural towns and villages. Over €31.6 million has been approved for more than 450 projects across the country since the scheme was introduced in the second half of 2016.

Project Ireland 2040 Administration

848. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of times he has met his officials regarding Project Ireland 2040 since its launch; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30558/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** Meetings and discussions with my officials on Project Ireland 2040 and related matters have taken place, and will continue to take place, on a frequent and ongoing basis.

These have included discussions on the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, which is being led out on by my Department in collaboration with other Departments and was launched last week.

It is therefore not possible to identify the specific number of meetings at which such discussions took place.

Freedom of Information Requests

849. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of FOI requests his Department has received since January 2018; the number of refusals; the number that have been appealed and that are ongoing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30575/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department has received a total of 34 requests under the Freedom of Information Act since 1 January 2018.

Of these, three are currently ongoing as of 6 July.

Six requests have been refused, two of which were appealed.

Vacancies on State Boards

850. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of vacancies on state boards under the remit of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30592/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** There are four State boards under the remit of my Department, the Western Development Commission, Irish Water Safety, the Charities Regulatory Authority and the recently established Char-
ity Appeals Tribunal.
There are currently no vacancies on those boards.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

851. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 1364 and 1365 of 17 April 2018, the progress made on a new pilot grant scheme (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30723/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The pilot scheme to encourage residential occupancy in rural towns and villages which the Deputy refers to is being developed as part of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme which is administered by my Department.

As advised in the previous questions referred to, a Steering Group was established to oversee the design and delivery of the pilot scheme and the work of that Group is still in progress. It is a complex issue but substantial progress has been made in developing the pilot. It is envisaged that the pilot scheme will be implemented in a small number of towns initially with a view, subject to the scheme’s success, to a wider roll-out over time.

This pilot has the capacity to inform future initiatives for town centre renewal under the new €1 billion Rural Regeneration and Development Fund which was launched on 4th July 2018 as part of Project Ireland 2040.

Work is ongoing on the development of the pilot and I hope to be in a position to announce details of the pilot scheme soon.

Local and Community Development Programme

852. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he will report on the community enhancement programme of €4.5 million; the steps local community development projects need to take to access this funding in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30856/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** I launched the Community Enhancement Programme in May 2018. The programme replaces and builds on RAPID and the Community Facilities Scheme. It is administered by Local Community Development Committees in each local authority area and is currently open for applications.

Groups who wish to apply for funding under this programme in the Dublin City Local Authority area will find details at this link and those in Fingal Local Authority will find details at this link.

Departmental Staff Recruitment

853. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of public sector jobs offered as internal competitions or restricted to existing Civil Service or public service staff in his Department in 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will
make a statement on the matter. [31554/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The Department of Rural and Community Development was established in July 2017.

The position in 2017 was as follows:

There were no jobs offered in the Department from internal competitions. The Department made seven appointments from interdepartmental competitions, which are restricted to civil servants. The Department also recruited twenty staff from open competitions, not restricted to existing civil service staff.

The position in 2018 to date is as follows:

There have been internal competitions held within the Department at the grades of: Principal Officer, Assistant Principal Officer, Higher Executive Officer, and Executive Officer levels.

A total of seventeen posts have been filled from these internal competitions to date.

In addition there was one competition confined to staff serving in two Departments, one appointment was made from this competition to the post of Head Service Officer.

The Department has made five appointments from interdepartmental competitions, which are restricted to civil servants.

The Department has also appointed twelve staff from open competitions, which were not restricted to existing civil service staff.

**Back to Education Allowance Data**

854. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of extending the cost of education allowance to all recipients of the back to education allowance. [30347/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The back to education allowance scheme (BTEA) enables eligible persons to pursue approved education courses and to continue to receive income support for the duration of a course of study, subject to meeting certain conditions. The BTEA is designed primarily to support second chance education.

Budget 2017 introduced a new €500 annual cost of education allowance for parents, including lone parents, encouraging them into education by helping to reduce their childcare costs. The cost of education allowance was made available to BTEA participants with children from the 2017/18 academic year.

Based on the number of students in receipt of BTEA for the academic year 2017/18 the estimated cost of extending the cost of education allowance to all recipients would be some €5.4 million. The number of participants on BTEA for this academic year was 10,840 (October 2017). Any such changes would have to be considered in a budgetary context and within the scope of the overall resources available for welfare improvements.

The BTEA is not intended to be an alternative form of funding for people entering or re-entering the third level education system. The Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) grant payable by the Department of Education and Skills represents the primary support for persons
pursuing education. In general, most BTEA customers will also have certain registration and related college fees paid by SUSI.

BTEA continues to support those people who are most distant from the labour market and whose need is greatest.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Child Benefit Data

855. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated additional cost of providing child benefit for young persons that are over 18 years of age for the duration of their enrolment in second level education. [31042/18]

856. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated additional cost of providing a 25% payment and a 50% payment of child benefit to young persons that are over 18 years of age for the duration of their enrolment in second level education. [31043/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 855 and 856 together.

Child Benefit is a monthly payment made to families with children in respect of all qualified children up to the age of 16 years. The payment continues to be paid in respect of children up to their 18th birthday who are in full-time education, or who have a disability. Child Benefit is currently paid to more than 631,000 families in respect of over 1.2 million children, with an estimated expenditure of more than €2 billion in 2018.

Based on Department of Education and Skills figures on the numbers of 18 and 19 year olds in full-time secondary education in 2017, the estimated annual cost of extending the upper age limit to include 18 and 19 year olds in full-time secondary education alone is in the region of €65 million. The estimated cost of providing a 25 percent and 50 percent payment of child benefit based on the cost above is €16.25m and €32.5m respectively.

The Deputy’s question indicates no upper age limit and would therefore also include young people of 20 years and above, thus giving rise to costs in excess of this figure.

Given the universal nature of Child Benefit, making it payable in respect of young people over 18 years of age for the duration of their enrolment in second-level education would not be a targeted approach. Any adjustment to the payment can result in benefits being spread very thinly, rather than making a difference where there is most need.

Under EU regulations Child Benefit is defined as a family benefit and is exportable in cases where the claimant is working in Ireland but where the children are living abroad. We have no way of predicting with any degree of accuracy the potential in-flow in this category for young people who turn 18 and remain in second level education in other Member States.

Carer’s Allowance Applications

857. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer’s allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30061/18]
Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):
Carer’s allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

I confirm that my department received an application for CA from the person concerned on the 1 June 2018.

As the applicant has previously been self-employed and declined to answer the question about self-employment on his most recent application for CA, the matter was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) on 5 July 2018 to assess the level of care being provided, assess means and confirm that all the conditions for receipt of carer’s allowance are satisfied.

Once the SWI has reported, a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer’s Allowance Applications

858. Deputy John McGuinness asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application by a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [30065/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):
Carer’s allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

I confirm that my department received an application for CA from the person concerned on the 20 June 2018.

As a question arises as to whether the person concerned is habitually resident in the State, the matter was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) on 5 July 2018 to assess this, assess the level of care being provided, assess means and confirm that all the conditions for receipt of carer’s allowance are satisfied.

Once the SWI has reported, a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Appeals

859. Deputy John McGuinness asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a supplementary welfare allowance will be awarded to a person (details supplied); and if the appeal submitted recently will be expedited. [30069/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who has decided to hold an oral hearing in this case on 17 July 2018. The person concerned has been notified of the arrangements for the hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection.
Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Invalidity Pension Applications**

860. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30091/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The lady referred to has been awarded invalidity pension with effect from the 02 February 2017. Payment will issue to her nominated bank account on the 12 July 2018. Any arrears due from 02 February 2017 to 11 July 2018 (less any overlapping social welfare payment) will issue in due course. The lady in question was notified of this decision on the 06 July 2018.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Constitutional Amendments**

861. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her Department has identified laws which are dependent on or in place as a consequence of Article 41.2 of the Constitution; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30099/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The aim of my Department is to promote active participation in society through the provision of income supports, employment services and other services to all citizens.

Article 41.2 of the Constitution is concerned with the recognition of the role and duties of women and mothers in the home. While this Department provides a range of welfare supports to parents, including mothers, no specific laws have been identified which are wholly dependent on, or were enacted as a direct consequence of, Article 41.2.

**Disability Allowance Appeals**

862. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress to date in the determination of an appeal for a disability allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30142/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The person concerned submitted an application for disability allowance on 23 August 2017. The application, based upon the evidence submitted, was disallowed on medical grounds and they were notified in writing of the decision on 23 October 2017. They were also notified of the option to submit further evidence in support of their application for review by a Deciding Officer and of her right to appeal the Deciding Officer’s decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO).

Following receipt of further medical evidence a review was carried out. The original deci-
sion was upheld and the person concerned was notified of this in writing on 5 July 2018 and was also advised of their right to appeal this decision to the SWAO.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Constitutional Convention Recommendations

863. Deputy Colm Brophy asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if expert advice or data, including existing and or projected costings to the Constitutional Convention in the context of its consideration of Article 41.2 with particular reference to carers was provided; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30146/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): It has not been possible in the time available to respond to this PQ to confirm if the information specified was provided or not.

The Department of Justice and Equality was the Department with responsibility for providing the Secretariat to the Constitutional Convention, and I have asked my officials to liaise with officials in that Department to ascertain whether or not such information was provided, and to revert directly to the Deputy in the matter.

Social Welfare Schemes Data

864. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the processing time of each social welfare scheme including the initial application decision, appeal decision, oral hearing decision and processing time for award of payment of each once payment is allowed in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30313/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department has set measurable targets for the awarding of claims for the majority of schemes under its remit and details of these are in the attached table 1.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

All claim decisions taken by the Department’s Deciding Officers are appealable to the Chief Appeals Officer. In any year about 85% of all claims are awarded and just 1% are appealed. Nevertheless, the Department is concerned that these cases are dealt with as quickly as possible.

The time taken to process an appeal reflects all aspects of the appeal process including time spent in the Department preparing the appeal submission. The quasi-judicial nature of the appeals system means that there are inevitable time-lags involved. The time taken is proportionate to the complexity of many of the issues under appeal which require a high level of judgement, and the need to ensure due process and natural justice. The system is designed to be flexible and fair and allows for review and submission of further information at all stages which is to the benefit of the appellant.

Appeal processing times are kept under constant scrutiny by the Chief Appeals Officer. Significant effort and resources have been devoted in recent years to reducing the length of the time taken to finalise an appeal. As a result, appeal processing times improved between 2011 and 2017 from 52.5 weeks for an oral hearing in 2011 to 26.4 weeks in 2017 and from 25.1 weeks
for a summary decision in 2011 to 19.8 weeks in 2017. The most recent figures for May 2018 are 30 weeks for an oral hearing and 24.6 weeks for a summary decision.

A number of new Appeals Officers have joined the Appeals Office over the past year to replace staff leaving on retirement. Given the complexity of the appeals process it takes some time for new staff to be trained up and develop expertise and this has led to somewhat longer processing times during this period. The Chief Appeals Officer has advised me that appeal processing times will continue to be a priority for her office.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Table 1: Average weeks to award claims at the end of May 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Weeks to award</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Pension Contributory</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Pension Non-Contributory</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobseeker’s Benefit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jobseeker’s Allowance</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-Parent Family Payment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow(er)’s Contributory Pension</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity Benefit</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternity Benefit</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Allowance</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness Benefit</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalidity Pension</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carer’s Allowance</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Benefit (Domestic &amp; FRA)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Benefit (EU Regulation)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Income Supplement (New Claims)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Benefits</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Travel</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domiciliary Care Allowance</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary Welfare Allowance</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

Table 2: Appeal Processing Times by Scheme 01 January 2018 - 31 May 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Average processing times (weeks)Summary Decisions</th>
<th>Average processing times (weeks)Oral Hearings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blind Pension</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carers Allowance</td>
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<td>Child Benefit</td>
<td>36.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disability Allowance</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness Benefit</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial Capacity Benefit</td>
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<td>21.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domiciliary Care Allowance</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deserted Wifes Benefit</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm Assist</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>39.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working Family Payment</td>
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<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Average processing times (weeks)Summary Decisions</td>
<td>Average processing times (weeks)Oral Hearings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalidity Pension</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liable Relatives</td>
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<td>30.7</td>
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<td>Maternity Benefit</td>
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<td>Paternity Benefit</td>
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<tr>
<td>One Parent Family Payment</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Pension (Contributory)</td>
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<td>48.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Pension (Non-Contributory)</td>
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<td>Occupational Injury Benefit</td>
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<td>Disablement Pension</td>
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<td>Guardian’s Payment (Contributory)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guardian’s Payment (Non-Con)</td>
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<td>37.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jobseeker’s Allowance (Means)</td>
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<td>35.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jobseeker’s Allowance (Payments)</td>
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<td>30.4</td>
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<td>BTW Family Dividend</td>
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<td>Jobseeker’s Transitional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recoverable Benefits &amp; Assistance</td>
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<td>Pre-Retirement Allowance</td>
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<td>Carer’s Support Grant</td>
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<td>Incapacity Supplement</td>
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<td>Supplementary Welfare Allowance</td>
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<td>Survivor’s Pension (Contributory)</td>
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<td>Survivor’s Pension (Non-Con)</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>23.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Widowed Parent Grant</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Appeals</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Jobseeker’s Benefit Eligibility**

865. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the case of a person (details supplied) who is awaiting the result of a retrospective eligibility claim for a jobseeker’s payment; when this claim will be completed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30323/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): This person submitted a retrospective application for Jobseekers Benefit.
While his contribution record has been amended in relation to the matter referred to, further information is required before a decision can be made on his entitlement. This additional information was requested from him in April 2018, but unfortunately has not yet been received. The local Intreo Centre has written to the person to remind him of the need to submit this information. Once it is received, a decision will be made as quickly as possible.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

One-Parent Family Payment Data

866. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing the age limit for the one parent family payment to 12 and 18 years of age, respectively. [30332/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The estimate cost of increasing the age limit for qualified child for the One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) scheme to 12 and 18 years of age respectively would be very difficult to estimate with any accuracy.

There are three significant barriers to undertaking such an exercise. Firstly, a reversal of the amendments made to the OFP scheme could result in a cohort of lone parents that are currently not in receipt of a social welfare payment becoming eligible and therefore moving onto a social welfare payment. As members of this cohort are not currently in receipt of a social welfare payment it would be difficult for my Department to estimate the numbers involved.

Secondly, some customers could seek to move from alternative payments such as Jobseekers Allowance (JA), the Jobseeker’s Transitional Payment (JST) and the Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD) back to the OFP. Again, it would be difficult for my Department to estimate the magnitude of this flow between schemes with any degree of accuracy.

Finally, reversing the changes to the OFP would also increase the incidence of dual payments of OFP and the Working Family Payment (WFP). It would not be possible to estimate the extent to which Working Family Payments might change, without having detailed knowledge of individuals’ working patterns and level of earnings.

These unknown factors are critical to providing a reliable costing. My Department is therefore not in a position to provide the costing requested.

Child Benefit Payments

867. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of extending child benefit beyond 18 years of age for those in full-time education. [30333/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Child Benefit is a monthly payment made to families with children in respect of all qualified children up to the age of 16 years. The payment continues to be paid in respect of children up to their 18th birthday who are in full-time education, or who have a disability. Child Benefit is currently paid to more than 631,000 families in respect of over 1.2 million children, with an estimated expenditure of more than €2 billion in 2018.

It is not possible to give the full-year estimated cost of extending child benefit to all those in
full-time education who are over 18 years of age because of the open ended nature of the question. Based on Department of Education and Skills figures on the numbers of 18 and 19 year olds in full-time secondary education in 2017, the estimated annual cost of extending the upper age limit to include 18 and 19 year olds in full-time secondary education alone is in the region of €65 million. The Deputy’s question, which seems to include people over 18 in third-level education, and indicates no upper limit as to age, would therefore give rise to costs substantially in excess of, and multiples of, this figure.

The student grant scheme, SUSI, is the main financial support for students in third-level education. There is detailed information on the range of grants and funds for students in further and higher education on the website www.studentfinance.ie including the Student Assistance Fund.

Given the universal nature of Child Benefit, making it payable to persons in respect of children who are 18 years of age, or older people in full-time education, would not be a targeted approach. Any adjustment to the payment can result in benefits being spread very thinly, rather than making a difference where there is most need.

Under EU regulations Child Benefit is defined as a family benefit and is exportable in cases where the claimant is working in Ireland but where the children are living abroad. We have no way of predicting with any degree of accuracy the potential in-flow in this category for children who turn 18 and remain in education in other Member States.

**Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications**

868. Deputy Brendan Howlin asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for domiciliary care allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30359/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): An application for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) was received from the person concerned on the 30 April 2018.

Applications received in mid-April 2018 are currently being finalised. This application will be considered by a deciding officer and the decision notified to the person concerned as soon as possible.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Pension Provisions**

869. Deputy Sean Fleming asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when the pension for persons that reach 67 years of age will be introduced; the arrangements in place for persons that leave work prior to 67 years of age and are on jobseeker’s benefit or jobseeker’s allowance prior to that; the requirements for this period of payment before the State pension (contributory) comes into effect; if persons that are on illness benefit can claim this from 64 years of age in circumstances in which they were born in March 1955; if this can continue up to the new pension date; if they will be required to transfer to jobseeker’s benefit or jobseeker’s allowance for a period prior to reaching 67 years of age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30430/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The
Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011 provided that State pension age will be increased gradually to 68 years. This began in January 2014 with the abolition of the State pension (transition) which was available to people aged 65 who satisfied the qualifying conditions. This measure standardised the State pension age for all at 66 years. This will increase to 67 in 2021 and to 68 in 2028.

The purpose of these changes is to make the pension system more sustainable in the context of increasing life expectancy. This has significant implications for the future costs of State pension provision which are currently increasing by roughly €1 billion every 5 years.

There is no statutory retirement age in the State, and the age at which employees retire is a matter for the contract of employment between them and their employers. While such a contract may have been entered into with a retirement date of 65, in the context of the previous State pension arrangements, there is no legal impediment to the employer and employee agreeing to increase the duration of employment for one or more years, if both parties wish to do so.

Where a person exits the workforce before reaching State pension age they may apply for either the jobseeker’s benefit or jobseeker’s allowance schemes. Jobseeker’s payments are paid to eligible jobseekers aged 18 to 66 years subject to the rules of the scheme. A decision to change the jobseekers schemes in the context of the increased pension age would be a matter for Government to consider in a budgetary context.

Illness benefit is a payment made to insured people who; are unable to work due to illness; satisfy certain PRSI contribution conditions and are under pensionable age. The legislative provision governing the qualifying age is covered under s.40(1)(a) of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 and a person is entitled to illness benefit where “the person is under pensionable age on the day for which the benefit is claimed”. There are no proposals to amend the wording in respect of the age requirement so a person would be entitled to illness benefit, subject to satisfying the other conditions in respect of illness and contributions conditions, until their entitlement to illness benefit exhausts or they reach pension age, whichever is earliest.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.
will be recorded as having paid 52 weekly contributions for that year.

Where the self-employed discharge their combined Income Tax, USC and PRSI liability through Revenue’s self-assessed system of collection, a single payment is made in respect of their combined liability for all complete tax years up to and including the year in which the self-employed worker reaches their 65th year.

As Revenue does not have the facility to collect a part of a year’s PRSI liability in respect of the individual’s 66th year, payment can be facilitated by the Department’s Client Eligibility Services, Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection, Government Buildings, Cork Road, Waterford.

Such additional (66th year) S Class contributions may be used, where necessary, to satisfy the ‘minimum 520 paid contributions’ condition for State pension (contributory) eligibility, but cannot be used in the yearly-averaging assessment of pension rate entitlement, for which the cut-off point in totalling contributions is the end date of the immediately preceding (full) tax year. This is exactly the same ‘66th year’ approach that is facilitated in the case of standard employees (rather than self-employed) who may require some additional contributions to satisfy the “520 contribution” condition.

Community Employment Schemes Administration

871. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her views on a matter (details supplied) regarding pension schemes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30480/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** As the Deputy is aware Community Employment (CE) scheme supervisors are employees of private companies in the community and voluntary sector that receive public funding. They are not employees of my Department or public servants, and as such were not subject to pay reductions under the provisions of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) which only applied to public servants.

While the motion called for the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to meet with unions with a view to addressing the issue of CE supervisors’ pension provision, the issue is currently being examined by a Community Sector High Level Forum, chaired by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. A number of Departments including my own Department are represented on this group, as are the unions and Pobal.

A detailed scoping exercise was carried out with input from the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) on the potential costs of providing Exchequer support for the establishment of such a pension scheme for employees across the Community and Voluntary sector in Ireland. The exercise clearly illustrated that this matter presents very significant issues for the Exchequer, with a potential cost to the State of €188 million per annum in respect of funding to enable an employer pension contribution in State funded Community and Voluntary organisations, excluding any provision for immediate ex-gratia lump sum payment of pension as sought, which could, depending on the size of the sector, entail a further Exchequer cost of up to €318 million.

I am very conscious that while the issue relates to Community Employment supervisors and assistant supervisors, such individuals comprise of just one small group within the wider Community and Voluntary sector.
The Deputy should note that any provision of State funding for such a scheme in respect of those employees could potentially give rise to claims for similar schemes on the part of those in the broader sector, thus crystallising the potential level of liability. Any solution to this issue will require careful consideration, in particular the implications for scarce Exchequer resources.

**Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility**

872. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the way in which a person working full-time and paying PRSI on a widow’s pension (contributory) is not entitled to illness benefit when sick; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30500/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):**

There are a number of basic principles which underpin the Irish social insurance system. Firstly there is the contributory principle. Under this principle there is a direct link between the PRSI contributions that a person has paid and entitlement to a varying range of benefits and pensions. Where a person has sufficient PRSI contributions, then benefits and pensions may be paid as of right, where a particular contingency arises and without a means test.

Secondly there is the solidarity principle. Under this principle the benefits and pensions that are paid are not directly related to the amount of PRSI contributions paid by insured persons. PRSI contribution income is instead redistributed to support contributors who are more vulnerable.

In addition, there is a general principle of one person, one payment, which applies across the social welfare system. Given the contingency-based nature of this system, it can happen that a person may experience more than one contingency at the same time and he or she can receive only one of those payments. This principle is common to social security systems across the world.

There were a limited number of exceptions in the social insurance system to the general principle of one person, one payment. These exceptions usually applied in the context of short-term benefits. For instance, recipients of One-Parent Family Payment, Widows and Widowers Pensioners could, until recent years, also receive short-term social insurance benefits, such as Illness Benefit and Jobseeker’s Benefit at half-rate at the same time. These overlapping payment arrangements were introduced in the early 1950s when the social insurance system was first established, at a time when there were only 10 individual social welfare payments and when rates were significantly lower in real terms than they are now. However, the social welfare system has been significantly developed over the intervening period, with the result that the number of possible combinations of concurrent contingencies has increased greatly.

The concurrent payment of half-rate Illness Benefit and Jobseeker’s Benefit in addition to One-Parent Family Payment, and Widows and Widowers Pensions was discontinued from January 2012, in the context of the Government’s commitments to maintain existing core rates of primary payments for social welfare recipients. There are exceptions to this as in a case where a reduced Widows Pension is in payment and paid at a rate lower than the Illness Benefit Rate. In such circumstances Illness Benefit may be paid to ensure that the aggregate payment will equate with the maximum rate of Illness Benefit appropriate to the person’s circumstances.

To change the underlying principle of entitlement to only one payment at any one time could involve significant and unsustainable additional expenditure in the long-term and it is not intended to depart from this principle.
**Ministerial Travel**

873. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the cost of travel expenses for her and those that travel with her since her appointment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30510/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The cost of domestic and foreign travel expenses claimed by myself, my Private Secretary and my Advisers and the cost of foreign travel expenses claimed by civil servants who travelled with me since I became Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection in June 2017 is €49,517.30.

Due to the procedures in place in my Department for claiming travel costs and the number of staff employed in my Department it has not been possible to separate out on an individual basis the domestic travel costs that relate specifically to official travel with me.

**Project Ireland 2040**

874. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of times she has met her officials regarding Project Ireland 2040 since its launch; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30551/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The key overarching objective included in Project Ireland 2040 which relates to my Department is to bring unemployment rates in all regions down to within 1% of the national average.

In the shorter term, the National Development Plan 2018 to 2027 includes two projects that come under my Department’s remit. These concern additional ICT modernisation and the refurbishment of my Department’s Áras Mhic Dhiarmada building in Store Street, Dublin 1. The Deputy will be aware that my Department is not amongst those with significant capital budgets.

While I have not had formal meetings with my officials specifically in relation to Project Ireland 2040, or in relation to the above-named projects included in the National Development Plan 2018 to 2027, I have, of course, met with officials in relation to a wide range of issues which will contribute towards the ultimate achievement of the ambition set out in Project Ireland 2040.

**Freedom of Information Requests**

875. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of FOI requests her Department has received since January 2018; the number of refusals; the number that have been appealed and that are ongoing; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30568/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received in my Department from 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2018 is set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total No. of FOIs received</th>
<th>1,404</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refused</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appealed</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this context, it should be noted that the different categories do not add up to the total number received. This is because some FOI requests are withdrawn, transferred or handled outside of the FOI process, with the agreement of the requester.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Vacancies on State Boards

876. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of vacancies on State boards under the remit of her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30585/18]

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 details, as requested by the Deputy, are set out in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Board</th>
<th>No. of vacancies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizens Information Board</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Pay Commission</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensions Authority</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Welfare Tribunal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vacancies on the board of the Citizens Information Board are currently advertised on Stateboards.ie with a closing date for applications of 7 August 2018.

The vacancy on the Social Welfare Tribunal is in course of being filled following the recent receipt of the requisite nomination from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU).

I should mention, finally, that there is one recent vacancy on the Pensions Council.

Pension Provisions

877. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the criteria for qualifying for the TCA; and if a person (details supplied) will qualify. [30741/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Earlier this year the Government announced a proposal that will give pensioners affected by the 2012 changes in state pension (contributory) rate bands the option to have their pension entitlement reviewed and entitlement re-examined under an alternative Total Contributions Approach. This proposal also allows for the option to claim for up to 20 years of a new HomeCaring credit. This approach is expected to benefit many people, particularly women, whose work histories include extended period of time outside the paid workplace, while raising families or in a caring role. It will make it easier for pensioners assessed under the yearly average model to qualify for a higher rate of state pension (contributory) by basing the pension decision on the totality of a person’s social insurance contributions as opposed to the timing of those contributions during
their working life.

My Department will invite pensioners, who reached pension aged on or after 1 September 2012, to have their pensions reviewed and re-calculated under the alternative method to determine if they qualify for a higher rate of entitlement. Currently work is underway to put the necessary legislative provisions in place to implement these arrangements, as well as the administrative processes and IT systems necessary to undertake these reviews of affected pensioners. Once these elements are in place, the Department will contact pensioners and invite them to participate in the review, with invitations proposed to issue from the end of 2018.

Review applicants will be notified of the outcome of their review and any applicable higher rate of entitlement will be paid to them. Where eligible, payments are expected to commence from early 2019. Where an increase is awarded, it will be backdated to 30 March 2018. It is not possible to anticipate outcomes in advance of a review in individual cases.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

878. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress to date in respect of an appeal for an invalidity pension in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30758/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Invalidity pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

The department received a claim for IP for the gentleman concerned on 16 February 2018. His claim was disallowed on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on the 07 June 2018 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review and appeal. To date there is no record of a request for a review or an appeal having been received from the gentleman in question.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer’s Support Grant

879. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress to date in respect of an appeal for a carer’s support grant in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30759/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer has completed a review of his original decision to disallow the appeal of the person concerned in light of additional medical evidence submitted and as a result, has decided to allow the appeal. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer’s decision.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.
I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Free Travel Scheme Eligibility

880. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans for a person (details supplied); the steps that will be taken to include free travel for persons with this level of disability regardless of income in budget 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30761/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The current free travel scheme provides free travel on the main public and private transport services for those eligible under the scheme. These include road, rail and ferry services provided by companies such as Bus Átha Cliath, Bus Éireann and Iarnród Éireann, as well as Luas and services provided by over 80 private transport operators. There are currently approximately 914,000 customers with direct eligibility with an annual allocation of €90 million.

Persons resident in Ireland who are over 66 and persons in receipt of certain social welfare payments are eligible for the scheme. The social welfare payments that allow persons aged under 66 to a free travel pass include disability allowance, invalidity pension, carer’s allowance and partial capacity benefit. While medical evidence will be required to determine eligibility for these schemes, it does not, of itself, entitle a person to free travel.

A person in receipt of Disability Allowance or an Invalidity Pension receives the pass on the basis of the primary benefit they are paid, and not on the basis of their underlying medical condition.

Accordingly, while applications for Free Travel for the person concerned were received in 2016 and 2018, they were refused on both occasions as the person concerned was not in receipt of a qualifying payment on application.

If the free travel scheme was to be extended to all people who had a disability and/or significant health issues, regardless of whether they receive a qualifying payment, a medical assessment process would be required for all such applications, significantly changing the nature of the scheme.

Any decision to change the eligibility criteria of the free travel scheme along such lines would have significant costs and require additional administrative processes to be put in place. Accordingly, it could only be considered in the context of overall budgetary negotiations.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Eligibility

881. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the eligibility for a disability allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30778/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Disability Allowance is a weekly allowance paid to people with a specified disability who are aged over 16 and under 66. The disability must be expected to last for at least one year and the allowance is subject to a medical assessment, a means test and a habitual residency test.
A person must submit a completed application form for disability allowance to the Department in order to have their eligibility assessed and a formal decision made on their entitlement. To date no application for disability allowance has been received from the person concerned.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Exceptional Needs Payment Applications

882. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an exceptional needs payment has now issued in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30781/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Further to Parliamentary Questions 23070-18 and 27349-18, the person concerned spoke with a designated officer of the Department where it was established that she was seeking financial assistance with her rent payment. An exceptional needs payment is a single payment provided to help meet essential, once-off, exceptional expenditure, where it is established that a person cannot reasonably be expected to meet the expense out of their weekly income. It is not intended for habitual, regular, ongoing household expenses. The person concerned was advised that she should contact the Rents Unit as she required financial assistance with her rent payment and her need was more appropriate to that business area. She was given the contact details for the South Kildare/West Wicklow Rents Unit and her documents were forwarded to the Rents Unit. To date, the person concerned has not made contact with the Rents Unit.

As the Deputy has indicated in his representations that the person concerned is homeless, it is not possible therefore for the Rents Unit to issue an application form/information pack for Rent Supplement as a current address cannot be verified.

It is open to the person concerned to contact the Rents Unit and submit an application for a Rent Supplement payment. She should include all relevant documentation in support of her application.

The contact details for the Rents Unit for South Kildare/West Wicklow are as follows:

Telephone: 01 6732155 (9.30am-12.30pm)

Post: South Kildare/West Wicklow Rents Unit, PO Box 1107, Newbridge, Co Kildare

Email: RentsKildareSouth@welfare.ie.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Company Closures

883. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the actions she is taking in view of the announcement by a company (details supplied) to close its assembly facility in Kanturk, County Cork, in September 2018; if she will request the IDA to prioritise this area for investment and job creation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30784/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department received a communication dated 3 July 2018 from the company in question which
gave details of its intention to close a section of its operation, with the loss of 24 jobs.

The priority for my Department is to ensure that employees receive advice on jobseekers payments and other income supports that may be available to them and to provide support to them in relation to returning to work, or accessing appropriate education, training and development options.

My team in the Cork Division have already been in contact with the company directly and provided them with information on the Intreo services available locally. Arrangements are also being made for a presentation to be given by the Department to employees in relation to these services, including Employment Services provided by Case Officers.

The key message for current employees is that my Department will provide jobseeker payments to which they may be entitled, in a timely manner and will proactively help them to access the many opportunities available for employment. My Department will work with other relevant agencies in this regard.

Any queries relating to income or activation supports should be directed to the employee’s local INTREO/Branch Office. A full list of INTREO centres and Branch Offices is available on www.welfare.ie.

**Disability Allowance Appeals**

884. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress to date in the determination of an appeal for a disability allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30794/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The person concerned submitted an application for disability allowance (DA) on 18 April 2017. Their application was disallowed as she was not found to be habitually resident in the state.

The person concerned appealed this decision to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO). This appeal was disallowed by an appeals officer on 11 May 2018 and she was notified of this decision in writing on the same date.

An AO’s decision is final and conclusive in absence of any new facts or evidence. It is open to the person in question to reapply for DA.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Carer’s Allowance Applications**

885. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress to date in the determination of an application for carer’s allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); when the application will reach a conclusion; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30815/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** An application for carer’s allowance (CA) was received from the person concerned on 20 April 2018.
The application was awarded to the person concerned on 26 June 2018 and first payment will issue to their nominated bank account on 27 July 2018.

The person concerned was notified on 26 June 2018 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

One-Parent Family Payment Applications

886. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a decision has been finalised in respect a claim for one-parent family allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30818/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): This person made an application for One Parent Family Payment on 31 May 2018. In order to make a decision on her application the deciding officer requested additional information. To date this has not been received.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

One-Parent Family Payment Applications

886. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a decision has been finalised in respect a claim for one-parent family allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30818/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): This person made an application for One Parent Family Payment on 31 May 2018. In order to make a decision on her application the deciding officer requested additional information. To date this has not been received.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

887. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to outline the progress to date in respect of an appeal for a disability allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); when the appeal will reach a conclusion; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30819/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 21st June 2018. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. These papers have been received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 27 June 2018 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.
The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

888. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to outline the progress to date in respect of the determination of an appeal in the case of a person (details supplied); when the appeal will be concluded; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30820/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who will consider the appeal in light of all the evidence submitted. It is expected that a decision will issue to the person concerned within the next week.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Exceptional Needs Payment Applications

889. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an exceptional needs payment will be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30836/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** An application from the person concerned for an exceptional needs payment was refused on the 15/05/18 as their combined income is in excess of the Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) rate for their family size.

There has also been additional lodgements into their account over a two month period, separate to their usual incomes.

A formal written decision was sent to the person concerned, which included information regarding their right to appeal.

I trust that this clarified the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

890. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to outline the progress to date in the determination of an appeal in the case of persons (details supplied); when the appeal will be concluded; if an oral hearing will be facilitated in this instance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30837/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The
Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 26th April 2018. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When these papers have been received from the Department, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral appeal hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

One-Parent Family Payment

891. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to outline the social welfare payments in place specifically for lone parents; and the criteria in place to qualify for each. [30838/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The social welfare payments in place specifically for lone parents are the One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) and Jobseeker’s Transitional Payment (JST).

Under the current social welfare legislation in order to qualify for payment of OFP, an applicant must be a qualified parent of at least one relevant child who is ordinarily resident in the State, is not detained in a children detention school, and has not attained the relevant age, which is currently 7 years old.

There are special provisions for OFP recipients who have a child on Domiciliary Care Allowance, or are on the half-rate Carer’s Allowance, or are on the Blind Pension, that extends payment until their youngest child reaches 16 years old.

To qualify for OFP an applicant must be under 66 years old; be the parent, step-parent, adoptive parent or legal guardian and main carer of a relevant child, and the child must live with the applicant.

The applicant must satisfy a means test and if they have earnings from employment these earnings must be less than €425 per week. The applicant must be habitually resident and must not be living with a spouse, civil partner or cohabiting.

Under the current social welfare legislation in order to qualify for payment of JST, an applicant must be a qualified parent of at least one relevant child who is ordinarily resident in the State, is not detained in a children detention school, and has not attained the relevant age which is currently 14 years old.

The applicant does not have to be available for, and genuinely seeking, full-time work. The applicant must satisfy a means test and does not have to be fully unemployed for 4 out of 7 days.

The applicant must be habitually resident and must not be living with a spouse, civil partner or cohabiting.

One-Parent Family Payment Data
892. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to set out the number of persons in receipt of the one-parent family payment and the working family payment. [30839/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Working Family Payment currently benefits approximately 56,700 families in respect of over 127,000 children.

One-Parent Family Payment currently supports 39,580 lone parents and 72,578 children. Of these, some 6,700 are also in receipt of WFP.

Figures provided are in respect of May 2018.

**One-Parent Family Payment Eligibility**

893. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to outline her views on the Indecon report showing the impact that changes to the one-parent family payment have had on lone parents with regard to levels of deprivation. [30840/18]

896. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to outline the steps being taken to tackle poverty in lone-parent families. [30844/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 893 and 896 together.

Research repeatedly shows that the best way to tackle poverty among lone parents is through employment and the Indecon report on lone parents, published in 2017, echoed this view. The report found that the changes made to the one-parent family payment scheme in 2012 increased employment and reduced welfare dependency. It also found that the changes increased the probability of employment and higher employment income for lone parents. The report also concluded that assisting lone parents to enhance skills needs to be seen as a key objective, as low paid employment will not, on its own, ensure a reduction in the risk of poverty.

The review additionally highlighted a number of areas of concern: many of those who lost OFP remain unemployed, or are in low paid or part-time employment. The balance of evidence indicates that there is an increased probability of being at risk of poverty as a result of the changes. Further supports, aimed at assisting lone parents to obtain full-time employment or increased hours of work, need to be put in place.

Continued economic recovery, together with Budget measures over recent years introduced as the economy began to work its way out of recession, are likely to have impacted positively on poverty rates since 2016 (the most recent available data) and since the period examined in the Indecon report. This improvement is expected to continue over the coming years. My Department’s social impact assessments of Budgets 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 are an indicator of this improvement. These show a cumulative increase of €36.75 in the average weekly household income of employed lone parents (and €33.60 for unemployed lone parents). This compares favourably with a weekly increase of €34.45 for the average household (given the impact of two-adult families on the average household figure).

Budget 2018 measures that took effect from 29th March this year (specifically the increases to the income disregard, the primary rate and the increase for a qualified child) will assist a lone parent in receipt of the one-parent family payment or jobseeker’s transitional payment, working 15 hours a week on the National Minimum Wage, to be better off by almost €1,000 per year.
We know that social transfers are very effective in reducing poverty and that Eurostat data shows that Ireland performs well in this regard. But we also know that reducing poverty for lone parents is not just about income support. The latest CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) for 2016 shows that being at work reduces the consistent poverty rate for lone parents by nearly two-thirds, highlighting that the best way to tackle poverty among lone parents is to assist them into employment.

Our focus therefore, through the activation service provided by my Department, is on supporting lone parents to make the transition into employment and, at a cross-governmental level on assisting these families through the provision of quality services in areas including education, training and employment supports, and childcare.

**One-Parent Family Payment**

894. *Deputy John Brady* asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to outline the supports in place to assist lone parents returning to education and returning to work. [30841/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department, in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills, offers a wide range of financial supports to lone parents that allow them to participate in a variety of educational and employment programmes.

For example, lone parents in receipt of One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) or Jobseekers Transitional payment (JST) who wish to participate in second or third-level education can opt to retain their current payment and also avail of the SUSI maintenance grant from the Department of Education and Skills. This grant is not assessed as means by my Department. Alternatively, they can opt to receive Back To Education Allowance (BTEA), which is paid at the same rate as their former payment. There are some differences between the options with regards to secondary benefits, so the individual can select the option that best suits their needs and circumstances.

Working Family Payment (WFP) is a tax-free weekly payment available to employees with children. It gives extra financial support to people on low pay. You must be an employee working 19 hours per week or more to qualify.

The Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD) scheme aims to help families to move from social welfare into employment. It gives financial support to people with qualified children who are in, or take up, employment or self-employment and as a result stop claiming a jobseeker’s payment or a one-parent family payment. Qualifying applicants receive a weekly payment for up to 2 years, equivalent to the increase for a qualified child that was being paid on their jobseeker or one-parent family payment (up to a maximum of 4 children) for the first year in employment. Half that amount is paid weekly for the second year.

My Department’s employment services also currently provide a case-managed approach to assist lone parents to make a personal plan to assist them to return to work or education. For lone parents on JST, the engagement is a pro-active tailored support that can be available for up to seven years while JST is in payment.

**Working Family Payment**

895. *Deputy John Brady* asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protec-
Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Working Family Payment (formerly FIS) was introduced in 1984 and is an in-work support that provides an income top-up for employees on low earnings. WFP is designed to prevent in-work poverty for low paid workers with child dependants and to offer a financial incentive to take-up employment.

My Department regularly reviews its schemes to ensure that they continue to meet their policy objectives. There have been a number of changes to the WFP Scheme since its introduction in 1984, which are summarised in the following table: these have included changes to the hours-worked eligibility criteria, increases in the income thresholds and a reduction in the WFP multiplier.

Specific reviews are as follows:

- A policy and value for money Review of Child Income Support and associated spending programmes, including WFP, was published in 2010.

- The Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare was established in June 2011, harnessing expert opinion and experience to examine a number of specific issues relating to the tax and welfare systems. The Group produced a number of reports over the 2011-2013 period, and made proposals for improving employment incentives and achieving better poverty outcomes, particularly child poverty outcomes.

- In 2017 as part of the initial process of developing the Working Family Payment (WFP), the Department carried out an extensive analysis of the range of supports it provides, including the Working Family Payment, to assist individuals to take up and remain in employment. This analysis showed that existing in-work supports are very effective and work well in assisting individuals to make the transition from unemployment into employment.

- Finally, the Social Welfare Act 2017 provides for a review of the operation of the Working Family Payment, including the requirement to work at least 19 hours per week, or 38 hours per fortnight, to be submitted to the Social Protection Committee.

WFP Developments 1984 – to date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Scheme introduced to provide income support for employees on low earnings with children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Reduction in the minimum number of hours worked per week from 30 to 24.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>An increase in the multiplier from 50% to 60% of the gap between actual income and ceiling. Reduction in the number of minimum hours worked per week from 24 to 20.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Extension of WFP to families with children ages 18-21 in full-time education. Scheme extended to co-habiting couples with children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>A reduction in the minimum hours required to work from 20 a week to 38 a fortnight. Qualifying employment period reduced from 6 to 3 months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Method of calculating amount of WFP changed from gross income to net of PRSI contributions and health and employment levies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Method of calculating amount of WFP changed to net income pay after tax, levies and superannuation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Refocusing of income thresholds to include additional gains for larger families. Prior to 2006, weekly income thresholds were increased by a fixed amount regardless of family size. This led to a bias in favour of smaller families. Budget 2006 and subsequent budgets concentrated additional resources on larger families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Budget 2012 provided for the inclusion of income from weekly carers payments for the purposes of calculating entitlement to WFP in line with other welfare payments (introduced over a three year period). Budget 2012 also provided for the inclusion of income from employment as a home help in the WFP income assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Social Welfare legislation generally precludes changing the WFP rate within the 52 week payment period, except in the case of an increase for an additional child. However in light of the changes to the One-parent Family Payment (OFP) regulations were introduced in July 2013 as an exceptional measure, to enable entitlement to WFP to be reviewed so that former OFP recipients in receipt of FIS will have their WFP payment increased in light of the termination of their OFP due to the age of the youngest child. The WFP payment will be adjusted solely to take account of the loss of OFP income and other changes in income will not affect the rate of WFP within the original 52 week award period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Budget 2016 increased the Working Family Payment income thresholds by €5 for families with one child and €10 for families with two or more children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Budget 2018 increased the Working Family Payment earnings thresholds by €10 per week for families with up to three children. The name of the Family Income Supplement was also changed to the Working Family Payment to better reflect the nature of the payment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question No. 896 answered with Question No. 893.

Rent Supplement Scheme Eligibility

897. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to outline the progress to date in the determination of a rent allowance review in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30846/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** A review of Rent Supplement entitlement was undertaken in April 2018 in the case of the person concerned. On completion of this review the rate of Rent Supplement was assessed at €490 per calendar month. This constituted a reduction in payment due to the fact that a child dependant had reached the age of 18, is in receipt of a social welfare payment in their own right and is thus assessed with a minimum contribution of €30 per week towards the cost of rent payment as per current scheme guidelines. The revised Rent Supplement payment is effective from April 2018.

If the person concerned is not happy with the decision of the designated officer or if their circumstances have changed since completion of the last review in April 2018, it is open to the
person concerned to contact the community welfare service and request a further review of their Rent Supplement claim.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Back to Work Allowance Eligibility**

898. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to outline the eligibility for the back-to-work family dividend scheme in the case of persons (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30847/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The person concerned was awarded Back to Work Family Dividend Scheme on the 4th April 2018 effective from the 27th March 2018.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Foster Care Supports**

899. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to outline the estimated amount it would cost in a full year if the foster care allowance for a child aged under 12 years of age was increased from €325 to €335 per week and from €352 to €372 per week for a child that is over 12 years of age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30862/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** This is a matter for my colleague in Department of Children and Youth Affairs, who administrators the foster care allowance scheme.

**Fuel Allowance Eligibility**

900. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to outline the eligibility for the fuel allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30875/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Fuel allowance is a means-tested payment to assist those on long-term social welfare payments with their heating costs. Only one allowance is paid per household. Eligibility is subject to a household means test and other qualifying conditions, such as household composition. With regard to means, a person may have a combined household income of up to €100.00 per week over and above the maximum rate of state pension (contributory).

A fuel allowance application form was received from the person concerned on 12 March 2018. Additional information regarding their household means was requested in writing on 9 April 2018. As no reply was received, a further request for the required information was issued on 6 July 2018. When the requested information is received from the person concerned, a decision on their eligibility for fuel allowance will be made and the person notified in writing.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.
10 July 2018

Carer’s Allowance Eligibility

901. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to outline the progress to date in the determination of an application for carer’s allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); if the application has reached a successful conclusion; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30876/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer’s allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

I confirm that my department received an application for CA from the person concerned on 26 February 2018.

Additional information and documentation was requested from the person concerned on 25 June 2018. Once the information is received the application will be processed without delay and she will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Working Family Payment Applications

902. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to outline the eligibility for family income supplement in the case of persons (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30877/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): An application for Working Family Payment (WFP) was received from the person concerned on 28 March 2018.

In order to determine entitlement to WFP, all applications must be fully completed and signed by the claimant so that a claim can be processed.

The application form (FIS1) submitted by the person concerned could not be processed as Part 8 (employer details) of the form was incomplete. WFP Section wrote to the applicant on 14 April 2018 requesting Part 8 (employer details) to be completed on the application form but no response was received and the claim remained pending.

To date, the information requested by WFP Section remains outstanding so a decision on entitlement cannot be determined. WFP Section reissued a letter requesting the relevant documents on 6 July 2018.

On receipt of this information, WFP will be processed and the person without delay and the person concerned will be notified in due course.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Applications

903. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress in the determination of an application for a widowed or surviving civil
partner grant in the case of a person (details supplied); if the application has successfully con-
cluded; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30878/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The
person concerned was awarded widowed parent grant on 15 March 2018 and a payment of
€6,000 was lodged to his nominated account in a financial institution. The person concerned is
currently in receipt of one-parent family payment.

Neither the person concerned, nor their late spouse, have sufficient social insurance contrib-
utions paid in Ireland to qualify the person concerned for a standard Irish widower’s contribu-
tory pension. As the person concerned and their late spouse worked outside Ireland entitlement
to a widower’s contributory under EU regulations is currently under consideration. My Depart-
ment has contacted the relevant pension authority in Germany to request the social insurance
records of the person concerned and their late spouse.

On receipt, entitlement of person concerned to widower’s contributory will be examined
under EU Regulations and the person will be notified of the outcome without delay.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

JobPath Programme

904. Deputy Imelda Munster asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Pro-
tection if it is necessary for a person who is applying for a community employment scheme
to attend a Seetec or JobPath programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter.
[30892/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Jobpath is an employment activation service to support unemployed jobseekers to secure and
sustain full time paid employment or self-employment. Two companies, Turas Nua and Seetec
are contracted by my Department to deliver the JobPath services.

Since 1 June 2018, it is open to persons attending a JobPath provider to take up a position
on a Community Employment (CE) scheme on the condition that they commit to continued
engagement with the provider. The JobPath provider will take the CE participants work pattern
into account for their engagement with them. By facilitating a person to take up a position on
CE while attending the JobPath provider, it maximises the assistance and services available to
them through a combination of a quality work placement and personalised job-seeking support
provided through the JobPath service.

If a person is not attending the JobPath provider when they take up a placement on CE, they
are not currently obligated to attend a JobPath provider on taking up their placement.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory)

905. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protec-
tion if the case of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; the reason this person is not re-
ceiving full entitlements in pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30901/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Ac-
According to the records of my Department, the person concerned has a social insurance record of 650 reckonable paid and credited contributions, from September 1969 to end-December 2017, giving them a yearly average of 15. In arriving at this yearly average, disregards for home-making periods were applied and the person concerned qualified for a reduced rate state pension (contributory). The person was notified in writing of this decision on 11 June 2018.

Earlier this year the Government announced a proposal that will give pensioners affected by the 2012 changes in state pension (contributory) rate bands the option to have their pension entitlement reviewed and entitlement re-examined under an alternative Total Contributions Approach. This proposal also allows for the option to claim for up to 20 years of a new HomeCaring credit. This approach is expected to benefit many people, particularly women, whose work histories include extended period of time outside the paid workplace, while raising families or in a caring role. It will make it easier for pensioners assessed under the yearly average model to qualify for a higher rate of state pension (contributory) by basing the pension decision on the totality of a person’s social insurance contributions as opposed to the timing of those contributions during their working life.

My Department will invite pensioners, who reached pension aged on or after 1 September 2012, to have their pensions reviewed and re-calculated under the alternative method to determine if they qualify for a higher rate of entitlement. Currently work is underway to put the necessary legislative provisions in place to implement these arrangements, as well as the administrative processes and IT systems necessary to undertake these reviews of affected pensioners. Once these elements are in place, the Department will contact pensioners and invite them to participate in the review, with invitations proposed to issue from the end of 2018.

Review applicants will be notified of the outcome of their review and any applicable higher rate of entitlement will be paid to them. Payments are expected to commence from early 2019. Where an increase is awarded, it will be backdated to 30 March 2018.

The person concerned may wish to make an application for a means tested state pension (non-contributory) as depending on the person’s circumstances, they may qualify for a higher rate of entitlement. An application form has issued to the person concerned and their entitlement will be assessed on return of the completed form. The person concerned will be notified in writing of the outcome and will be awarded whichever pension is the more financially beneficial to them.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Supervisors

906. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason there has been no progress to introduce an agreed pension scheme for community employment scheme supervisors despite repeated calls for same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30917/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy is aware, Community Employment (CE) scheme supervisors are employees of private companies in the community and voluntary sector that receive public funding. They are not employees of my Department or public servants, and as such were not subject to pay reductions under the provisions of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) which only applied to public servants.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DEPER) is the lead Department in ad-
dressing the entitlement of CE supervisors to occupational pensions. It is currently being examined by a Community Sector High Level Forum, chaired by DPER. A number of Departments including my own Department are represented on this group, as are the Unions and Pobal.

A detailed scoping exercise was carried out with input from the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) on the potential costs of providing Exchequer support for the establishment of such a pension scheme for employees across the Community and Voluntary sector in Ireland. The exercise clearly illustrated that this matter presents very significant issues for the Exchequer, with a potential cost to the State of €188 million per annum in respect of funding to enable an employer pension contribution in State funded Community and Voluntary organisations, excluding any provision for immediate ex-gratia lump sum payment of pension as sought, which could, depending on the size of the sector, entail a further Exchequer cost of up to €318 million.

I am very conscious that while the issue relates to Community Employment supervisors and assistant supervisors, such individuals comprise of just one small group within the wider Community and Voluntary sector. Any provision of State funding for such a scheme in respect of those employees could potentially give rise to claims for similar schemes on the part of those in the broader sector, thus crystallising the potential level of liability. Any solution to this issue will require careful consideration, in particular the implications for scarce Exchequer resources.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Carer’s Benefit Applications**

907. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason for a delay of up to 11 weeks for applications to be processed relating to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30941/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer’s benefit (CARB) is a payment made to insured people who leave the workforce to care for a person(s) in need of full-time care and attention.

At the end of May processing times were on average 9 weeks from date of receipt.

Processing times vary across schemes, depending on the differing qualification criteria. Schemes that require a high level of documentary evidence from the customer, particularly in the case of disability and caring schemes, can take longer to process.

I confirm that my department received an application for CARB from the person concerned on the 5 June 2018.

The application is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Social Welfare Appeals**

908. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30958/18]
Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer on 29 May 2018, who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

909. Deputy John McGuinness asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a domiciliary allowance by a person (details supplied). [30978/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): An application for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) was received from the person concerned on the 23 September 2016. This application was not allowed as the child was not considered to satisfy the qualifying conditions for the allowance. A letter issued on 10 January 2017 outlining the decision of the deciding officer to refuse the allowance.

A request for a review of this decision was received on 3 February 2017. The claim was reviewed by a deciding officer who determined that a revised decision was not warranted. The person concerned was notified of this decision on 12 June 2017.

An appeal of the decision was requested on 4 July 2017. As part of the appeal process the DCA claim was again reviewed by a deciding officer who upheld the decision dated 12 June 2017. The person concerned was notified of this decision on 14 November 2017. The application has now been forwarded to the Social Welfare Appeals Office for further consideration.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Home Loan Scheme

910. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30287/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan is provided by local authorities in accordance with the Housing (Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans) Regulations 2018, which broadly set out the eligibility criteria to avail of the loans as well as the obligations of the local authorities and duties of borrowers in respect of the Scheme. In accordance with the regulations, as Minister, I have issued a statutory credit policy which obliges each local authority to establish a credit committee to assess and decide on applications and an appeals mechanism for those who are not satisfied with a decision of the credit committee.

To support local authorities in operating the Scheme, the Housing Agency provides a central assessment service to the authorities and makes recommendations to them in respect of each application submitted to it. The final decision on loan approval is a matter for each local au-
authority and its credit committee to make on a case-by-case basis. Decisions on all housing loan applications must be made in accordance with the Regulations and the statutory credit policy, having regard to the recommendation of the Housing Agency, in order to ensure consistency of treatment for all applicants.

Under legislation, a local authority is independent in the performance of its functions and as Minister, I am precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to any individual case with which a housing authority is or may be concerned. I am therefore not in a position to comment on or deal with an individual case.

The person concerned should therefore contact the local authority to which they applied for the loan for an update in relation to their application.

**Wind Energy Guidelines**

911. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the updated wind farm construction guidelines will be published. [30310/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department is currently undertaking a focused review of the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines. As part of the overall review, a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is being undertaken on the revised Guidelines before they come into effect, in accordance with the requirements of EU Directive 2001/24/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, otherwise known as the SEA Directive.

SEA is a process by which environmental considerations are required to be fully integrated into the preparation of plans and programmes which act as frameworks for development consent, prior to their final adoption, with public consultation as part of that process. Following a tendering process, my Department appointed SEA experts in December 2017 to assist in this regard. It is expected that a public consultation on the revised draft Guidelines, together with the comprehensive environmental report, will be commenced over the coming weeks, with the aim of issuing the finalised Guidelines, following detailed analysis and consideration of the submissions and views received during the consultation phase, by end 2018.

When finalised, the revised Guidelines will be issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Planning authorities, and, where applicable, An Bord Pleanála must have regard to guidelines issued under Section 28 in the performance of their functions generally under the Planning Acts. In the meantime, the current 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines remain in force.

**Property Registration**

912. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when a section 49 application (details supplied) submitted to the Property Registration Authority in 2015 will be assigned to the principal assistant and progressed to completion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30776/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Under the Registration of Deeds and Title Act 2006, the Property Registration Authority (PRA) was established as and from 4 November 2006. The PRA replaces the Registrar of Deeds and Titles as the registering authority in relation to property registration in Ireland and, subject to
the above Act, is independent in the performance of its functions.

A service for Oireachtas members was introduced in 2006 through which information can be obtained on the current status of applications, such as the case referred to. The Deputy’s query has been forwarded to the PRA for attention and direct reply via the above mentioned service.

Local Authority Staff Recruitment

913. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the basis on which public sector recruitment may be restricted to existing staff, including the basis for the common recruitment competition pools operated by local authorities; and his plans to amend legislation to prevent the use of such pools. [30883/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Recruitment in the Local Government sector is undertaken through a mixture of internal competitions and open competitions. In open competitions, candidates may apply irrespective of their place of work and will be assessed against the published criteria. A set proportion of posts are filled on an open competition basis. In addition, posts at some management levels are filled solely through open competition.

In internal competitions in the Local Government sector, only candidates from a range of public sector bodies, what is called the Common Recruitment Pool, may apply.

The common recruitment system for Clerical/Administrative grades has been in place for over thirty years. The system provides for the filling of certain posts (at Grade IV to VII level) by competition confined to employees of Local Authorities, the Health Service Executive, Education and Training Boards, Institutes of Technology and certain other health and local government agencies. Issues in relation to the common recruitment pool were addressed in the Social Partnership Agreement “Sustaining Progress” when the social partners agreed to conduct a cross-sectoral review of recruitment issues pertinent to the grades concerned including the issue of greater accessibility and the introduction of a graduate entry level.

The recommendations of the Review Group established to review the issues were reflected in the discussions and agreement reached on the successor social partnership agreement “Towards 2016” concluded by the social partners. The “Towards 2016” Agreement provided for the implementation of arrangements whereby 20% of the posts at Grades V to VII and 50% of posts at Grade IV would be filled by open competition. Specialist posts would continue to be filled by open competition only. Posts above Grade VII are also filled by open competition. Under the “Towards 2016” Agreement the implementation of the provisions regarding the common recruitment pool (CRP) is a matter for each relevant sector where the pool operates.

Recently, the Health and Education members of the CRP withdrew their membership of the pool. On foot of a request from my Department, the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) is currently reviewing the CRP with a view to engaging with Public Sector Unions on a revised arrangement. Following this process and once I have considered the outcome of the LGMA’s engagement with the unions, I will be introducing, by Ministerial Order, new qualifications for administrative staff to enhance the recruitment process and its alignment with Government policy of broadening the pool of candidates for public sector jobs.

Traveller Accommodation
914. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to incidents in which there have been difficulties for emergency services gaining unhindered access to Traveller accommodation at Glenamuck Road, Carrickmines, Dublin 18; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30083/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, housing authorities have statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) in their areas. This responsibility includes carrying out the necessary health and safety checks on individual traveller halting sites, and where appropriate, taking necessary action to remedy the situation. Any concerns the Deputy may have in relation to the particular halting site concerned should be pursued directly with the relevant local authority, in this case Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

My Department’s role is to ensure that there are adequate structures and supports in place to assist the authorities in providing traveller accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding. Capital funding of €12m is being provided for Traveller-specific accommodation in 2018. Included in this is provision to assist local authorities with the costs of capital works arising from the fire safety review of traveller-specific accommodation.

**Traveller Accommodation**

915. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to provide for the fitting of remote controlled motorised gates at all Traveller accommodation sites to ensure unhindered access for emergency services. [30084/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, housing authorities have statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) in their areas. This responsibility includes carrying out the necessary health and safety checks on individual traveller halting sites, and where appropriate, taking necessary action to remedy the situation.

My Department’s role is to ensure that there are adequate structures and supports in place to assist the authorities in providing traveller accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding. Capital funding of €12m is being provided for Traveller-specific accommodation in 2018. Included in this is provision to assist local authorities with the costs of capital works arising from the fire safety review of traveller-specific accommodation.

I have no plans to introduce a nationwide policy on the provision of motorised gates for halting sites. However, it is open to housing authorities, following any health and safety checks of halting sites, to submit proposals for funding to my Department.

**Legislative Measures**

916. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his Department has identified laws which are dependent on or in place as a consequence of Article 41.2 of the Constitution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30103/18]
Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

Earlier this year, my Department conducted a review of the legislation under its remit to identify if any of it was based upon or drew upon the concepts in Article 41.2 of the Constitution. No such legislation was identified.

The review was undertaken on foot of a request by the Department of Justice and Equality.

Local Authority Housing Data

917. Deputy Sean Fleming asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of houses purchased by a local authority (details supplied); the funding made available to the local authority in 2018; the amount unspent in the period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30275/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): To date in 2018, my Department has recouped some €2 million in funding to Carlow County Council for the direct purchase of twenty properties. The total expenditure recouped to the Council on capital and current housing programmes to date in 2018 is €7.5 million.

In respect of delivering new social housing homes, whether through construction, acquisition or other approaches, no precise advance allocation of funding is made to individual local authorities. Instead, funding is drawn down by the local authorities, in line with the level of advancement they make in delivering new social housing. In that regard, I have issued social housing delivery targets to all local authorities which, in the case of Carlow County Council for build, acquisition and leasing from 2018-21, is 309 - further information is available at the following weblink. All local authorities, including Carlow, will be required to deliver against these targets and I have assured the Chief Executives that funding is in place to support this delivery.

Local Authority Housing Provision

918. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the potential impact that a proposed development through the rapid build housing programme will have on a sports club (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30285/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): As housing authorities, local authorities, including South Dublin County Council, are responsible for the identification of the social housing need in their area and for the development of appropriate responses to the need identified. My Department is supporting local authorities in the delivery of a range of social housing schemes from small to larger scale developments.

South Dublin County Council advise that the housing development is at a preliminary stage but will not affect the pitch or pavilion of Knocklyon United Football Club as they are outside the boundary of the proposed site. The Council reaffirmed its commitment and continued support to the football club.

European Parliament Elections

919. Deputy Darragh O’Brien asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Gov-
ernment when a constituency report for European Parliament boundaries under section 5(1A) of the Electoral Act 1997 will be initiated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30293/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): On 28 June 2018, the European Council adopted a decision on the composition of the European Parliament for the 2019-2024 parliamentary term. This provides for 13 members to be elected in Ireland, an increase from the present 11 members.

The Electoral Act 1997 (as amended) provides for the establishment of a committee to review European Parliament constituencies in the context of a change in the number of MEPs to be elected in Ireland. The provisions generally mirror those in place for a Constituency Commission, including the membership, but with shorter timelines for receipt of submissions and for presentation of a report to the Chairman of the Dáil (within two months of establishment).

I have written to the Chief Justice seeking his nomination for a Chairperson for the committee which I intend to establish as soon as practicable after receiving the nomination.

Project Ireland 2040 Implementation

920. Deputy Darragh O’Brien asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the anticipated launch date of the national regeneration and development agency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30295/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): Project Ireland 2040, published in February 2018, signals a significant policy shift towards securing more compact and sustainable urban and rural development, which requires significantly more effective land management in key development areas. Against that background, it is proposed to establish a National Regeneration and Development Agency to assist in ensuring a more effective approach to strategic land management, particularly in terms of publicly owned land.

The Agency will act as a national centre of expertise, working with and supporting local authorities, public bodies and other interests, to harness public lands as catalysts to stimulate regeneration and wider investment and to achieve compact, sustainable growth, with a particular emphasis on complex regeneration projects and the provision of affordable housing.

Detailed arrangements in relation to the functions, powers and mechanisms and legislative arrangements for the establishment of the Agency are currently being developed by my Department, in conjunction with the Department of An Taoiseach and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, with a view to their early finalisation. The current work in this area will inform the functions, resource needs, budgetary requirements and location of the Agency.

Planning Investigations

921. Deputy Darragh O’Brien asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when he plans to publish the report into certain planning matters in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30300/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Review Into Certain Planning Matters In Respect Of Donegal County Council was received by my Department in June 2017.
Following initial analysis and assessment of the report’s findings and recommendations, including interaction with the Department’s own legal advisers and the Attorney General’s Office, a comprehensive set of queries and request for advice was submitted to the Attorney General’s Office late last year and I expect a detailed response to all the matters raised, including the issue of publication and dissemination, in the very near future.

Once the Attorney’s advice is received and considered, a submission on the matter will be finalised for my consideration.

Housing Provision

922. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of units covered by the enhanced leasing scheme by county; the anticipated cost in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30302/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** A range of housing options are necessary to ensure a supply of accommodation to meet different types of social housing need. Harnessing the off-balance sheet potential of private investment in social housing is an important objective of the Government and the social housing targets set out in Rebuilding Ireland over the period to 2021 reflect the ambition in that regard.

Of the 50,000 social housing homes to be delivered under Rebuilding Ireland, 10,000 are targeted to be leased by local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) under leasing arrangements from a range of different sources, including 3,500 homes targeted using the Repair and Lease Scheme (RLS), and 6,500 homes using a combination of the existing social housing leasing arrangements, and the new Enhanced Lease Scheme. All homes delivered under leasing arrangements, including a new Enhanced Leasing Scheme, will be funded under the Department’s Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP).

It is intended that up to 2,000 units will be leased by Local Authorities in 2018 through a combination of the existing Long Term Leasing arrangements, the Repair and Leasing Scheme and the new Enhanced Leasing Scheme.

The new Enhanced Leasing Scheme has been developed by my Department, together with the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA), the Housing Agency and local authorities, in order to harness the potential of private sector interest in social housing delivery in a new set of long-term leasing arrangements, in a manner designed to leverage off-balance sheet funding opportunities in accordance with Rebuilding Ireland objectives. The new Scheme is targeted at new build or new to the market properties to be delivered at scale and will complement the existing long-term leasing arrangements, which will continue to be available. There are, however, a number of key differences between the existing long term lease and the enhanced lease, the purpose of which is to facilitate larger levels of private investment in social housing while ensuring that the capital investment is off balance sheet in respect of Government expenditure.

The scheme will be governed by my Department and operated by local authorities. The Housing Agency will manage and administer the scheme on behalf of my Department and will act as a national co-ordinator.

A call for proposals was launched on 31 January 2018 and the Housing Agency accepted submissions from interested parties until 12 April 2018. All proposals are subject to a range of criteria as set out in the “Calls for Proposals for Enhanced Long Term Social Housing Leasing Scheme” and the proposals will be assessed and marked in accordance with the terms set out therein. The Call for Proposals is available on the Housing Agency website at the following
A total of 33 submissions were received from interested parties which represents strong interest from the market. The Housing Agency is currently reviewing the proposals. Of those assessed, 14 proposals were returned on the grounds that they did not meet certain minimum qualifying criteria, 4 proposals did not pass suitability or appropriateness tests and 1 proposal has been withdrawn by the proposer. Following detailed requests for additional information from the proposer, I understand that 9 proposals were deemed incomplete by the Housing Agency and will not be proceeding. The remaining 5 Proposals are in the assessment process which I am hopeful will be complete shortly.

Detailed information with respect to the numbers and locations of the units proposed for leasing under the Scheme will only be available once the individual proposals have been assessed, marked and accepted in accordance with the terms and methodology set out in the Calls for Proposals document and the respective Local Authorities have signed any Agreements for Lease arising.

**Departmental Staff Data**

923. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of staff engaged in the housing delivery office per annum since its establishment; the average length of service in the office; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30303/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** In line with the commitment under Action 2.9 of Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, a dedicated Housing Delivery Office (HDO) was established within my Department, in August 2016, to support the accelerated delivery of housing across the social and private sectors, and tenure spectrum, in an integrated and timely manner. Working with the broader Housing and Planning Divisions in my Department, other key agencies, local authorities and the construction sector, the HDO supports the roll-out of complex projects, including identifying and resolving barriers to delivery, and monitors progress across key sites as they progress.

At the time of its establishment, the HDO comprised a team of 4 people with extensive expertise in project management, finance, planning and local government, including staff seconded from the local government sector and the National Development Finance Agency. Having carried out a range of initial initiatives, and taking account of the fact that some assignments to the office were time-limited, the HDO was refocused in September 2017 to work more closely on supporting local housing delivery and land management. In that context, the current team of 3, with service ranging from 3 to 22 months, works closely with the extensive range of highly experienced officers within the wider housing and planning areas of my Department and local authorities, across key disciplines such as architecture, planning, engineering and building control, project and construction management, quantity surveying, capital programme delivery and administration. As with all critical areas of activity in my Department, the resources available to the HDO are kept under regular review in the context of ongoing evolution of the Office’s role and, in that context, I expect additional resources to be assigned to the Office in the coming months.

**Vacant Sites Levy**

924. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Gov-
ernment the number of vacant site levy designations that have been appealed to An Bord Pleanála to date; the status of the appeals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30304/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**
The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 introduced the vacant site levy aimed at incentivising the development of vacant, underutilised sites in urban areas. Under the Act, planning authorities are required to establish a register of vacant sites in their areas, beginning on 1 January 2017. Planning authorities issued notices to owners of vacant sites by 1 June 2018 in respect of vacant sites on the register on 1 January 2018, indicating that the levy will apply to those sites on 1 January 2019.

There are a number of appeal provisions in the Act, including an appeal against the entry of a site on the register, an appeal of market value determination of a site and an appeal against demand for payment of the levy.

By end June 2018, An Bord Pleanála had received a total of 74 valid appeals against the entry of sites on the registers of planning authorities; 53 of these cases have been decided, leaving 21 still to be determined.

**Local Authority Housing Rents**

925. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the section of the Local Government Act 2014 that makes the making of a differential rent scheme a reserved function of elected local authority members will be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30309/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**
At present the making of rent schemes and the setting of rent levels is a matter for each local authority under the provisions of the Housing Act 1966. The making or amending of such schemes is not a reserved function and does not require the approval of the elected members; however, it is subject to the influence of the elected members through the annual estimates process. The Chief Executive of the authority makes the (non-statutory) rent scheme subject to broad principles laid down by my Department in Circular letter HRT 3/2002 dated March 6th 2002.

I assume the Deputy is referring to Section 31 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 which is not yet commenced. Section 31(7) of the Act provides that the making and revocation of a rent scheme are reserved functions. Section 31(8) provides that the charging of rents or other charges in accordance with a rent scheme are executive functions.

Considerable work has been carried out by my Department in developing a draft national differential rents framework under section 31 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009. Such a framework had as its main aim the facilitation of a significant harmonisation in local authority rents, including a set of standardised income disregards, whilst retaining the general principle of rents related to household income.

The introduction of a rent framework could mean that the amount of rent payable by some households may be subject to change. This work is now being examined further in the light of the broader commitment given in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, to review the disparate systems of differential rent for social housing in place across local authorities. The overall objective is to ensure that housing supports are fair and sustainable, prioritise those on lowest incomes and avoid creating social welfare traps that may prevent people from either returning to work or to the private housing market.
I expect that the review will be completed in the near future.

Local Authority Funding

926. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if there is a fund from which local authorities can draw on for exceptional circumstances (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30348/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**
The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from local authorities’ own resources supplemented by State road grants which are the responsibility of the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Local Authority Housing Provision

927. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if it is policy across local authorities not to allow a prospective tenant to view a property offered before deciding whether to accept the allocation. [30395/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**
The allocation of social housing support is a matter for the relevant local authority in accordance with the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, and associated regulations.

Section 22 of the 2009 Act requires all local authorities, as a reserved function, to make an allocation scheme determining the order of priority to be accorded in the allocation of dwellings to households qualified for social housing support and to households approved for a transfer, the allocation of which would, in the opinion of the authority, meet the accommodation needs and requirements of the households. The manner in which the allocation process is managed including allowing prospective tenants to view properties being offered is a matter for the relevant local authority concerned. My understanding is that currently the approach varies across the country.

As part of the broader social reform policy framework the Social Housing Allocation (Amendment) Regulations 2016 were made on 30th September 2016, and required all local authorities, if they had not already done so, to provide for Choice Based Letting (CBL) as a method of allocation in their allocation schemes by 31 December 2016. Where a local authority, having included a provision on CBL in its allocation scheme, decides to operate a CBL scheme, it must implement it in accordance with Regulations 6 – 11 of the 2011 Regulations. Decisions on which properties are to be included under a CBL scheme is a matter for individual authorities.

CBL is a method, whereby available social housing is let by being openly advertised, allowing qualified applicants to ‘bid’ for or ‘register an interest’ in available homes. Applicants have to act on their own initiative to respond to adverts and bid for dwellings that they would like to live in, rather than waiting for an authority to offer a dwelling.

This approach offers more choice and involvement for applicant households in selecting a new home, thereby reducing the likelihood of a refusal, and helping to build sustainable tenancies and stable communities. In order to improve responses to CBL, authorities have been asked...
to consider putting in place a process to allow bidders to view the property.

My Department is committed to monitoring the roll-out of CBL across all Local Authorities and will continue to liaise with them over the course of the second half of the year, with a view to ensuring that CBL is implemented, as widely as possible, across the country.

Local Authority Assets

928. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if lands or properties vested in wholly owned subsidiary incorporated bodies of local authorities in which the chief executive is the sole shareholder should be included in the register of fixed assets of that local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30404/18]

929. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if lands or properties vested in wholly owned subsidiary incorporated bodies of local authorities in cases in which the chief executive is the sole shareholder have been duly entered in the register of fixed assets for each local authority will be investigated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30405/18]

930. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the action he will to take to ensure lands or properties vested in wholly owned subsidiary incorporated bodies of local authorities in which the chief executive is the sole shareholder have been duly entered on the register of fixed assets for each local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30406/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 928 to 930, inclusive, together.

A fixed asset register records all movements of assets owned or controlled by an entity, and is generally used for internal administrative purposes. Accounting details of assets such as the date of purchase, location, cost, supplier details, warranty if applicable, serial number, depreciation method and rate, insurance details and disposal details are usually contained within the register.

The Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice, as published by my Department, states that every local authority shall keep a register of assets, including all lands acquired or leased by the local authority itself.

The position in relation to properties vested in or lands owned by a wholly owned subsidiary of a local authority, in which the chief executive is the sole shareholder, is that these assets should be recorded in the financial statements of the subsidiary incorporated body itself rather than in those of the local authority. However, Appendix 8 to the annual financial statement of each local authority records the interest a local authority has in companies and joint ventures and discloses the total assets and liabilities of each such subsidiary and joint venture.

The accounting code of practice is available on my Department’s website at the following link.

**Water and Sewerage Schemes Funding**

931. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if funding for a sewerage treatment tank upgrade in respect of a housing development (details
supplied) in County Kerry will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30499/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**
The taking-in-charge of housing developments is a matter for the relevant local authority under section 180 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). My Department launched the National Taking-in-Charge Initiative (NTICI) in April 2016 to trial new approaches and working methods in supporting and accelerating overall national and local action on the taking-in-charge process of housing estates, including estates with developer-provided water services infrastructure (DPI).

Under the terms of the NTICI, which was underpinned by €10m in funding, developments subject to valid taking-in-charge applications were eligible for inclusion in the associated call for funding proposals. Ultimately, €7.7 million of the allocated funding was paid to local authorities in respect of 330 developments, containing some 13,400 homes.

Findings and recommendations from the NTICI process will be included in a report on the initiative that I intend to publish shortly. The publication of the NTICI report will be of value to local authorities and other stakeholders in applying the lessons from the pilot authorities, in a more general roll-out of a streamlined approach to taking-in-charge. I expect that the initiative will contribute to further streamlining of the taking-in-charge process, through, for example, securing coordination with capital works by Irish Water.

In addition, the recently published National Development Plan includes provision of €31 million for the period 2018-2021 for DPI. This is clear evidence of the Government’s commitment to transition from the pilot phase under NTICI to a programme phase, commencing with an estimates provision of €3m in 2018 on which further details will be announced in due course.

**Ministerial Travel**

932. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the cost of travel expenses for him and those that travel with him since his appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30514/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**
Details of ministerial expenses that have been paid to me are available, along with other transparency data, on my Department’s website at this link. To date, I have been paid a total of €10,969.13 in domestic and foreign travel and subsistence costs since being appointed Minister. To date, foreign travel and subsistence costs paid to officials and advisors travelling with me in that period amounted to €2,714.41. The information requested in respect of domestic travel and subsistence costs paid to officials and advisors travelling with me is not readily available as it involves a relatively wide range of officials from across the Department and its compilation would involve an inordinate amount of staff time and cost.

**Local Authority Housing Funding**

933. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount in funding provided to local authorities for the improvement works in lieu grant scheme in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018, by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30524/18]
Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department provides capital funding to Local Authorities for Improvement Works In Lieu of local authority housing (IWIL’s) to enable them to repair, improve or extend privately owned houses that are occupied by approved housing applicants as an alternative to the provision of local authority housing. My Department contributes 90% and the local authority contributes 10% of the cost of such works.

IWIL’s are administered under the Disabled Person’s Grants Scheme. The detailed administration of these grants, including the assessment, approval and prioritisation of applications is the responsibility of the local authorities.

To date, no local authority has submitted a recoupment request for IWILs funding in 2018. Details of IWILs funding provided to local authorities for the years 2016 and 2017 are set out in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Local Authority</th>
<th>Funding (£’s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Cavan County Council</td>
<td>29,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Westmeath County Council</td>
<td>9,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Mayo County Council</td>
<td>86,515</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Project Ireland 2040

934. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of times he has met his officials regarding Project Ireland 2040 since its launch; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30555/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Earlier this year, the Government launched Project Ireland 2040, the overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of Ireland. It includes a detailed capital investment plan for the period 2018 to 2027, the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2027, and the 20-year National Planning Framework (NPF).

Since its launch, work has continued under Project Ireland 2040 in relation to its implementation. The issues involved are broad-ranging and, therefore, I engage on a constant, effectively daily, basis with relevant officials in my Department in relation to progressing the many important national objectives in the NPF.

For example, you will be aware that last week my Department launched the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, one of the four funds allocated under Project Ireland 2040. The Urban Fund was opened for applications by my Department on Tuesday, 3rd July, and just yesterday I held an information seminar on the URDF, primarily geared towards key stakeholders in the local government sector.

I and my Department will be continuing to work proactively on the roll out of the NPF.

Freedom of Information Requests

935. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of freedom of information, FOI, requests his Department has received since January 2018; the number of refusals; the number that have been appealed and that are ongoing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30572/18]
Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):
The number of FOI requests that my Department has received from 1 January 2018 to 5 July 2018 is 260. A total of 10 cases sought internal review (i.e. were appealed), 54 requests were refused and 37 are as yet undecided. The remainder were either granted, part-granted, withdrawn or lapsed.

Vacancies on State Boards

936. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of vacancies on state boards under the remit of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30589/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):
The following table presents for each State Body under the aegis of my Department the current number of vacancies required to be filled in order to bring board membership to the level required by legislation and the number of appointment processes currently underway.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Body</th>
<th>Maximum Board Size</th>
<th>Minimum Board Size</th>
<th>Current Board Membership</th>
<th>Vacancies (to reach Minimum Board Size)</th>
<th>Appointment processes underway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An Bord Pleanála1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ervia</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas Networks Ireland</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Finance Agency</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Water</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government Management Agency</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Oversight and Audit Commission2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### State Body Membership and Vacancies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Body</th>
<th>Maximum Board Size</th>
<th>Minimum Board Size</th>
<th>Current Board Membership</th>
<th>Vacancies (to reach Minimum Board Size)</th>
<th>Appointment processes underway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ordnance Survey Ireland</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Registration Authority</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyrite Resolution Board</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Tenancies Board</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Advisory Body3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. An order was made on 29/3/18 increasing the membership of An Bord Pleanála by 1 in order to enable the Board to fulfil its duties and objectives. The order is for a maximum period of 5 years.

2. On 19 October 2016 an order was made increasing the number of members of the National Oversight and Audit Commission to 11 for a period of two years in order to enable the efficient and effective discharge of its functions.

3. The Water Advisory Body was established on 1st of June 2018; the recruitment process to fill the two vacancies is in preparation.

### Dog Breeding Industry

937. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount collected by local authorities on an annual basis to licence puppy farms; the number of inspections that take place; the measures taken to ensure regulation of this sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30596/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I have no responsibility in regard to the matter raised which falls under the remit of my colleague, the Minister for Rural and Community Development.

### Building Regulations

938. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans for legislative change to give effect to the section of the European Union’s energy performance of buildings directive which deals with the installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure in new residential and non-residential buildings with more than ten parking spaces and such buildings that are undergoing major renovations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30605/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
Questions - Written Answers

(Deputy Damien English): The revised Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EU) 2018/844 came into operation on 9 July 2018 and Member States are required to bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with this Directive by 10 March 2020.

The revised Directive requires that in the case of new non-residential buildings and non-residential buildings undergoing major renovation with more than 10 parking spaces, Member States shall ensure the installation of at least one electric vehicle charging point and ducting infrastructure to enable the installation of vehicle charging points at a later stage for every 5 parking spaces subject to the conditions of the Directive. Member States are also required to ensure the installation of ducting infrastructure to enable the installation of vehicle charging points at a later stage for every parking space subject to the conditions of the Directive.

In addition, Member States shall lay down requirements for the installation of a minimum number of recharging points for all non-residential buildings with more than twenty parking spaces, by 1 January 2025. Member States are also required to advance measures in order to simplify the deployment of recharging points in new and existing residential and non-residential buildings and address possible regulatory barriers, including permitting and approval procedures, without prejudice to the property and tenancy law of the Member States.

My Department is the lead Department for the coordination of the implementation of this Directive and will be working with other Departments and Public Sector bodies to implement the Articles of the revised Directive in the coming months.

Pyrite Remediation Programme

939. Deputy Darragh O’Brien asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a full review of the pyrite remediation scheme will be carried out with a view to including all homes with a category 1 rating in the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30663/18]

940. Deputy Darragh O’Brien asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the definition of the exceptional circumstances clause when accessing appeals of refusals for applications to the pyrite remediation scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30664/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): I propose to take Questions Nos. 939 and 940 together.

The Pyrite Resolution Act 2013 provides the statutory framework for the establishment of the Pyrite Resolution Board and for the making of a pyrite remediation scheme to be implemented by the Board with support from the Housing Agency.

The provisions of the Act apply only to dwellings affected by significant damage attributable to pyritic heave consequent on the presence of reactive pyrite in the subfloor hardcore material and not to damage arising in any other circumstance, e.g. such as pyrite in concrete blocks.

The pyrite remediation scheme is a scheme of “last resort” for affected homeowners who have no other practical option to obtain redress and is limited in its application and scope. The full conditions for eligibility under the scheme are set out in the scheme which is available on the Board’s website, www.pyriteboard.ie.

The scheme is applicable to dwellings, which are subject to significant damage attributable
to pyritic heave established, in accordance with I.S. 398-1:2017 - Reactive pyrite in sub-floor hardcore material – Part 1: Testing and categorisation protocol. In this regard, it is a condition of eligibility under the scheme that an application to the Board must be accompanied by a Building Condition Assessment with a Damage Condition Rating of 2. Dwellings which do not have a Damage Condition Rating of 2 are not eligible to apply under the scheme. This ensures that, having regard to the available resources, the focus of the scheme is on dwellings which are most severely damaged by pyritic heave. I have no proposals to amend this eligibility criterion.

Where a dwelling, otherwise not eligible for inclusion in the scheme, adjoins a dwelling already included in the scheme, such a dwelling may be considered in accordance with the exceptional circumstance provisions set out in section 17 of the Act. Section 17 provides that exceptional circumstances may apply where -

- failure to include a dwelling in the scheme may result in damage to that dwelling or damage to the dwelling being remediated under the scheme, or

- pyrite remediation work is causing or may cause damage to a dwelling.

The Housing Agency will consider if exceptional circumstances apply when the Remedial Works Plan is being drawn up and the Board will be informed of any recommendation for a decision in the matter. To date, no dwellings have been included in the pyrite remediation scheme under the exceptional circumstances provisions of the Act.

My Department is in regular contact with the Board and the Housing Agency in relation to the implementation of the scheme and is satisfied with the arrangements that are currently in place, including in relation to appeals.

The latest figures available indicate that a total of 2,107 applications have been received under the pyrite remediation scheme. Of the 2,107 applications received so far, 1,656 dwellings have been included in the scheme and the applicants notified accordingly.

A further 87 applications have been validated and referred to the Housing Agency for the Assessment and Verification Process, while another 233 applications are at the initial Application and Validation Process. 131 applications under the scheme were not successful.

Of the 1,656 dwellings that have been included in the pyrite remediation scheme:

- 217 are at remedial works planning stage,
- 43 are at tender / tender analysis,
- 269 are under remediation, and
- 1,127 are complete.

A sum of €30 million was announced under Budget 2018 to fund the operation of the pyrite remediation scheme this year. This allocation will facilitate the remediation of some 430 additional dwellings and is a clear signal of the continuing importance attached by Government to addressing the issue of significant pyritic damage in private dwellings.

Ultimately, the Pyrite Resolution Board, together with the Housing Agency, will arrange for all eligible dwellings to be remediated to a high standard and at no additional cost to the affected homeowners. Remediation works will continue to be carried out at the earliest possible opportunity having regard to the existing demands of the scheme and the optimum use of available resources.
941. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the review of the tenant purchase scheme will be published; when changes to the scheme will be announced in view of the report’s recommendations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30701/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**
The Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme which came into operation on 1 January 2016 is open to eligible tenants, including joint tenants, of local authority houses that are available for sale under the Scheme. To be eligible, tenants must meet certain criteria, including having a minimum reckonable income of €15,000 per annum and having been in receipt of social housing support for at least one year.

In line with the commitment given in Rebuilding Ireland, a review of the first 12 months of the Scheme’s operation has been undertaken. The review has incorporated analysis of comprehensive data received from local authorities regarding the operation of the scheme during 2016 and a wide-ranging public consultation process which took place in 2017 and saw submissions received from individuals, elected representatives and organisations.

The review is now complete and a full report has been prepared setting out findings and recommendations.

In finalising the report some further consultation was necessary and due consideration had to be given to possible implementation arrangements. These matters are now almost completed and I expect to be in a position to publish the outcome of the review shortly.

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### Foreshore Issues

942. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the impact on proposed dune conservation works at Portrane Beach, The Burrow, Portrane County Dublin of a planning application under section 3 of the Foreshore Act 1933 for a pre-installation survey, site investigation and installation of a sub-sea fibre optic cable at Portrane Beach has been taken into account; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30720/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** The possible impacts on proposed dune conservation works at Portrane Beach, The Burrow, Portrane, County Dublin by the activities proposed under the application will be examined as part of the technical assessment process for applications for consent under the Foreshore Act 1933 (as amended).

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### Urban Development

943. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details of the new €2 billion urban regeneration and development fund, URDF; his views on its potential to deliver affordable homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30728/18]

944. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will report on the information session on the urban regeneration and development fund held on 9 July 2018 for local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the
Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 943 and 944 together.

A new Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) was announced as part of Project Ireland 2040 to support the compact growth and sustainable development of Ireland’s five cities, regional drivers and other large urban centres. The funding 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.

My Department has responsibility for implementing the URDF, which has an allocation of €2 billion over the 10-year period of the National Development Plan (NDP) to 2027, with €100 million available for expenditure in 2019 and an overall allocation of €550 million earmarked for the Fund up to the end of 2022.

On 3rd July, I announced the first call for proposals under the URDF. The application process will run until end-September 2018. The Fund will operate on a competitive, bid-based Exchequer grant basis, with proposals being required to demonstrate that they will be:

- Innovative and transformational urban regeneration projects;
- Public-sector led and with the option of community and/or private sector partners;
- Matched by at least 25% direct funding from other public and/or private sources;
- A minimum bid of €2m;
- A catalyst for development that would not otherwise occur; and
- Likely to leverage significant further public and private sector investment.

This Fund has enormous potential to deliver more affordable homes as part of the redevelopment and revitalisation of urban core areas, and my Department would welcome proposals addressing measures to improve housing affordability, in addition to a range of proposal types in the context of urban regeneration and development. I would urge eligible public sector organisations to avail of the opportunity through collaboration and making best use of the skills and talent available to design creative and innovative proposals.

The information seminar which my Department organised yesterday, 9 July 2018, and which I attended, was aimed at providing some policy context and more detailed guidance on the Fund for potential lead partners from Local Authorities, Regional Assemblies and Government Departments and to provide clarity on any queries arising, to ensure that we can maximise the potential of the available funding to help meet the National Strategic Objectives set down in the NPF, both in 2019 and over subsequent years. I am greatly encouraged by the level of engagement and interest of all who attended and I look forward to seeing funding applications for proposals that are innovative, ambitious and collaborative and that are capable to delivering on the key objectives.

My Department will monitor the process in relation to the Fund and will consider the issue of further guidance in light of the level of queries that may emerge throughout the application period. My Department will also consider facilitating further information-sharing events with local authorities and other stakeholders over the summer months, as appropriate.

Detailed information on the URDF and the application process can be viewed at the following links: www.gov.ie/urdf and www.npf.ie.
945. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details of the serviced sites fund for affordable housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30730/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** I have recently invited applications, under the Serviced Sites Fund, from a number of local authorities to support the provision of key enabling infrastructure on their land, to get their sites ready for affordable housing.

Given that funding for housing-related infrastructure can now be sought under the €2 billion Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, I have re-directed the €50 million funding, originally earmarked for a further call under the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund, to the Serviced Sites Fund, increasing the scale of the Fund from the previously announced €25 million to €75 million. When local authority co-funding is included, an overall minimum investment of €100 million will be available to offset the costs of providing both on-site and off-site enabling infrastructure for sites in order for them to be brought into use for affordable housing.

The Serviced Sites Fund is being targeted, in the first instance, to areas where increasing house prices and rents have created a significant affordability gap for first-time buyers and for those who wish to rent: Dublin; Cork; Galway; Meath, Kildare, Louth and Wicklow.

As regards the affordable homes to be delivered as a result, they will either be made available under affordable purchase or cost rental. In this regard, I have recently commenced the relevant provisions of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, the effect of which is to place the new scheme for affordable purchase on a statutory footing. My Department, in consultation with the Housing Agency and the local government sector, is currently finalising the associated regulations and guidance. It is envisaged that the delivery and allocation of affordable homes, funded under the SSF, will be administered under the provisions of the 2009 Act.

The ambition of local authorities should not be limited to affordable purchase, however. Recognising that it is often those households renting in the main urban areas that face the greatest affordability challenge, the development of a viable cost rental sector is a key Government objective. A cost rental model is being developed by my Department, the Housing Agency, relevant local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies in the context of a number of pilot cost rental projects, and the findings and outcomes of this model will provide the template to develop further projects at scale.

946. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the parameters of affordable homes further to his statement (details supplied); the way in which affordable is defined; the persons that will be eligible for these homes; the way in which the allocation of the homes will be operated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30731/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** While there is no universally agreed, ideal price/rent to income ratio or minimum residual income requirement, there is general agreement that lower-income households in particular should not be paying more than roughly one third of their disposable income on housing costs.
As Minister, I have been clear that we also need to address issues of housing affordability, recognising the pressures that exist for low- to middle-income households, particularly in Dublin and certain other of our main urban centres. Recognising that people want a choice of affordable purchase and rental, depending on their stage of life and circumstances, a range of initiatives are being progressed, targeting the delivery of more affordable homes to households generally with maximum income of €50,000 for single applicants and €75,000 for joint applicants.

In order to underpin progress in this area, I have now commenced the relevant provisions of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, the effect of which is to place the new scheme for affordable purchase on a statutory footing. The associated detailed regulations and guidance are close to finalisation in consultation with the Housing Agency and local authorities.

An allocation scheme (of priority) will be developed in local authorities, agreed by the elected members, in accordance with principles and qualifying parameters set out in the Regulations.

I am also determined that cost rental homes become a major part of our rental landscape in the future. It is clear that there is a gap between social housing and the rental market that needs to be filled, making a sustainable impact on housing affordability, national competitiveness, and the attractiveness of our main urban centres as places to live and work.

The Housing Agency, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council and a number of Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) have been working to get our first cost rental pilot, at Enniskerry Road, ready for tenders to issue shortly. In parallel, Dublin City Council, my Department and the National Development Finance Agency are undertaking detailed modelling and financial appraisal on a major site, at St. Michael’s Estate in Inchicore, to assess its suitability for a significant cost rental development. The work of that multi-disciplinary team is progressing well and should be concluded shortly.

Irish Water Data

947. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the extent to which Irish Water has in place the necessary plans and resources to replace the deficient pipe network; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30749/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Since 1 January 2014, Irish Water has statutory responsibility for all aspects of water services planning, delivery and operation at national, regional and local levels.

Up to 2021 Irish Water plan to invest approximately €73m per annum to reduce leakage. A range of interventions are being implemented, including pressure management activities, active leakage control measures, water mains renewal and continued customer side savings. These interventions are targeting approximately 61m litres per annum to be saved by 2021 against the 2017 baseline.

If the Deputy has more specific queries in relation to water services issues, Irish Water has established a dedicated team to deal with representations and queries from public representatives. The team can be contacted via email to oireachtaismembers@water.ie or by telephone on a dedicated number, 1890 578 578.

Social and Affordable Housing Data
948. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of persons on the housing list in east County Cork by local electoral area, LEA. [30795/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**
Details on the number of households qualified for social housing support in each housing authority area are provided in the statutory Summary of Social Housing Assessments (SSHA). The most recent SSHA carried out in 2017, details the number of households on all local authority waiting lists as at 28 June 2017.

The results of the SSHA include breakdowns by each local authority across a range of categories. The results do not provide a breakdown of the numbers by electoral area and my Department does not hold such data.

The 2017 report also includes the results of the 2016 summary for comparative purpose. Full details in relation to the 2017 assessment are available on my Department’s website at the following link.

The SSHA is now being carried out an annual basis and the results of the 2018 summary will be published once finalised.

**Housing Data**

949. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of persons in east County Cork in receipt of housing assistance payment, HAP by local electoral area, LEA; and the cost of this support. [30796/18]

950. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of persons on rental accommodation scheme, RAS, in east County Cork by local electoral area, LEA; and the cost of this support. [30797/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 949 and 950 together.

My Department does not hold data on Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) tenancies or Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) tenancies by local electoral area, but rather collects data by local authority area.

The number and cost of tenancies supported under RAS for the period 2011 to 2016, broken down by local authority area, is available on my Department’s website at the following link under the Rental Accommodation Scheme heading - www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision.

Expenditure by Cork County Council on the scheme in 2017 amounted to €6,098,411 and expenditure for the period 1 January to 30 April 2018 was €2,110,667.

882 RAS tenancies were supported by RAS in Cork County Council’s administrative area on 30 April 2018. RAS continues to be an important solution to meet social housing need, but with the national roll-out of HAP now complete, the number of new RAS tenancies commencing will decline.

The number of tenancies supported under HAP for the period 2014 to 2017, broken down by local authority area, is available on my Department’s website at the following link under the Housing Assistance Payment heading - www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-
and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision.

HAP is a flexible and immediate housing support that is now available to all eligible households throughout the State. There are currently over 37,000 households in receipt of HAP and over 20,000 separate landlords and agents providing accommodation to households supported by the scheme. HAP commenced in Cork County Council on 15 September 2014 and the total numbers of active HAP tenancies at end 2017 was 2,647. The 2017 average monthly rent paid to landlords under the HAP scheme in County Cork was €689.

In respect of the provision of HAP funding, Limerick City and County Council provides a highly effective HAP transactional shared service on behalf of all local authorities. This HAP Shared Services Centre (SSC) manages all HAP related rental transactions for the tenant, local authority and landlord. Accordingly, my Department does not recoup individual local authorities in respect of HAP rental payments in their administrative areas but rather recoups all landlord costs via the HAP SSC.

**Traveller Accommodation**

951. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the allocation of Traveller specific accommodation funding to each local authority; and the value of the drawdown of that funding by each local authority for each of the years 2008 to 2018. [30907/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, housing authorities have statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) in their areas. My Department’s role is to ensure that there are adequate structures and supports in place to assist the authorities in providing such accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding.

Housing authorities submit funding proposals for individual Traveller specific projects and developments on an annual basis. These projects are assessed on a case-by-case basis in my Department in advance of allocations being made. In addition, further funding may be considered by my Department throughout the year in the light of progress across the programme generally. There is regular contact between my Department and housing authorities in order to try to ensure maximum progress and drawdown. If it becomes clear that allocations or part thereof may be unspent, then those allocations will be diverted to alternative projects and developments.

The amount of funding allocated and drawn down by housing authorities for Traveller specific accommodation from 2008 to date in 2018 is set out in the attached table.

[<a href="/debates%20authoring/webattachments.nsf/0/067C1C717130D756802582C70033C852/$File/ATTQGTUX.docx?openelement">Allocation vs Drawdown</a>]

**Pyrite Issues**

952. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the ongoing work to address the issue of securing green certs or a form of certification for homes affected by pyrite but without structural damage. [30908/18]
Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): I.S. 398-1:2017 - Reactive pyrite in sub-floor hardcore material – Part 1: Testing and categorisation protocol sets out the process for assessing and determining whether a building has been damaged by reactive pyrite or is likely to be in the future and it categorises the building.

While the standard provides an objective, reliable and robust means by which dwellings can be tested and categorised, there is no statutory requirement on any homeowner to carry out testing on their property in order to confirm the presence or otherwise of reactive pyrite in the subfloor hardcore material. However, it is open to any homeowner to undertake testing on their home if they so wish to obtain confirmation that their home is not affected by pyrite.

References to “red”, “amber” and “green” as originally referred to in the Report of the Pyrite Panel (June 2012) and I.S. 398-1:2013 have been removed in I.S. 398-1:2017, which was introduced in August, 2017 and replaced its predecessor. Building categories A, B, C, and D have been redefined in terms of the extent of susceptibility to expansion of the hardcore and the potential for future damage to the building from pyritic heave.

Buildings are categorised by means of a ‘Certificate of Building Categorisation for Reactive Pyrite in sub-floor hardcore material’ as per Annex B of I.S. 398-1:2017, based on the results of the Building Condition Assessment and the classification of the hardcore material.

To obtain a Category A Certificate following assessment under the requirements of I.S. 398-1:2017 (previously referred to as a “green” Certificate) the building must have a;

- Damage Condition Rating of 0 and hardcore which has negligible susceptibility to expansion; or

- Damage Condition Rating of 1 or 2, and hardcore which has negligible susceptibility to expansion and also has an alternative probable cause for the damage.

The Category A certificate is issued in respect of dwellings that have been assessed, at the request of the homeowner, in accordance with I.S. 398-1:2017. The issuing of such certificates is a matter entirely for the homeowner and the professional they engage; it is not part of the pyrite remediation scheme.

Where a house has been remediated under the pyrite remediation scheme, a certificate of remediation is provided and the issue of a Category A certificate does not arise.

Departmental Expenditure

953. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the expenditure within his Department by project or funding headline for 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018. [30909/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Details of expenditure from my Department’s Vote in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018 are set out in the tables below.

[<a href="/debates%20authoring/webattachments.nsf/0/B7AA311ED8625075802582C70033FAD6/$File/ATTYO2U0.pdf?openelement">DHPLG Expenditure</a>]

Legislative Measures

400
954. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the Bill to ban microplastics will be published. [30940/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** The preparation of a General Scheme of a Bill to provide for the prohibition of the sale, manufacture, import or export of certain products containing plastic microbeads is at an advanced stage. It is intended to bring this to Government at the earliest opportunity, with a view to drafting progressing as a priority, so that the Bill can be published in the 2018 autumn/winter legislative session.

**Rental Sector Strategy**

955. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the part played by pre-63 accommodation in the housing market will be reviewed; if the effects of concentrations of pre-63 lets on the urban fabric will be reviewed; if he will assess and report on the considerations relevant to introduce legislation to subject the pre-63 designation to a sunset clause rather than have it continue into a third generation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31011/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Strategy for the Rental Sector, published in December 2016, recognises that the quality of rental accommodation is critical to the success and sustainability of the residential rental sector and its attractiveness as a long-term accommodation option for households. The Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2017 prescribe the minimum standards for rental accommodation for all rental accommodation, with very limited exemptions. Matters prescribed under these Regulations include structural repair, fire safety, sanitary facilities, ventilation and safety of gas, oil and electricity supply.

All landlords are legally obliged to comply with these Regulations. Enforcement of the Regulations is a matter for individual housing authorities, whose extensive powers range from inspections in order to ensure compliance with minimum requirements to the application of sanctions, up to and including prosecution in the District Court. Any person who believes a landlord is in breach of the Regulations can report the matter to the relevant local authority.

As regards the long-standing statutory provision to the effect that planning permission is not required for development of land commenced before 1 October 1964, I have no proposals to change this provision in respect of any particular class of development.

**Departmental Staff Recruitment**

956. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of public sector jobs offered as internal competitions or restricted to existing Civil Service or public service staff in his Department in 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31551/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** There were a number of such jobs offered as a result of internal competitions in my Department in 2017 and in 2018 across a range of grades and roles. These posts were assigned in accordance with the sequencing arrangements agreed both centrally through the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and also with individual trade unions. The total number of such jobs offered as a result of internal competitions in 2017 was 41 and to date in 2018 is 34.
Appointments to State Boards

957. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to hold elections for appointment to the board of Údarás na Gaeltachta; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30265/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Deputy will be aware that earlier this year I announced the new board of Údarás na Gaeltachta. The new board was appointed for a 5-year period to January 2023.

In accordance with the provisions of the Gaeltacht Act 2012, certain members were appointed to the board on foot of nominations by County Councils that have a Gaeltacht area within their jurisdictions. The other appointments, including the reappointment of the Chairperson, were made following the results of a process overseen by the Public Appointments Service whereby applications were sought from the public to be considered for appointment.

I am confident that with the ability and the wide range of experience and skills held by the newly appointed board, the work of the board over the coming five years will greatly benefit both An tÚdarás and the Gaeltacht in general.

Consequently I see no reason to reintroduce an expensive election process in the case of Údarás na Gaeltachta.

Heritage Sites

958. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if a site (details supplied) in County Sligo will be taken in charge; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30532/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The site referred to by the Deputy is included in the statutory Record of Monuments and Places and, as such, is protected under the National Monuments Acts.

Because of resource implications, the State is only ever in a position to acquire, maintain and present to the public a relatively small number of heritage properties and monuments. My Department makes such acquisitions from time to time in exceptional circumstances in line with their archaeological, architectural, historical or other special significance.

There are already approximately 1000 national monuments in State care which demand very extensive resource allocations, both in terms of funding and personnel. The care, maintenance and presentation of each of these national monuments is undertaken by the Office of Public Works in consultation and with the advice of my Department’s National Monuments Service. Against the background of the resources needed to service the extensive portfolio of monuments already in State care I regret that it is not possible at present to consider adding this site to that list.

I do, of course, appreciate that it is a valued local landmark and, as such, it may be eligible for consideration under one of the schemes operated by my Department that provide financial support for the conservation and protection of historic buildings. The Built Heritage Investment Scheme and the Structures at Risk Fund are administered by local authorities and details are available on their websites.

While the closing date for the 2018 funding has now elapsed my Department remains in
contact with the local authorities throughout the year to ensure the best possible use of allocations, including by redistributing monies when, for example, projects do not go ahead. I would suggest that interested parties in this case should liaise with the relevant local authority to identify any potential assistance that might be available under the current or next round of funding.

Wildlife Control

959. Deputy Patrick O’Donovan asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the measures in place for the control of the non-native grey squirrel (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30745/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I am advised that the policy of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is that pest and mammal control is a matter for landowners. Grey squirrels are not a protected species under the Wildlife Acts and are considered a pest species as they cause serious damage to broadleaf trees. Teagasc outline a number of management options to reduce a woodland’s susceptibility to such damage in its Farm Forestry series of Information leaflets.

I am advised by my own Department that the spread of pine martens in recent years has been very beneficial in regard to squirrel damage. A four-year study in NUI Galway found that pine marten recovery in the Midlands was linked to a significant decline in grey squirrel numbers; and that a spin-off benefit was that the red squirrel has been able to take back its former range, including woodlands which had been dominated by greys for more than 30 years. Recent research in Scotland has confirmed similar outcomes.

Architectural Heritage

960. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if the former Magdalen laundry on Sean McDermott Street will be prevented from being sold to private persons for use as a hotel as a first step in developing a place to be used in a manner which would benefit the community and that would recognise the history of the site. [30034/18]

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 planning authorities and the responsibilities of owners.

The Planning and Development Acts give primary responsibility to planning authorities to identify and protect our architectural heritage by including relevant structures on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS).

As Minister, I draw on information from my Department’s National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH), to recommend structures to the planning authorities for inclusion on their RPS. Three buildings associated with the former Magdalene Laundry on Sean McDermott Street are recorded in the NIAH and have been recommended to Dublin City Council for inclusion on the RPS.

The addition or deletion of a building to or from the RPS is a reserved function of the planning authority.

I understand that the building referred to by the Deputy is in the ownership of the local authority. As such, any decision as to the disposal of the building or its future use will be a matter
I am informed that a report on the proposed development of the site is being prepared by the local authority. Any development proposal will also be subject to the usual requirements of the planning process.

**Departmental Funding**

961. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if a grant commitment (details supplied) remains in place; the correspondence, communication and contact with Mayo County Council up to 30 June 2018 in relation to this project; her understanding of and input into the review of the project to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30117/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** In February 2016, my Department offered a capital grant in principle to Mayo County Council of up to €2 million towards the cost of construction of the proposed centre referred to in the question, subject to the standard conditions that apply to all such capital grants.

The grant followed a formal request for funding in July 2015 from the project promoters, Mayo County Council.

In November 2016 the project promoters indicated that they intended to review the options for developing the proposed centre. My Department has maintained regular contact with Mayo County Council in relation to the project since then and awaits the outcome of the review. My Department will consider any proposals which may emerge from the review, when completed.

**Greenways Development**

962. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the plans to link Shannon harbour and Dublin city centre with a greenway cycle and pedestrian path; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30133/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The Grand Canal crosses Leinster from Ringsend in Dublin City to Shannon Harbour in Co Offaly. Its main line is 131km in length with the Naas and Corbally Branch adding a further 12km to the route and the Kilbeggan Branch adding an additional 13km. The towpath along the canal is fully in public ownership and provides a unique opportunity to provide a Greenway linking Grand Canal Dock in Dublin with Shannon Harbour in Co Offaly. Work on the development of the Grand Canal towpath has already taken place at Ringsend, the 3rd lock at Inchicore to the 12th lock in Lucan, Co. Dublin, Hazelhatch, Co. Kildare and Edenderry, Co. Offaly.

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 those areas not yet developed as a walking and cycling route for recreational, tourism and commuter purposes. All Local Authorities are keen to progress the development of the towpath and it is anticipated that each Council area will submit Part 8 planning applications for the undeveloped sections in the autumn of 2018/spring of 2019, and Waterways Ireland are assisting this process by working closely with officials.
Greenways Development

963. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status on a phase basis of the greenway project between Castleknock, Dublin 15 and Maynooth, County Kildare; the progress made to date on each phase; the estimated completion dates for each phase; the amount of funding that was made available for each phase of the project in 2018; if further funding will issue in 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30151/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** Waterways Ireland, which is funded by my Department, is working closely with Local Authorities and The National Transport Authority along the route of the Royal and Grand canals to advance development of the canal towpaths into long distance Greenways for walking and cycling.

With regard to the development of towpath from Castleknock to Fingal County border at Confey, a distance of 8km, Fingal County Council, funded by the National Transport Authority, has appointed consultants to investigate the options for the towpath development with a view to bring a scheme through the planning process. Waterways Ireland have informed me that work on this section will be dependent on the outcome of the planning application and then subject to funding.

Planning permission for towpath upgrade from Confey to Maynooth a distance of 9km in Kildare county, was granted in 2017. Consultants have been appointed by Kildare County Council to take the project to detailed design and tender with the intention to tender and appoint a contractor before the end of 2018. This work is being funded by the National Transport Authority. Subject to continued funding this element of towpath development should commence early 2019.

Ferry Services

964. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the details of the agreement specifically reached between her Department and the community on Tory Island concerning the provision of the island’s new ferry service relating to the provision of secondary stand-in ferry services; when this service will commence; the duration of the contract in place for the provision of the services; the commencement and expiry dates for same; if the vessel utilised to service the route is licensed for the carriage of both passengers and cargo; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30288/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the deputy will be aware, a contract for provision of a passenger and light cargo service for Toraigh was awarded to Réalt na Mara Teo for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2023. In addition to this, my Department has made funding available to the Comharchumann on the island to enable it to procure a supplementary fast ferry passenger service using a twelve-passenger vessel. It has put in place a temporary service until 31 July 2018.

The temporary service is a passenger-only service and the carriage of cargo is not permitted. It is my Department’s intention that the one-year contract will also be for a passenger-only service. I wish to remind the Deputy that the main five-year contract for the island is for passengers and light cargo and in addition to this, my Department recently agreed a two-year contract for a dedicated cargo service for the island which commenced on 1 June 2018. The cargo needs of the island are well catered for under these services.
965. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the financial contribution of the National Lottery to arts funding bodies over the past five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30400/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** Under section 8 of the National Lottery Act 1986, the proceeds of the National Lottery are paid into the Central Fund of the Exchequer and therefore National Lottery funding is one of the constituents of Exchequer funding. The apportionment of National Lottery funding to various lines of voted expenditure is the responsibility of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

The components of my Department’s Vote, which are part-funded by proceeds of the National Lottery, are:

- Subhead A.9 An Chomhairle Ealaíon (Arts Council)
- Subhead B.3 Grant for An Chomhairle Oidhreachta (Heritage Council)

Allocations in respect of these subheads for each year are set out in the Revised Estimates Volumes for the years in question and published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on its website at www.per.ie.

### Capital Expenditure Programme

966. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the capital commitments towards the culture, heritage and Gaeltacht sectors in each of the years 2018, 2019 and 2020 outlined in Project Ireland 2040 and otherwise; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30401/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The capital allocation for my Department this year amounts to €54.3 million in total and is broken out across programme areas in the 2018 Revised Estimates published at www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2015/07/2018rev.pdf.

The capital allocation for my Department in each of the years 2019 and 2020 is as follows:

- €75 million in 2019;
- €76 million in 2020;

The break out of capital allocations for these years has not yet been finalised as investments over the period are subject to appraisal and evaluation in line with the Public Spending Code. The broad capital allocations for projects and programmes are set out in my Department’s 10 Year Plan, “Investing in our Culture, Language & Heritage 2018 – 2027”, published at www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2018/04/capital_plan_april3-8.pdf.

More details on the individual projects and programmes will emerge as we go through the process of appraising, evaluating and planning for these important investments. The final disaggregation will be completed as part of the annual Estimates process for each of the years in question.
Departmental Funding

967. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the level of support given to a festival (details supplied) in each of the past five years. [30419/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department has not provided support to the festival referred to in the question in the past five years.

Waterways Issues

968. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if flexibility will be given to farmers along inland waterways to access water for their crops from the canals and rivers during the prolonged period of warm weather; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30445/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** Waterways Ireland have informed me that any prolonged period of warm weather affects all of the canal feeder water supplies reducing the volume of water available. This leads to a shortage of water for the canal network.

Waterways Ireland work closely with the Local Authorities and Irish Water to try to maintain adequate water in the canal network and meet the minimum levels required to sustain these unique bio systems and the structural integrity of the canal. This involves careful management of the water available through the system from canal levels between locks to facilitate boat passages.

In these circumstances there is no surplus of water available to support the irrigation of crops on land adjacent to the canal network.

Ministerial Travel

969. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the cost of travel expenses for her and those that travel with her since her appointment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30507/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** I have been advised by my officials that the total cost of my travel since I took office is €9,874.96.

The cost for those that travelled with me on Department business is €1,388.36.

Project Ireland 2040

970. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of times she has met her officials regarding Project Ireland 2040 since its launch; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30548/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** Project Ireland 2040 – the National Planning Framework and associated 10 year National Development Plan – has given explicit recognition to the importance of our culture, language and heritage to
our sustainable development over the next decade and beyond. This recognition is supported by the Government’s commitment to invest in excess of €1 billion in our culture, language and heritage over the 10-year implementation of the NDP.

Project Ireland 2040 encompasses all programme areas of my Department and the range and depth of the projects encompassed by it are diverse, ranging from significant multi million capital projects at our National Cultural Institutions to smaller ongoing projects in our parks and reserves, our islands and in relation to our language. The officials in my Department brief me on an ongoing basis in relation to all issues pertaining to the work of the Department including the investments proposed under Project Ireland 2040.

Freedom of Information Requests

971. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of FOI requests her Department has received since January 2018; the number of refusals; the number that have been appealed and that are ongoing; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30565/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** I am advised that 137 Freedom of Information requests have been received in my Department since January 2018. Of these, 42 cases have been refused. To date in 2018 only one request for internal review has been received. The decision in this case was also appealed to the Office of the Information Commissioner.

The outcome of the Internal review and appeal to Office of the Information Commissioner affirmed the original decision.

Vacancies on State Boards

972. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of vacancies on State boards under the remit of her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30582/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The table below gives details of the number of vacancies on State boards under the remit of my Department. A process is currently in place with the Public Appointments Service to appoint suitably qualified people to the Boards of the Arts Council, the Irish Museum of Modern Art and the National Museum of Ireland. It should be noted that one of the vacancies on the National Museum of Ireland is to be filled by staff nomination following a process set out under Section 19 of the National Cultural Institutions Act 1997, that vacancies on the Board of Foras na Gaeilge are filled on a 50:50 basis by the North South Ministerial Council, and that the enactment of the Heritage Bill will have the effect of extinguishing the current vacancy on the Heritage Council.

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<tr>
<th>Board</th>
<th>Current Vacancies</th>
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<tr>
<td>Arts Council</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irish Museum of Modern Art</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Museum of Ireland</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crawford Art Gallery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heritage Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foras na Gaeilge</td>
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Turf Cutting

973. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of a permission to cut turf for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30622/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** 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 EU Habitats Directive.

In certain areas where there is a difficulty in finding relocation solutions for turf cutters, the Department, in consultation with turf cutter interests and within the framework of the National Plan, is considering whether the provisions of article 6.3 of the Directive could be utilised to provide for domestic turf cutting within areas of a number of special areas of conservation. Under article 6.3 of the Directive consent could only be given to cut turf on a raised bog special area of conservation where it can be shown by rigorous scientific investigations that such cutting will not have an adverse effect on the (ecological) integrity of the site.

If it can be demonstrated that turf cutting within a proposed location in a special area of conservation would not impact on the integrity of a European site, the appropriate consent would then be required from the relevant public authority.

As set out in the National Plan, the site referred to in the Deputy’s Question is one of the sites being examined as regards the potential for domestic turf cutting on the site in accordance with the provisions of the Directive. The initial phase of scientific investigations on the site, undertaken by contractors engaged by my Department, was completed in November 2017. These investigations illustrated that further specialised investigations were required because of the hydrological and topographic complexities of this particular bog. I am advised that this specialised work has recently been completed and a report on its outcome is currently being compiled for review by my Department.

**Special Areas of Conservation**

974. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 576 of 3 July 2018, her plans to lease land holdings (details supplied) on the private market for the development of a commercial windfarm; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30771/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The land in question is an integral part of the Ox Mountain Bogs Special Area of Conservation and therefore, would not be compatible with a commercial wind farm.

I have no plans to lease the land on the private market for such a purpose.

**Wildlife Regulations**

975. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if a 2018-2019 hare coursing licence will be refused and all hare hunting and shooting stopped in view of warnings from wildlife experts (details supplied) that Irish hare numbers
have declined significantly; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30825/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): EU Directive 92/43/EEC (the Habitats Directive) requires Ireland to make a detailed report every six years on the conservation status of all listed species, including the hare. Ireland’s most recent report in 2013 included a comprehensive assessment of the range, population status, habitat and threats for the Irish hare. The report can be downloaded at www.npws.ie/article-17-reports-0/article-17-reports-2013. The next report is due in 2019.

The 2013 report stated that the Hare is found throughout the country from coastal habitats to upland heath and bog. The Hare is widespread and common in Ireland with a broad habitat niche. None of the identified threats are considered likely to impact on its conservation status in the foreseeable future and the Overall Conservation Status was assessed as Favourable. My Department is not aware of any expert reports which indicate a national decline in the population of hares.

In addition to the reporting requirements of the EU Habitats Directive, data on the distribution of the hare is being collected continuously by the National Biodiversity Data Centre and the recent Atlas of Mammals in Ireland 2010-2015 provided a summary of the species’ range, demonstrating that it remains widespread across the country.

My Department recently commissioned a new assessment of the status of hare’s population in Ireland. The survey work to inform this population assessment has already begun with the main survey work to occur over the 2018/19 winter period. The final report is due in mid-2019.

In relation to hare coursing meetings, the recent 2017/18 hare coursing season finished at the end of February last. All reports in relation to the season will be considered in the context of licenses for the 2018/19 coursing season.

EU Directives

976. Deputy Brendan Ryan asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if the review of the wild birds derogation process 2018 has been completed; if the final report has been submitted to her Department; and the date on which the final report will be published. [30992/18]

977. Deputy Brendan Ryan asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if the wild birds derogation process, and the development or revision of policy that might arise from the 2018 review, specifically on urban gull issues and the serious negative impacts on communities and the public health and safety concerns caused by such issues, will be urgently addressed; and if new or revised policy arising will be published (details supplied). [30993/18]

978. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if representations have been received from all public representatives of the local community in north County Dublin since summer 2016 with regard to the interim report of the review of the wild birds derogation process 2018, submitted to her Department on 18 April 2018, specifically on the section 2.0 recommendations for the 2018-2019 derogation (details supplied). [31018/18]

979. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if authority and responsibility for derogations on public health and safety grounds, as described in Article 9.1(a) of the birds directive, rest with her Department in view of previous statements that the review of the wild birds derogation process would address public health and safety in addition to taking into account relevant policy and operational practices across the EU. [31019/18]
980. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the basis on which it is asserted there are shortfalls in EU compliance in regard to a section of the interim report of the review of the wild birds derogation process 2018 (details supplied); the way in which and the reason they have come about; the possible consequences of these shortfalls; the way in which they will be addressed; and the person or body that holds responsibility for addressing same. [31020/18]

981. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when the scheduled final report from the review of the wild birds derogation process will be published; and if it is planned that recommendations requiring the involvement of other State bodies, for example, local authorities, in addition to collaborative planning and-or funding will be acted upon ahead of the autumn 2018 planning and budgeting cycle, which will set operational plans and resources for 2019. [31021/18]

982. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the date on which revised or new policies arising from the outcomes of the review of the wild birds derogation process will be published. [31022/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 976 to 982, inclusive, together.

My Department is currently undertaking a review of the derogation process under Article 9 of the EU Birds Directive which will take account of all relevant factors, including perceived threats, distribution and population data available in respect of all the bird species in the derogations. ANIAR Ecology were appointed by my Department to undertake the review following a public tendering process. My Department has received a draft of the final report from the consultants and following consideration of the draft report by my Department the final report will be concluded.

An interim report was received from the consultants in April, which included recommendations in respect of the derogation process, including in relation to the 2018/19 declarations. The consultants indicate in their interim report that the inclusion of gulls in the derogation is challenging in terms of compliance with the Birds Directive on the basis of their view that an analysis of other possible solutions needs to be set out and reviewed, the status of the herring gull is unfavourable and the effects of mitigation actions taken on the gull species concerned are not measurable. While the inclusion of gulls in the derogation was limited to the Balbriggan area only for a limited trial period and does not involve the actual culling of gulls, I will take full account of the consultants’ views in the context of future derogations and following consideration of the consultants final report, a draft of which has been sent to my Department.

My Department has received representations from the local community group referred to in relation to the interim report. This report has already been published on the website of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department.

Following consideration of the consultants’ final report, my Department will engage with relevant stakeholders.

The ultimate statutory authority on the derogations resides with me.

**Forbairt Caláí agus Céanna**

983. D’fhiafraigh **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** den Minister for Culture; Heritage and the Gaeltacht an dtabharfaidh sí eolas faoin dul chun cinn atá déanta go dáta maidir le
Togra Ché Mhachaire Rabhartaigh; an dtabharfaidh sí eolas i dtaobh cén uair a mheasann sí a chuirsí leis an obair ag an ché agus cén uair a bheidh cead tugtha le bogadh ar aghaidh go dtí an staid tógala; an ndéanfaidh sí a chinntiú fosta go mbeidh maoiniú curtha i leataobh don togra mar pháirt den Phlean Náisiúnta “Éire 2040” agus nach mbeidh cómhaoiriú ag teastáil ón Údarás Áitiúil; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh.

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): Mar is eol don Teachta, is faoi chúram Comhairle Contae Dhún na nGall atá Cé Mhachaire Rabhartaigh. Tá forbairt na Cé luaite sa Phlean Forbartha Náisiúnta atá Cé Mhachaire Rabhartaigh. Tá an togra pléite ag mo Roinn leis an gComhairle Chontae agus tá pléan fhorbairt le dearadh agus beidh innealtóiri comhairleacha le ceapadh chuige sin. Mar aon le haon togra mór infreachtuír, cuirfear an togra seo i gcrioch go céimiúil i ndáil le riachtanais an Chóid Caiteachais Poiblí.

Departmental Staff Recruitment

984. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of public sector jobs offered through internal competitions or restricted to existing Civil Service or public service staff in her Department in 2017 and to date in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31543/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I have been advised by officials in my Department that 34 posts were offered through internal competitions in 2017 and to date in 2018. This is in line with the sequencing arrangements as per the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform guidelines.