

## Written Answers.

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

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*Questions Nos. 1 to 11, inclusive, answered orally.*

### Motor Insurance Costs

12. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the implementation of the report on the cost of insurance working group for motor insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43967/18]

43. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding implementing recommendations of the cost of insurance working group for motor insurance; the number of recommendations which are delayed; his plans to deal with delayed items; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43968/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 12 and 43 together.

The Cost of Insurance Working Group's *Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance* was published in January 2017 and makes 33 recommendations with 71 associated actions to be carried out in agreed timeframes, set out in an Action Plan.

In line with the commitment to publish quarterly update reports on the implementation of the recommendations of the Motor Report, the Working Group has published six such updates, most recently on August 30th last. It shows that of the 56 separate applicable deadlines within the Action Plan set to the end of Q2 2018, 44 relate to actions which have been completed. Substantial work has also been undertaken in respect of the nine action points categorised as "ongoing".

In respect of the 12 actions which were not fully completed by the end of Q2 2018 as scheduled, six relate to legislative issues, while legislation is being considered for another due to a lack of agreement with industry. Two other outstanding actions are related to the same recommendation and require the establishment of the new Office of the Legal Costs Adjudicators, while another is contingent on the development of a register of personal injuries proceedings by the Courts Service. The remaining two actions both relate to Recommendation 26, which requires the approval of both the Minister for Justice and Equality and the Garda Commissioner for potentially far-reaching cooperative mechanisms between Insurance Ireland and An Garda Síochána to be formalised.

It should be recognised that significant progress has been made in respect of the implementation of all 12 of these aforementioned actions, most particularly regarding legislation to

establish a new National Claims Information Database. Also, it must be acknowledged that the average cost of motor insurance has been consistently falling since the middle of 2016, with the most recent CSO data (for September 2018) indicating that private motor insurance premiums have decreased by 21.5% since peaking in July 2016.

Finally, it is envisaged that the seventh quarterly update will be completed in the coming weeks. This update will provide details on the implementation of all of the recommendations from both the Motor and Employer/Public Liability Reports, with a particular focus placed upon the seven actions with Q3 2018 deadlines, including three actions from the *Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance*.

### **Tax Strategy Group**

13. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the reason no progress was reported on budget day on the merging of PRSI and USC. [44210/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I have always been clear that the amalgamation of USC and PRSI is a medium term plan and, as a result, the matter is being progressed on a separate track from the Budget and Finance Bill process.

The Working Group have now completed their work, in line with their terms of reference. Their Report was submitted to me in recent weeks and I am now considering the contents.

The Report addresses a range of options for how amalgamation could be achieved, but also has identified a number of serious challenges that will need to be further considered.

The amalgamation relates to State funds with an estimated combined value of over €7bn per annum, collected from over 2.5 million income earners.

The issue is therefore a complex one that will take time to consider.

Follow-on decisions will be taken in due course and I will make the House aware of these at the appropriate time.

### **Central Bank of Ireland Reports**

14. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he anticipates legislative changes as a result of the report from the Central Bank on the behaviour and culture of Irish retail banks; if he has had further consultations with the main banks in relation to the tracker mortgage scandal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44119/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Central Bank Section 6A Report on the culture and behaviour of the main retail banks was drafted by the Central Bank in response to my request in November 2017, on foot of the serious cultural failings in banks brought to light in the Tracker Mortgage Examination.

My Department's analysis of the report found that it is a detailed, qualitative and considered analysis of culture within the banking sector. The report's recommendations will drive positive changes in terms of wider banking culture, greater delegation of responsibilities, and enhanced accountability. The report importantly focuses on simplifying the taking of sanctions against individuals who fail in their financial sector roles.

As the Deputy will be aware, I have long been on the record as stating that there are cultural failings in the banking sector that must be addressed. I and my colleagues in Government are supportive of measures to change behaviour, operations and organisational culture within the financial sector that will keep the customer at the heart of its operations.

The Central Bank's proposals to enhance individual accountability by way of Conduct Standards for all regulated financial services providers and the individuals working within them; a Senior Executive Accountability Regime (similar to the Senior Managers Regime in the UK); and, enhancements to the current Fitness and Probity Regime are being considered as part of the work of the forthcoming Central Bank (Amendment) Bill. Officials in my Department are engaging with the Central Bank and other stakeholders in order to identify the legislative changes that are required to implement such a customer centric culture and to enhance individual accountability. I intend to bring forward heads of a Bill for approval in Q1 2019.

As part of my regular ongoing engagement with industry I meet with representatives of the main banks, and updates on the Tracker Mortgage Examination form part of the discussion at these meetings. The Central Bank has confirmed that four of the five main lenders are now close to completing their redress and compensation phases. Central Bank enforcement investigations in respect of six of the lenders are continuing, and will consider all possible angles, including potential individual culpability.

### **Brexit Issues**

15. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance his assessment of the likely impact on the economy of a hard Brexit in March 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43974/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** My Department's budget forecasts assume, as a central scenario, that the UK will make an 'orderly' exit from the EU. This involves a transition period being agreed until the end of 2020, and a free trade agreement being agreed thereafter.

However, I am conscious that the nature of the UK's exit remains uncertain, and that the risks of a harder Brexit have increased. An assessment of the potential outcomes is included in the *Economic and Fiscal Outlook* that accompanied *Budget 2019* .

In the short-term, a no-deal hard Brexit would have a material impact on Ireland, which would be asymmetric relative to the rest of the EU. The resulting shock would likely lead to market volatility, further sterling depreciation, and disruption to trade with the UK. This would have negative impacts for consumer spending, investment and competitiveness, with potential spillovers to the labour market and public finances. Sectors with strong export ties to the UK, such as agri-food and parts of manufacturing (especially indigenous manufacturing), would be especially exposed, in particular at the regional level.

With regard to the long term impact, joint research by my Department and the ESRI published in 2016 shows that the potential impact of a hard Brexit is significant. The level of GDP would be almost 4 per cent below what it otherwise would have been in a no-Brexit scenario, after ten years. The level of employment in Ireland would be 2 per cent lower, with the unemployment rate nearly 2 percentage points higher.

It is important to stress that the economic models may not fully capture the full impact, given the difficulty in modelling financial market effects, non-tariff barriers and other factors. Therefore, these quantitative effects should be seen as a minimum as opposed to a maximum

impact.

The Government is working hard with the EU Taskforce and our EU partners to ensure that an agreement between the EU and the UK is reached. While it is still Government's view that a 'no deal' outcome remains unlikely, we are planning for all scenarios. *Budget 2019* continues the process of ensuring that Ireland is in the best possible position to respond to the challenges that Brexit will bring.

### Tax Reliefs Costs

16. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of the tax breaks to private landlords announced in budget 2019; if the cost benefit analysis of direct investment in public housing has been analysed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44224/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I announced in the Budget that the amount of interest that may be deducted by landlords in respect of loans used to purchase, improve or repair a residential property will be restored to 100% from 1 January 2019 at an estimated cost of €10 million in the first year and €18 million in a full year.

It is not a new initiative but rather an acceleration of the rate of the restoration of the full value of this relief which was already scheduled to increase to 100% by 2021.

In 2009, the interest deduction for landlords of residential property was restricted in the context of the financial crisis.

In 2018, it is my view that it is timely, given the demand for housing across all sectors, to lift this restriction on the private residential landlords who are an essential feature of a functioning housing market.

Interest payments are generally considered to be legitimate business expenses and by restoring this relief to 100% deductibility on interest payments, it is hoped that the change will discourage private landlords from exiting the rental market as house prices increase.

Further, it has been argued that the existence of a restriction on the profit-making capacity of a business incentivises them to increase income streams - for landlords, this means increasing rent. I am taking action now to remove at least one incentive to increase rents that is within my direct control, at a relatively modest cost of €10 million in 2019 in the interests of all parties in the rented residential market.

Regarding direct investment in public housing, the Government is allocating Exchequer funding of €2.3 billion to housing in Budget 2019. This investment will see the housing needs of almost 27,400 households being met in 2019. An additional 17,600 units will be provided through the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS).

Beyond 2019, each year will see the housing needs of more households met through build programmes (over 7,000 units in 2020 and almost 9,000 in 2021) and less through the HAP, with published targets decreasing from a peak of 17,000 new units this year to 10,000 in 2021.

This changing mix of social housing support out to 2021 reflects the increase in direct build social housing as the construction sector continues to recover, while also allowing the State to accelerate the delivery of social housing in the short term and grow the long-term social housing stock in a sustainable manner.

*Question No. 17 answered with Question No. 10.*

### **Banking Sector Remuneration**

18. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance when the report he commissioned on bankers' pay will be completed and published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44221/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Deputies will be aware that Government policy on banking remuneration has remained unchanged since the financial crisis. Extensive restrictions are in place and from the outset let us be clear these are not simply confined to a handful of senior bankers whose pay is restricted by the €500,000 pay cap (excluding a standard pension contribution). These affect c.23,000 workers across the three banks in which the State has a shareholding. The Policy dictates that variable pay including bonuses and any other fringe benefits including the likes of health insurance and childcare cannot be paid to any staff members from the most junior lowest paid staff to the most senior ranks.

A new regulatory framework has been put in place since the financial crisis across the EU, the economy has returned to near full employment, the remaining banks are profitable again – and in the case of AIB and BOI sustainably so. The State remains the largest shareholder in AIB, BOI & PTSB but following the successful IPO of AIB in June 2017 all three banks are also now on an equal footing with listings on the main market of the Irish and London stock exchanges.

The skill set required in the banking sector is evolving with the greatest demand for staff now in areas such as the digital economy, risk management, legal and compliance. These skills are in demand right across the economy and so the banks are competing for this talent against companies who have more flexible and attractive remuneration structures. Brexit has only made this problem more acute.

In the senior ranks of the banks the substantial disparity in pay levels versus other Irish listed companies or peer banks in Europe is stark and introduces an obvious retention risk particularly in AIB and Bank of Ireland. I also need to be advised if this retention risk and a lack of alignment between the interests of executives and shareholders, undermines the Government's objective of recovering the State's full investment in the banks.

My department held a full open EU public procurement to select a suitably qualified external consultant to assist the Department of Finance in completing this review of Government policy. On 3 October the specialist advisory division of International Firm Korn Ferry were appointed.

My officials have met with Korn Ferry and already begun a consultation process with the banks, the Financial Services Union as well as a range of investors. I expect the Department to complete the Review before the end of the year and the review itself will be published in Q1 2019.

It is important that we do not prejudice the outcome of the review, It is also important to note irrespective of the outcome of this review, and what advice is given on the reintroduction of variable pay or bonuses, the 'super tax', which sees 89% of bonuses being paid back to the State will remain in place via the Finance Act 2011. The power to alter that remains exclusively in the hands of the Oireachtas.

### **Film Industry Tax Reliefs**

19. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Finance if the granting of section 481 status for film productions and his Department's role in sanctioning such production will be examined in view of concerns that budgets have been overestimated to avail of the scheme; the safeguards in place to ensure this does not happen; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39808/18]

52. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to make adjustments to section 481 film tax relief particularly in view of recent allegations of possible abuses of this relief and concerns that the relief is not generating the quality employment in the film industry that is required under the legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44228/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 19 and 52 together.

Under Section 481, a company which produces a film can claim a payable tax credit of 32% of eligible expenditure, subject to certain limits.

Eligible expenditure is the amount that the producer company spends in Ireland, wholly and exclusively on producing the film. Expenditure outside of Ireland does not qualify for the tax credit. However, where the credit is calculated based on 80% of the total cost of production, Revenue must have regard to the amounts incurred outside of the State as an increased global budget can lead to an increased credit.

Recognising the potential risks presented, the administrative framework of the relief requires that a company's application for the credit must include:

firstly an auditor's report detailing the eligible expenditure, the global budget and details of related party transactions, and secondly a solicitor's letter detailing that they have reviewed the legal agreements and that 68% of the funding has been lodged to the company's bank account (a requirement prior to Revenue releasing any amounts of the payable tax credit).

Section 481 provides that Revenue may refuse to certify a film if they have reason to believe that the budget, or any part of the budget, is inflated. They may also refuse to certify the film if they are not satisfied with the commercial rationale for the corporate structure used for financing, distribution and other similar activities.

As part of this year's Finance Bill, I announced that applications under Section 481 will be moved to a self-assessment footing to put the credit inside the normal penalty and prosecution regime where an incorrect claim is made. Further administrative changes are also being made to allow for earlier engagement with production companies in relation to the training requirements that form part of the relief.

In terms of employment, Revenue carries out a comprehensive programme of 'outdoor' compliance operations each year across a broad range of economic sectors, including the film industry. Many of the operations are carried out on a multi-agency basis, which can include officials from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the Workplace Relations Commission. The primary role of these joint investigation units, JIUs, is to detect non-compliance with tax and duty obligations, which includes non-operation of the PAYE system on foot of bogus self-employment.

20. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Finance the timescale for the conclusion of the Credit Union Advisory Committee's work; when it is next to report to him; the outstanding projects to be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43973/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Credit Union Advisory Committee (CUAC) is a statutory committee established under section 180 of the Credit Union Act 1997 to advise the Minister for Finance in relation to:

- the improvement of the management of credit unions;
- the protection of the interests of members and creditors of credit unions; and
- other matters relating to credit unions.

Four new appointments were made to CUAC in September, in addition to two continuing members. The new committee met for the first time on 15 October 2018 and is currently considering an indicative work plan for the next few years. It will report to me on progress when this new work plan is in place.

In 2017, an Implementation Group was established to oversee and monitor the implementation of recommendations set out in the CUAC's "Review of Implementation of the Recommendations in the Commission on Credit Unions Report", published in 2016.

The group is chaired by my Department and consists of one member from each of the credit union representative bodies – the Irish League of Credit Unions, the Credit Union Development Association, the Credit Union Managers' Association, and the National Supervisors Forum – along with one member from the CUAC and a member from the Central Bank. This broad membership ensures participation and encourages contribution from all credit union perspectives.

The Implementation Group submitted 2 papers to the Central Bank in November 2017 on (1) Lending Limits and Concentration Limits and (2) Consultation and Engagement. The paper on Lending Limits included a number of proposals which, if implemented, could provide for a material increase in long-term lending for those credit unions that would have the capability to do so. These proposals were provided for consideration by the Central Bank in its review of the Credit Union Lending Limits. The Central Bank has just issued a consultation paper regarding its review of the Lending Regulations.

I am expecting the Implementation Group to report to me in December, ahead of the completion of the term of that group, with a status update on all of the recommendations from the CUAC report of 2016 and subsequent CUAC policy papers.

### **Banking Sector**

21. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the progress being made in respect of the establishment of the banking culture board; if his attention has been drawn to the concerns expressed by a union (details supplied) in respect of the manner of the configuration of the board; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43975/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I wish to clarify for the Deputy that the Irish Banking Culture Board is a private initiative from the banking industry in Ireland aimed at rebuilding trust and confidence in the industry following the tracker mortgage scandal, and as such it is not within the remit of my Department nor the Central Bank as regulator.

It is intended that the Irish Banking Culture Board will be an independently led entity to ensure that the industry is focused on the best interests of the customer and leads to a sustainable banking industry that promotes the highest standards of behaviour and professionalism.

I have been informed by representatives of the five main lenders that over the next 6-12 months, the search for an independent Chairperson will be concluded, the wider Board will be appointed, and there will be an initial culture survey and a stakeholder consultation process.

The initiative does not seek to replace or diminish existing regulation and will be run out of a separate entity to the Banking and Payments Federation of Ireland (BPFI) and the banks. The establishment costs and annual running costs will be funded by the retail banks themselves. The Board will not act as a lobbying or representative organisation. It will not act as a regulatory body nor duplicate the work of individual banks or the regulator.

I welcome this initiative by the banks to regain the trust of customers, but it is no substitute for regulation.

To that end, my officials have been working with the Central Bank over the past year on policies to be addressed in a forthcoming Central Bank (Amendment) Bill. As I have already stated, the Government is supportive of measures to enhance individual accountability arising from the Central Bank's culture report recommendations. The Central Bank's proposals to enhance individual accountability include: Conduct Standards for all regulated financial services providers and the individuals working within them; a Senior Executive Accountability Regime; and, enhancements to the current Fitness and Probity Regime. I propose to address the required changes to legislation under the ongoing Central Bank Amendment Bill project. My officials have been engaging with the Central Bank and other stakeholders in that regard and I intend to bring forward heads of a Bill for approval in Q1 2019.

## **Tax Code**

22. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to introduce a tax incentive to owners of vacant properties to refurbish same provided they are ceded to the local authority for social housing tenants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38911/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Department of Finance Tax Expenditure Guidelines, published in October 2014, sets out guidelines for best practice in ex-ante and ex-post evaluation of tax expenditures and is used by my Department when considering whether or not to introduce a new tax expenditure, or in reviewing an existing measure. These guidelines indicate that tax expenditures should only be used in limited circumstances of demonstrable market failure, and where a tax based incentive is likely to be more efficient than a direct expenditure intervention.

In relation to the particular incentive being proposed by the Deputy, I understand that there is already a targeted direct expenditure measure in operation under the remit of the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, i.e. the Repair and Leasing Scheme.

I am advised that this scheme, developed under Pillar 5 of Rebuilding Ireland, is targeted at owners of vacant properties who cannot afford or access the funding needed to bring their properties up to the required standard for rental property. The scheme provides upfront funding for any works necessary to bring the property up to the required standard, and in return the property owner agrees to lease the dwelling to the local authority to be used as social housing.

In relation to taxation measures which are targeted at increasing the supply of property

available in the rented residential sector, as the Deputy may be aware, in 2017 my Department published a report on the Tax and Fiscal Treatment of Rental Accommodation Providers. Ten policy options were put forward in the report, divided into short-term, medium-term and long-term timeframes. Five potential short-term options were identified as measures which could potentially be implemented within 18 months, i.e. within Budgets 2018 and 2019.

In Budget 2018, I introduced one of these measures: *deductibility for pre-letting expenditure for previously vacant properties*. This option was prioritised as it was specifically designed to encourage an overall increase in housing supply by bringing currently vacant property back into residential use. This measure applies to residential premises which have been vacant for at least 12 months and which are then let after 25 December 2017. The expenditure is allowed as a deduction against rental income from that premises and applies to expenses that would be allowable if they had been incurred while the property was let, such as the cost of repairs, insurance, maintenance and management of the property. The total deduction allowed is capped at €5,000 per vacant premises and the deduction will be clawed-back if the property ceases to be let as a residential premises within four years of the first letting.

Finally, it should be noted that taxation is only one of the policy levers available to the Government through which to boost rental and overall housing supply. Ireland's past experience with tax incentives in the housing sector strongly suggests the need for a cautionary stance when considering intervention in the rental sector. There are many competing priorities which must be considered when deciding which policy measures to introduce and the rental sector is just one of many other sectors that may require assistance and intervention.

### **Small and Medium Enterprises**

23. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will introduce a simplified process by which small and medium enterprises can avail of the research and development tax credit. [44219/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** There are no specific provisions for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the research and development (R&D) tax credit, and nor are there any restrictions for SMEs wishing to avail of the scheme. It is available to all firms, within the charge to Irish tax, that undertake qualifying R&D activities in the European Economic Area. However I am aware that Revenue issued guidance in February 2017 with the specific aim to reduce the administrative burden for relatively small claims for SMEs and micro-companies.

The administration of the R&D tax credit is a matter for the Revenue Commissioners and I am aware that Revenue participate in a number of initiatives to ensure that the availability of the R&D tax credit, and the activities in respect of which it is available, is communicated to firms of all sizes. For example, Revenue attend and speak at R&D events organised by IRDG, IDA and EI. Revenue has also established the Research & Development (R&D) discussion group which provides a forum for Revenue and representative organisations to raise and address issues affecting the operation of the R&D tax credit.

I would also note that the refundable nature of the R&D tax credit can be particularly attractive to start-up companies or SMEs which are not making profits as the credit can effectively part-fund the R&D activity and act as a valuable source of cash-flow.

Notwithstanding these points, I am aware of proposals that a separate, simplified R&D tax credit be introduced for small companies. In view of the Exchequer cost of the relief such pro-

posals have to be carefully considered. In line with my Department's Tax Expenditure Guidelines, a full ex-post cost benefit analysis and evaluation of the R&D tax credit is scheduled to be carried out in 2019, and this will include consideration of proposals for alterations to the credit.

### **Insurance Costs**

24. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Finance the measures he has taken to meet and engage with insurance companies here regarding excessive premiums being charged to consumers, particularly in counties Cavan and Monaghan. [43997/18]

40. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Finance the measures taken to meet and engage with insurance companies here regarding excessive premiums being charged to consumers particularly in counties Carlow and Kilkenny. [40780/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 24 and 40 together.

The Minister for Finance is responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither he nor the Central Bank can interfere in the pricing of insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature, and are determined by insurance companies based on the risks they are willing to accept.

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

Indeed, the problem of rising motor insurance premiums was the main impetus for the establishment of the Cost of Insurance Working Group, which I chair. 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. The Working Group continued its work throughout 2017 and subsequently published the *Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance* in January 2018.

Stakeholder consultation formed the foundation upon which the Working Group's two Reports and their recommendations were developed. This consultation process undertaken by the Working Group involved a wide range of stakeholders representing the different voices within this sector, including representative bodies, the major individual motor insurance providers and interest groups. The impact of excessive premiums being charged to consumers from all counties across the country was a feature of this engagement process with industry.

In addition, my officials regularly raise specific issues affecting consumers across the country during their ongoing engagement with Insurance Ireland, including within a sub-group formed to implement relevant consumer-focused recommendations from the Motor Report.

Furthermore, I have separately met with representatives from insurance companies and other relevant stakeholders in relation to a number of issues and the problems resulting from high insurance premiums have been discussed during these engagements.

### **Betting Regulations**

25. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the uncertainty the increased betting duty has caused for small betting shops; and if his

attention has been further drawn to the fact that further taxation of online betting as opposed to retailers could have been more justified. [44236/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As announced in the Budget I have increased the rate of betting duty from 1 per cent to 2 per cent for all bookmakers and the rate of betting intermediary duty from 15% to 25% on the commission earned for betting intermediaries. These measures will take effect from 1 January 2019.

The Government's priority has been to level the playing field by extending the tax to remote bookmakers and betting exchanges. This was achieved in 2015, via the Betting Amendment Act, and I believe it is now timely to increase the rates of betting duty and betting intermediary duty. Some of you here will remember when betting tax was 20% of turnover. In fact, the last time the betting duty rate increased was in 1975. Furthermore, it is also worth pointing out that the standard bookmaker's licence fee, at €500 for a two year period, is modest and has not increased since 1992. I appreciate the concerns raised by the betting sector following the budget. However, this increase must be seen in the context of the rate being at an all-time low. It is also worth pointing out that VAT generally does not apply to betting services, also there are on-course exemptions from betting duty, and last but not least, the fact that there is a raised public consciousness on the social costs of problem gambling.

I acknowledge that the market has moved towards online betting and this has brought ongoing competitive challenges to smaller independent bookmakers. I acknowledge that advances in technology have challenged existing business models and have changed the structure of many markets, including the betting market. While I have sympathy for small bookmakers I cannot apply the increase to some bookmakers and not others.

### **Mortgage Interest Rates**

26. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the steps he is taking to reduce mortgage interest rates; his views on whether interest rates being charged here are reasonable; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44118/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The level of interest rates being charged in Ireland is an important issue for the Government and the charging of excessive rates on mortgages would not be acceptable. It is also important that Ireland has a healthy commercial banking system that is able to provide finance to customers and has an ability to withstand economic and financial market shocks. This means it must be in a position to generate sustainable profits over the long term to absorb credit losses over the credit cycle while still generating capital.

While we can see that Irish mortgage rates are higher relative to the eurozone average interest rate, there are a number of factors that impact on the level of interest rates. In Ireland, it is unfortunate that the mis-pricing of risks in historical lending continues to be a significant burden, as evidenced by the continued high level of non-performing loans, the prevalence of very low yielding tracker mortgages, and low net interest margins. There is also the issue of reduced competition with fewer banks in the system compared to a decade ago and the largest operators have a significant share of the mortgage market.

The residential mortgage market comprises, amongst other things, fixed interest rate mortgages, loan to value managed variable rate mortgages, trackers and restructured mortgages of various types, etc. Therefore, the residential mortgage market cannot be assessed by only looking at standard variable rate mortgages and any assessment would need to consider the large number of different factors that influence interest rate pricing.

In terms of what I can do as Minister, the European Central Bank sets the monetary policy for the Eurozone as a whole and the Central Bank of Ireland does not have a statutory role in prescribing the rates that mortgage lenders charge on their loans. I too have no statutory function in relation to the commercial decisions made by individual lending institutions, including decisions on the level of interest applicable on mortgage or other financial products offered by banks.

The Central Bank has carried out research, which showed the scope for borrowers to save money by switching mortgages and the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission has launched a mortgage switching tool for consumers that notes the findings of the Central Bank research of cases where borrowers could make savings. I strongly urge consumers to utilise these tools and information to enable them to available of better rates.

I firmly believe that increased competition and making it easier to switch ones mortgage, rather than administrative controls, remain the best way to ensure that retail lending rates are driven down in a sustainable way for the market as a whole but without giving rise to potentially undesirable consequences for the provision of new mortgage lending.

### **Ireland Strategic Investment Fund Investments**

27. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether consideration should be given to diverting €1.5 billion of excess funds in the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund to develop the State's infrastructure further to a report by his Department in advance of budget 2019. [43978/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** While published as part of the Budget 2019 documents on Tuesday 9 October last the Department's Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) Review was concluded in 2017. It was an important input into the Government's Decisions on the Rainy Day Fund and Home Building Finance Ireland (HBFi) as part of Budget 2018 last year; and on the reallocation of ISIF funds in July 2018 and the establishment of the Land Development Agency (LDA) taken in September 2018.

The Review proposed the reallocation of ISIF funds (i) to support the Rainy Day Fund, and (ii) to address infrastructure constraints; among a number of other recommendations. The recommendation to address infrastructure constraints set out that the investments should be off balance sheet, leverage in private sector co-investment, and be a decision for Government. The Government has identified the increase in housing supply as a key strategic objective that facilitates both off balance sheet treatment and private sector co-investment.

The final Government Decision to refocus ISIF's investment strategy reflected this review of the ISIF and also the wider challenges facing the State and included the following decisions:-

- Recycling the existing ISIF investment commitments of €4.4 billion and the allocation of €1 billion of ISIF funds to support ISIF's future role while continuing the double bottom line of a commercial and an economic return;
- Transferring €750 million to support the establishment of Home Building Finance Ireland as had been announced in Budget 2018;
- Transferring €1.5 billion of funds to seed the Rainy Day Fund, also as announced in Budget 2018; and
- Allocating a reserve of €1.25 billion of ISIF funds to stand ready to support the LDA in its

housing and other objectives. These funds are to be transferred to the LDA as they are needed to be used for off-balance sheet activities in line with the LDA's commercial mandate.

The Minister for Housing's establishment of the LDA will better coordinate State lands for regeneration and development and will support a continued increase in housing supply. The Government has already identified a number of sites through which the LDA can deliver approximately 3,000 homes and there are ongoing discussions with various State bodies in relation to land that could deliver another 7,000 homes.

### **Motor Insurance Costs**

28. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance his views on spiralling costs in the motor vehicle insurance industry and the negative impacts this is having on commercial and personal users of motor vehicles; and the steps he will take to address this. [38003/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Deputy should note at the outset that in my role as Minister for Finance I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I nor the Central Bank can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature and are determined by insurance companies based on the risks they are willing to accept.

I acknowledge that motor insurance costs have spiralled over the last number of years. This volatility in pricing in fact 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 2017 and makes 33 recommendations with 71 associated actions to be carried out in agreed timeframes, set out within an Action Plan. There is a commitment within the Report that the Working Group will prepare quarterly updates on its progress. The sixth such update was published on August 30th . It shows that of the 56 separate applicable deadlines within the Action Plan set to the end of Q2 2018, 44 relate to actions which have been completed. The seventh update will be published in the coming weeks.

I believe that the above work is having the desired impact on pricing. In this regard, it should be pointed out that the most recent CSO/CPI data (for September 2018) indicates that private motor insurance premiums have decreased by 21.5% since peaking in July 2016. There was a drop of 7.9% year-on-year in September 2018, the 18th consecutive month with a year-on-year reduction. I appreciate that these figures represent a broad average but I think it has to be recognised that the overall trend in the price of premiums currently is downward, which is welcome. Nevertheless, I am of course aware that some private and commercial drivers may still be seeing increases, and accept that more work needs to be done.

In conclusion, I am hopeful that with the continuing implementation of the recommendations of the Cost of Insurance Working Group, there will be a further positive impact on pricing over the next 12 months or so.

### **VAT Rate Application**

29. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Finance the discussions he has had in relation to the retention of the 9% VAT rate for the tourism industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37887/18]

35. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to raise the VAT rate

on hotel rooms; and his views on changing VAT rates in the tourism sector. [37796/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 29 and 35 together.

With effect from 1 January 2019, services and goods currently applying at the second reduced VAT rate of 9% will increase to 13.5%, with the exception of newspapers and periodicals and sporting facilities. The VAT rate applying to catering and restaurant supplies, tourist accommodation, cinemas, theatres, museums, historic houses, open farms, amusement parks, hairdressing and horses and greyhounds will increase from 9% to 13.5%.

The 9% VAT rate was introduced as part of the Jobs Initiative from July 2011 to December 2013 and was aimed at boosting tourism and the creation of additional jobs in that sector. The rate was designed to be temporary and the Programme for Partnership Government commitment to maintaining the 9% VAT rate was dependent on prices remaining competitive in the sector.

The recently published economic review of the 9% VAT rate by my Department has shown that there is a decline in competitiveness in the sector and that if the 9% rate were to be increased, this would likely not materially impact demand or employment in the sector. The review further finds that tourism expenditure is more sensitive to income growth and the economic cycle than price changes, which reduces the relevance of the VAT rate applying to the sector. In the context of this analysis, it has been decided to increase the VAT rate to 13.5% for the majority of goods and services currently applying at the 9% rate.

As part of the Budgetary process all views are taken into consideration when deciding on tax policy. With regard to the 9% VAT rate discussions took place with a number of industry representatives who raised the issue of the VAT rate on tourism, including the Irish Hotels Federation, the Irish Tourism Industry Confederation, the Irish Business and Employers Confederation, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and Social Justice Ireland.

### **Legislative Measures**

30. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will report on the proposed structure and aims of the rainy day fund; when the promised national surplus (reserve fund for exceptional contingencies) Bill will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44143/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am pleased to inform the Deputy that Government on Tuesday approved the text of the National Surplus (Reserve Fund for Exceptional Contingencies) Bill 2018, which will now be published in the coming days. This Bill will provide the legislative underpinning for the Rainy Day Fund, which will be formally known as the National Surplus (Exceptional Contingencies) Reserve Fund.

The Fund is intended to increase the resilience of the economy to external economic shocks by providing a highly liquid fund that can be deployed rapidly in the event of a severe economic downturn. The intention is that the Fund can support economic activity, and mitigate the effects of a severe economic shock.

I look forward to discussing and debating the contents of the Bill at Second Stage in the coming weeks.

## Credit Union Advisory Committee

31. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Finance the process and details of his most recent appointments to the Credit Union Advisory Committee; the persons nominated to fill the vacancies on the committee; when the committee is scheduled to next report to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43970/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Credit Union Advisory Committee (CUAC) is a committee established under section 180 of the Credit Union Act 1997. The function of the CUAC is to advise the Minister for Finance and such other persons as I think fit, in relation to the improvement of the management of Credit Unions, the protection of the interests of members and creditors of credit unions and other matters relating to credit unions.

The legislation provides that every person appointed to the CUAC shall be chosen by the Minister for Finance. Under section 180(3) of the 1997 Act, on 25 September, 2018 I appointed four persons to the CUAC for three years to 31 August 2021.

In terms of the process, an advertisement, including an information booklet, was posted on *www.stateboards.ie* in May of this year seeking expressions of interest for appointment of new members to the CUAC. 36 expressions of interest were received from the Public Appointments Service. In addition to this the Department also had an additional 12 expressions of interest from the previous recruitment process in 2017. In total 48 expressions of interest were considered in the process.

A shortlisting exercise was undertaken to assist in selecting candidates for further consideration, based on requirements as outlined in the advertisement. The shortlisting exercise involved assessing each candidate (based on the information provided) on the following;

- Experience/expertise relevant to credit unions;
- Financial and business expertise;
- Experience of credit union restructuring; and
- Communication and relationship building skills.

Following this exercise 12 candidates were selected to attend an interview conducted by officials from my Department. In order to maintain diversity in the selection process, the interview board included a mix in terms of gender and perspectives. Following the interview process four candidates were selected for appointment to the CUAC. On 25 September, I issued a press release appointing the following new members to the CUAC:

1. Lorraine Corcoran, Director, Afanite
2. Olive McCarthy, Senior Lecturer in University College Cork (UCC)
3. Seamus Newcombe, Chief Executive, Payac Services CLG
4. Diarmaid O’Keeffe, Head of Audit, EisenAmper Ireland

The new members are in addition to two existing members of CUAC, both credit union managers, who have good credit union management and restructuring experience. The new CUAC now consists of six members and provide a good balance with backgrounds in credit union management, restructuring, academia, accounting and financial experience.

I am satisfied that each appointed member of the CUAC has the requisite experience and

knowledge of credit union matters and will make a valuable contribution towards dealing with the challenges facing the sector at this important time for the Irish credit union movement.

The new committee met for the first time on 15 October 2018. The Committee is currently considering an indicative work plan for the next few years and will report to me on progress when this is in place.

### **Credit Union Services**

32. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the progress that has been made in putting in place a strategy for the development of growth for credit unions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44217/18]

58. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to develop a new strategy for the growth and development of the credit union sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44116/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 32 and 58 together.

The Government has a clear policy to support the strategic growth and development of credit unions delivering the comprehensive recommendations set out in the Commission on Credit Unions Report and the Credit Union Advisory Committee (CUAC) report in 2016, both of which involved extensive stakeholder engagement. CUAC remains an important advisor to me on strategic issues facing the sector, and the safety of members' savings and the security of the credit union sector as a whole are priorities for this Government.

Since 2011 my Department has put in place a number of measures to assist the credit union sector. These measures include:

- establishment of the Commission on Credit Unions in 2011;
- publication of the Credit Union and Co-operation with Overseas Regulators Act 2012;
- establishment of the Credit Union Restructuring Board, ReBo, which oversaw 82 restructuring projects involving 156 credit unions during its lifetime: these newly merged credit unions are now better positioned to harness the efficiencies of their increased scale to prudently develop products and services that their members are looking for now, and into the future;
- availability of €250 million for voluntary restructuring of credit unions facilitated by ReBo;
- establishment of a stabilisation levy to support credit unions that are undercapitalised but are otherwise viable; and
- establishment of a Resolution Fund for the resolution of financial instability in, or an imminent serious threat to the financial stability of, a Credit Union, as well as the provision of €250 million in 2011 to meet resolution costs anticipated at the time.

More recently, on the basis of a CUAC recommendation, an Implementation Group was established to oversee and monitor the implementation of the CUAC Report's recommendations. The group, which meets monthly, is chaired by my Department and consists of one member from each of the representative bodies, one member from the CUAC and a member from the Central Bank. This group is an important forum for key stakeholders in the Credit Union Sector and has submitted papers on long-term lending and consultation and engagement to the Central

Bank. The Implementation Group is expected to issue a final report to me in December 2018.

In addition, following consultation with the Credit Union sector, revised regulations for credit unions commenced on 1 March 2018 which make changes to the investment and liquidity requirements and allow for greater diversification of investment income, including provision for up to c. €700 million investment in Tier 3 Approved Housing Bodies via a regulated vehicle.

While there are challenges to returns arising from the low yield environment and low loan to asset ratios, the sector continues to show signs of improvement reflected in growth in new lending, delivering c 35% of all unsecured consumer lending in 2017, a decrease in the level of reported arrears and an increase in reserves. Total assets have increased consistently for many years and currently stand at approximately €17.5 billion.

The Central Bank is due to publish a Consultation Paper in Q4 2018, as part of its review of the current long term lending limits for Credit Unions which may facilitate improvement in loan to asset ratios.

Business model development is another challenge facing the sector and to this end the Central Bank has set up a dedicated Business Model Unit within the Registrar of Credit Unions and has developed initiatives such as the CEO forum to address key constraints to, and enablers for, business model development. Business model development is also a focus of the CUAC, and I have specifically requested the committee to review barriers to and supports for collaborative efforts as well as SME lending, linking with the outcomes of the Local Public Banking report.

This Government recognises the important role of credit unions as a volunteer co-operative movement and its priorities remain the protection of members' savings, the financial stability of credit unions and the sector overall. The Government is determined to continue to support a strengthened and growing credit union movement. Credit unions are member owned and it is these members, with support from their representative bodies, who ultimately are responsible for setting and implementing their own individual strategic plans, with appropriate support from Government, which reflect the diverse nature of credit unions be they urban or rural, large or small, industrial or community.

### **Banking Sector**

33. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of loan sales by State backed banks he and his predecessor have been notified of and not raised an objection to since February 2016; the value of these sales; and the number of principal dwelling houses included. [44220/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Deputy will be aware that I, in my role as Minister for Finance, cannot stop loan sales, even by the banks in which the State has a shareholding. The same stipulation applied to my predecessor. Decisions relating to loan sales, including the composition of loans included, are the responsibility of the Board and management of the banks which must be run on an independent and commercial basis. The banks' independence is protected by Relationship Frameworks which are legally binding documents which the Minister cannot change unilaterally. These frameworks, which are publicly available, were insisted upon by the European Commission to protect competition in the Irish market.

I can confirm that the banks consulted with the Minister for Finance on the following loan sales during the period specified by the Deputy:

AIB:

**ROI Sales:**

- Project Cypress: Value: c. €0.3bn pre-provision balance sheet amount. The portfolio did not include principle dwelling houses;

- Project Redwood: Value c. €1.1bn pre-provision balance sheet amount. The portfolio did not include principle dwelling houses.

**UK Sales:**

- Project Rosetta: Value: c. £0.1bn pre-provision balance sheet amount. The portfolio did not include principle dwelling houses;

- Project Pine: Value c. £0.3bn pre-provision balance sheet amount. The portfolio did not include principle dwelling houses

**PTSB:**

- October 2016 – Sale of Isle of Man Performing UK residential mortgages originated in the Isle of Man with a gross value of c. £212m. No Irish PDH were included.

- November 2016 – Sale of Landsdowne Loan Book UK residential mortgages (pre-dominantly Buy-To-Let) originated in the UK with a gross value of c. UK£2.3bn. No Irish PDH were included

- July 2018 – Sale of Irish non-performing loans (Project Glas) with a gross value of c. €2.1bn and including 7,400 Irish PDH.

**Illicit Trade in Fuel and Tobacco Products**

34. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated loss on an annual basis due to illicit trade in fuel, alcohol and tobacco products from Northern Ireland and elsewhere; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44173/18]

57. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to implement additional measures to counteract cross-Border smuggling and illicit trade in fuel, alcohol and tobacco products; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44172/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 34 and 57 together.

The threat that fuel fraud, the illicit alcohol and illicit tobacco trades pose to legitimate business, to consumers and the Exchequer is clear and I am assured by Revenue that combatting such activity and criminality continues to be a priority for them.

Steps taken by Revenue to combat the illegal fuel trade include the introduction of stringent new supply chain controls and reporting requirements and a rigorous programme of enforcement action. In addition, Revenue in conjunction with the UK Revenue and Customs undertook a joint initiative to introduce a new marker for use in marked fuels, which came into operation from April 2015.

The industry view is that the action taken has been successful in curtailing fuel fraud. I am advised also that Revenue conducted random National Sampling Programmes in 2016 and 2017 to assess the extent of fuel laundering. The programmes each involved nearly one in ten of circa 2,500 holders of auto fuel trader licences and tests of diesel samples taken from the

randomly selected traders found no evidence of the new marker in any of them. The results of these sampling are a clear indication that Revenue's actions have resulted in the near elimination of the selling of laundered products at retail level. A further sampling programme, in 2018, was expanded to include hauliers and other businesses in the transport sector. Analysis from the results of this programme gave rise to three positive detections and investigation towards prosecution is now underway.

Illicit trade in alcohol can occur through the diversion of untaxed alcohol on to the market, through the production of counterfeit alcohol and through smuggling from countries with lower taxes. While there has been little evidence of large-scale illegal activity, as indicated by the low value of seizures in 2017 (€0.91million) when set against the overall value of the alcohol market (€6.1billion), Revenue remains vigilant and takes appropriate action where illicit activity is detected. This action is informed by, inter alia, intelligence on criminal activity and risk-based examination of commercial traffic and stock in retail premises. Key results of this activity include the seizure of almost 200,000 litres of beer, believed to be associated with diversion fraud since September 2017, the uncovering in November 2017 of a large-scale counterfeit vodka production plant processing highly dangerous denatured industrial alcohol and the detention in June 2018 at Dublin Port of a container carrying a quantity of raw alcohol with the capacity to produce over 50,000 litres of illicit alcohol.

*Question No. 35 answered with Question No. 29.*

### **Social and Affordable Housing Provision**

36. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Finance the progress he is making with the NTMA to establish a funding vehicle capable of facilitating off-balance sheet investment in delivering social and private housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43965/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** In line with "*Rebuilding Ireland*" commitments, the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) and a number of key Government Departments examined the feasibility of establishing a funding vehicle, in conjunction with the private sector to facilitate investment in social and affordable housing.

The objective was to create an 'off-balance sheet' mechanism which could facilitate investment additional to that being provided directly by the State and which would not impact on the General Government Balance. The investment was to take the form of either funding or forward purchasing the delivery of new mixed-tenure residential developments.

While, ISIF has made progress in conjunction with the other stakeholders in the public and private sectors in developing the off balance sheet model, as well as other potential social housing investment opportunities, ultimately it was not possible to overcome the considerable hurdles such as commerciality and balance sheet treatment.

Despite this and as part of Rebuilding Ireland the potential off balance sheet model has now been superseded by the Enhanced Long-Term Social Housing Leasing Scheme launched on 31 January 2018.

The NTMA, as the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA), acted as financial advisor to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in respect of the development of this long-term leasing model, however the NTMA has no role in relation to implementation of the scheme.

My colleague the Minister for Housing informs me that the Enhanced Long Term Social

Housing Leasing Scheme is one of a suite of measures introduced under Pillar 2 of “Rebuilding Ireland: An Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness” aimed at private investment in order to deliver social housing at scale.

The scheme, which is managed by the Housing Agency, has a principal objective of encouraging increased private investment in social housing while ensuring that the up-front capital cost is off-balance sheet.

### Insurance Costs

37. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the key recommendations of the cost of insurance working group, including the report on employer and public liability, he plans to implement in the next six months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44117/18]

**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 Sixth Quarterly Update published in August shows that 58 of the 71 deadlines placed on actions across the two reports to date have been completed. It is envisaged that the next quarterly *Progress Update* will be completed by the end of October and will be ready for publication on the Department of Finance website shortly after. A particular focus will be placed upon the 7 actions across the two Reports with Q3 2018 deadlines, including the actions from the *Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance*.

Over the next 6 months, the key recommendations addressed to my Department, which I am hopeful will be implemented are the establishment of the National Claims Information Database, subject to approval by the Oireachtas and the production of further key information reports on motor insurance claims and employer and public liability insurance claims. In addition, I will review the outcome of the CSO feasibility study on collecting price information on the cost of insurance to business.

With regard to the wider recommendations in both reports, I am of course working with my colleagues in Government, in particular the Minister’s for Justice and Equality, to whom a significant proportion of the recommendations in both reports are addressed to. In this regard, it is proposed to use the National Claims Information Database legislation to make important changes to sections 8 and 14 of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004.

Another, key area where I hope significant progress will be made is on the implementation of the recommendations of the recently published second report of the Personal Injuries Com-

mission report - in particular the recommendation that this country follows the example of judicial intervention which has occurred in Northern Ireland and in the UK, namely the introduction of Judicial Guidelines for judges in relation to damages for personal injury claims.

Finally, the Deputy should note that the implementation of the Cost of Insurance Working Group's recommendations remain a priority for this Government. In that context, I, and Minister of State D'Arcy, will continue to work closely with colleagues in Government, as well as other stakeholders, to ensure that the Working Group's recommendations are implemented in a satisfactory manner and I remain hopeful that there will be a further positive impact on pricing over the next 12 months or so over and above the 21.5% fall which has taken place since July 2016.

### **Ministerial Meetings**

38. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if he will report on his recent meetings with the principals of companies (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43977/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As the Deputy will be aware, I meet with a wide range of public and private representative bodies and companies from time to time, to discuss relevant developments and matters of interest. This engagement with stakeholders is a legitimate and important part of the development of public policy.

The particular meetings to which the Deputy refers, that I and officials in my Department attended, included developments in EU and international tax, in particular the digital tax agenda and the recovery of the alleged state aid.

### **Life Insurance Policies**

39. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding life assurance providers rejecting applications based on a mental health condition from which a person has since recovered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40656/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I nor the Central Bank of Ireland can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature, and are determined by insurance companies based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept. This position is reinforced by the EU framework for insurance which expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products. Consequently, I am not in a position to direct insurance companies as to the pricing level that they should apply to particular categories of individuals, nor am I in a position to direct them to provide cover to such individuals.

It is my understanding that insurers use a combination of rating factors in making their individual decisions on whether to offer life assurance cover and what terms to apply. These factors can include age, health, family medical history, occupation and lifestyle. In addition, these may be determined or linked to the length of time with which such a policy may last. Furthermore, my understanding is that insurers do not all use the same combination of rating factors, and as a result prices and availability of cover varies across the market, and that they will price in accordance with their own past claims experience.

In response to a broadly similar question on 3 October 2018, my officials sought the views of Insurance Ireland. They advised that applicants for any type of life assurance will be asked on the application form detailed health questions and that insurers may request one or more of the following in addition: a report from the applicant's GP; an independent medical examination; or other medical tests. On the basis of the information provided, the application is considered individually and the decision on whether to offer cover and on what terms depends on the facts of that particular case.

Finally, I would note that Insurance Ireland operates a free Insurance Information Service for those who have queries, complaints or difficulties in relation to obtaining insurance. Insurance Ireland can be contacted at [feedback@insuranceireland.eu](mailto:feedback@insuranceireland.eu) or 01-6761914.

*Question No. 40 answered with Question No. 24.*

### **Tax Code**

41. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether the PAYE modernisation scheme will place an unfair burden on small firms and businesses that cannot afford to have a dedicated member of staff to deal with wages on a weekly basis to satisfy the terms of the new scheme and avoid the penalties that will follow from non-compliance with the new system. [42554/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The move to real-time reporting is the most significant change to the PAYE system since its introduction more than fifty years ago. The modernisation programme will bring improved accuracy and transparency for all stakeholders, including employers, employees and Revenue, while also significantly streamlining the entire administration process. To that end, the introduction of PAYE Modernisation by Revenue is both much needed and very welcome.

Since October 2016, when the project was launched, Revenue has worked extensively with all relevant stakeholders in a co-design approach, to ensure the new PAYE Modernisation reporting system reduces the administrative burden on employers to the greatest extent possible. For example, one of Revenue's key design principles is that employer reporting should be seamlessly integrated into the business' payroll process. This will minimise the administrative burden on employers and allow their reporting obligations to Revenue to become a by-product of their payroll operation. In addition, the project will lead to the abolition of the current employer reporting obligations via P30, P35, P45, P46 and P60 forms. Revenue has advised me that employers have welcomed the abolition of these forms and the consequential reduction in the administrative burden.

All employers are currently obliged to calculate and make the correct statutory deductions from their employees' salary payments each time they pay. A significant number of employers, including small and medium employers, use payroll software to run their payroll and that will still be the case when PAYE Modernisation goes live on 1 January 2019. I am aware that Revenue has engaged extensively with the payroll software industry to ensure, as far as possible, that the necessary changes to their systems will be ready on time. Consequently, the processes for these employers before and after 1 January 2019 will be broadly similar.

For employers who do not use payroll software, Revenue is providing an easy-to-use process within the Revenue Online Service (ROS) to capture payroll data for each employee. The process includes data screens that the employer will be obliged to complete for each employee every time a pay-run is completed (normally weekly, fortnightly or monthly). The burden as-

sociated with this work will be offset to an extent by the abolition of the previously mentioned forms that operate under the current system. It is also very important to note that there is no change to current PAYE payment dates under the Modernisation programme.

I know that Revenue is very conscious that some employers may experience difficulties in the early phases of PAYE Modernisation and has assured me that it will make every effort to assist where required. For example, the Revenue Employer Helpdesk will have significant additional resources available to it to meet customer demand and officials will be available to visit employers should the need arise. Revenue has also assured me that it is not the intention to impose sanctions such as interest and penalties during the early transitional months where employers do their best to comply. However, Revenue always reserves the right to impose sanctions where there is clear non-engagement with the law.

Finally, while it is a matter for each employer to consider the impact that PAYE Modernisation will have on payroll arrangements and to put steps in place to ensure compliance with the new requirements, I would strongly encourage that they pro-actively engage with the change-over. I would particularly recommend that they review the very detailed PAYE Modernisation material that is available on the Revenue website at [www.revenue.ie/pmod174](http://www.revenue.ie/pmod174) and that they contact the Revenue Employer Helpdesk at telephone number 01-7383638 if they have any queries or require any clarifications. I would also recommend that employers consult their payroll software providers as a priority to ensure the payroll systems are compatible with the requirements for PAYE Modernisation.

## NAMA Operations

42. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Finance his plans in relation to NAMA and the contribution it could make to delivering public and affordable housing in view of the housing emergency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44227/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** NAMA has a well-established overriding commercial mandate to recoup the best return for the Irish taxpayer. However, that does not mean that NAMA does not carry out activities, such as facilitating the delivery of residential and social housing, which are entirely consistent with its existing purpose and objectives.

NAMA is already making a significant contribution to the supply of housing within the State where it is in a position to do so. NAMA's residential funding programme, has delivered over 8,000 new residential units since it was announced in 2014 and is committed to facilitating the delivery of 20,000 residential units by 2020. In addition, NAMA has an established policy of identifying to Local Authorities and approved housing bodies, properties within its portfolio which may be suitable for social housing. As of end-of-June 2018, 6,984 such properties have been identified, with demand confirmed for 2,717 and 2,474 delivered or committed. Part of this delivery has been through NAMA's innovative National Asset Residential Property Services (NARPS) model, which has purchased over 1,300 properties from NAMA debtors and leased them on for social housing.

It is important to recognise that NAMA does not own property, rather, NAMA owns loans secured by property which is owned by its debtors. NAMA, as a lender, cannot force a borrower to take action which would reduce his or her repayment capacity, such as providing a property for social or public housing where that is not the financially optimal course of action for the debtor. To do so would compromise a borrower's capacity to repay his or her debts to NAMA and would constitute a direct breach of the borrower's property rights, protected under Article 43 of the Constitution. I am advised that directing NAMA to act counter to these obligations is

not one lawfully open to me in all the current circumstances.

Furthermore, there would be many legislative, balance sheet and State aid implications in repurposing NAMA away from its existing objectives. NAMA was established with a very specific legal mandate, which was approved by the European Commission in 2010. It is important that NAMA's role is preserved and that it completes its work in line with its original mandate.

*Question No. 43 answered with Question No. 12.*

### **Fuel Rebate Scheme**

44. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to rework the diesel rebate scheme for hauliers in view of the industry's exposure to Brexit. [44218/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am well aware of the threat Brexit poses to every sector of the economy, including the haulage industry. This week I met with the Irish Road Haulage Association and discussed the implications of Brexit. I can confirm that I will continue to meet with industry and listen to their concerns.

Co-ordination of the whole-of-Government response to Brexit is being taken forward through the cross-Departmental co-ordination structures chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

This planning provides baseline scenarios for the impact of Brexit across all sectors. This approach is also enabling the modelling of potential responses under different scenarios, such as one where a withdrawal agreement is concluded and where a Free Trade Agreement is the basis for the future relationship between the EU and the UK. My Department is actively engaged in this planning work which has intensified in recent months and is well advanced.

The Government has been clear that it wants the closest possible relationship between the EU and the UK, including on trade, in order to minimise the impact on our trade and economy. The Government is working hard with the EU Taskforce and our EU partners to ensure that an agreement between the EU and the UK is reached.

### **European Investment Bank Loans**

45. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance if it is possible in an emergency situation to avail of a low interest EU loan to facilitate an immediate onsite start of sufficient houses to alleviate the most serious aspects and locations of the housing shortage (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44175/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I assume that a "low interest EU Loan" refers to loans provided by the European Investment Bank (EIB), the bank of the European Union which is owned by the EU Member States.

Every advanced economy borrows from the international capital markets to finance its obligations and the services which its citizens require. In Ireland, the recently published Department of Finance Annual Report on Public Debt has identified that, as an overhang from the global financial crisis, outstanding public debt amounts to €42,000 for every Irish resident or a Gross National Debt of circa €215 billion as at the end of September 2018. This level is the third highest among the world's advanced economies. Given our significant debt legacy and in an increasingly unpredictable external environment, high levels of public indebtedness increase

the vulnerability of the Irish economy to possible economic shocks. As part of a proactive and prudent strategy, the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA), as the Body responsible for managing Ireland's National Debt, has "locked-in" a substantial portion of our debt at the relatively low interest rates which have prevailed in recent years and also at longer maturities. By doing this, Ireland's risk of interest rate shock exposure is reduced. It also has to be borne in mind that reducing the level of public debt and preventing the build-up of additional debt are also extremely important policy priorities. Therefore, the NTMA in coordination with the Department of Finance publishes a target range for Ireland's planned borrowing annually, with auction schedules then released on a quarterly basis.

Both my Department and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government continue to engage with the EIB on the issue of support for the social and affordable housing sector. In fact, the EIB has been actively supporting Ireland in this regard through inter-mediated loans to the Housing Finance Agency. These long-term loans are made available to approved housing bodies and local authorities at competitive rates for the development of special and affordable housing. In the last five years the EIB has provided €350 million for such investment in cooperation with the Housing Finance Agency.

I am also aware that my colleague, the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government and senior government officials visited the headquarters of the EIB earlier this year to discuss future social and affordable housing investment in Ireland, and to explore ways to broaden EIB support for new social housing investment in Ireland.

In July 2018, a pilot project for the development of cost rental affordable housing in Inchicore was announced. I understand that discussions between the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the EIB are ongoing with regard to financing options for this project. I am also aware that the Bank expects to support the first social housing investment under a dedicated PPP financing structure which will see 500 social homes built on six sites across the greater Dublin area.

### **Tracker Mortgage Examination**

46. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the tracker mortgage scandal; the measures being put in place for those in arrears after being wrongly removed from tracker mortgages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43996/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Central Bank's Tracker Examination is focused on ensuring that lenders provide fair outcomes for all customers impacted by tracker related failings. The Examination requires all lenders, which offered tracker interest rate mortgages to their customers, to review all mortgage accounts, including accounts in arrears, to identify any tracker related failings both from a contractual and transparency perspective.

As part of the Examination framework, where customer detriment has been identified, the Central Bank has clearly articulated its expectations of lenders to provide appropriate redress and compensation to all impacted customers in line with prescribed Principles for Redress, including:

2.1. Redress will result in impacted customers being returned to the position that they would have been in had the relevant issue not arisen.

2.2. Compensation is to be reasonable and must reflect the detriment involved arising from and/or associated with being on an incorrect rate (such compensation to reflect the specific circumstances of each impacted customer).

Redress and compensation paid to customers should result in the arrears on any account being amended to take account of the non-application of the appropriate tracker rate.

An important part of the Examination Framework is a requirement for lenders to establish independent Appeals Panels, specifically to deal with customers who are not satisfied with any aspect of the redress and compensation offers that they receive from lenders.

In terms of the current status of the Examination, at the meeting of Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach on 4 October last, the Central Bank confirmed that, as of end August, lenders had identified circa 38,400 affected customers (including cases resolved before the commencement of the industry wide Examination) and had paid €580 million in redress and compensation.

The redress and compensation phases of the Examination are now significantly advanced. Some 93 percent of affected customer accounts already identified and verified had received offers of redress and compensation by August 31st. The Central Bank's supervisory review of conduct of the Examination is also significantly advanced, but will not conclude until lenders complete remaining work.

The Government continues to support the Central Bank in its efforts to complete the Tracker Mortgage Examination as quickly as possible and to see all impacted tracker customers receive appropriate redress and compensation.

### Property Tax Review

47. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Finance if the review of the local property tax announced in 2018 is complete; the main recommendations of the review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43966/18]

54. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance his plans for household property tax; when the review group's report will be available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44142/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 47 and 54 together.

The report of the review of the LPT is currently being finalised in conjunction with the Departments of the Taoiseach, Public Expenditure and Reform, Housing Planning and Local Government, and the Office of the Revenue Commissioners. I will of course, carefully consider the conclusions and recommendations of the report when it is presented to me. The report will also be published.

The purpose of the review is to inform me in relation to any actions I may recommend to Government concerning the LPT having regard to, *inter alia*, the residential property revaluation date which will arise on 1st November 2019. Any material changes would, of course, require legislation in order to enable the Revenue Commissioners to have the necessary administrative and technical arrangements in place in relation to LPT liabilities for 2020 and beyond.

### Motor Insurance Regulation

48. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Finance the reason commercial drivers such as taxi drivers are unable to buy motor insurance from insurance companies based

in other EU states in view of the free movement of goods and services across the EU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44229/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** At the outset, I would like to clarify that it is possible for all motorists including commercial drivers such as taxi drivers to buy insurance from insurers authorised in other EU states as part of the Single Market. This can be done through such insurers either:

- establishing a branch operation in the host country and thus conducting business on a ‘freedom of establishment’ (FOE) basis; or
- writing business from the home country (i.e. where authorised) into the host country on a ‘freedom of services’ (FOS) basis.

However, in order to conduct business in this fashion, the insurer is required to meet certain obligations in the host member state, such as becoming a member of the national bureau and the national guarantee fund. In Ireland, the relevant Bureau is the Motor Insurers’ Bureau of Ireland (MIBI). These are important requirements as the MIBI is tasked with meeting the EU requirement of compensating victims of accidents caused by uninsured and unidentified vehicles. What this means therefore is that it is not possible to take out insurance with an insurer which is not operating in the Irish market as such companies will be members only of their own national bureau.

In addition to the above, an important point to note is that an insurer in considering whether it wants to take on Irish risk business will look at a wide range of factors including the award levels, the legal system, the general claims culture etc. Therefore ultimately, even if we do get a more efficient and accessible EU insurance market, there can be no guarantees that insurers in other jurisdictions will automatically be willing to take on Irish risk.

Consequently, the key to addressing this problem is to make Ireland more attractive to new entrants. In this regard, I believe the implementation of the second Personal Injuries Commission Report is an important part of this process in particular its main recommendation that this country follows the example of judicial intervention which has occurred in Northern Ireland and in the UK, namely the introduction of Judicial Guidelines for personal injury awards.

## **Financial Services Sector**

49. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will report on the study being carried out by a company (details supplied) into pay across the financial sector; his views on performance related salaries in banks and other financial institutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44141/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Deputies will be aware that Government policy on banking remuneration has remained unchanged since the financial crisis. Extensive restrictions are in place and these are not simply confined to a handful of senior bankers whose pay is restricted by the €500,000 pay cap (excluding a standard pension contribution). These affect c.23,000 workers across the three banks in which the State has a shareholding. The Policy dictates that variable pay including bonuses and any other fringe benefits including the likes of health insurance and childcare cannot be paid to any staff members from the most junior lowest paid staff to the most senior ranks.

A new regulatory framework has been put in place since the financial crisis across the EU, the economy has returned to near full employment, the remaining banks are profitable again

– and in the case of AIB and BOI sustainably so. The State remains the largest shareholder in AIB, BOI & PTSB but following the successful IPO of AIB in June 2017 all three banks are also now on an equal footing with listings on the main market of the Irish and London stock exchanges. This provides a platform for the State to recover its investment in the banks over time.

The skill set required in the banking sector is evolving with the greatest demand for staff now in areas such as the digital economy, risk management, legal and compliance. These skills are in demand right across the economy and so the banks are competing for this talent against companies who have more flexible and attractive remuneration structures. Brexit has only made this problem more acute.

In the senior ranks of the banks the substantial disparity in pay levels versus other Irish listed companies or peer banks in Europe is stark and introduces an obvious retention risk. I also need to be advised if this retention risk and a lack of alignment between the interests of executives and shareholders, undermines the Government's objective of recovering the State's full investment in the banks.

My department held a full open EU public procurement to select a suitably qualified external consultant to assist the Department of Finance in completing this review of Government policy. On 3 October the specialist advisory division of international firm Korn Ferry were appointed.

My officials have met with Korn Ferry and already begun a consultation process with the banks, the Financial Services Union as well as a range of investors. I expect the Department to complete the review before the end of the year and it will be published in Q1 2019.

It is important that we do not prejudge the outcome of the review, It is also important to note irrespective of the outcome and what advice is given on the reintroduction of variable pay or bonuses, the 'super tax', which sees 89% of bonuses being paid back to the State will remain in place via the Finance Act 2011. The power to alter that remains exclusively in the hands of the Oireachtas.

### **NAMA Social Housing Provision**

**50. Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to use the surplus generated from winding down NAMA to build housing. [44209/18]

**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 its 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, which is expected to be 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. 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.

In the meantime NAMA is making a significant contribution to the supply of housing within the State where it is in a position to do so. NAMA's residential funding programme is expected to fund the completion of 20,000 residential units by the end of 2020. NAMA is on track to meet this target with over 8,000 completed as of 16 October 2018. In addition, NAMA has an established policy of identifying to Local Authorities and approved housing bodies, properties within its portfolio which may be suitable for social housing. To date 6,984 such properties have been identified, with demand confirmed for 2,717 and 2,474 delivered or committed. Part of this delivery has been through NAMA's innovative National Asset Residential Property Services (NARPS) model, which has purchased over 1,300 properties from NAMA debtors and leased them on for social housing.

### EU Meetings

51. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Finance if he will report on his engagement with his European counterparts regarding the proposed digital tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43971/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Deputy will be aware that on 21 March 2018 the European Commission published two proposed Directives which seek to tax certain digital activities differently within the EU.

The first, an 'interim' solution for a 3% levy on turnover from certain digital service activities. 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 that company has no physical presence there.

The interim proposal is being debated among Member States – both at technical and political level. Most recently, it was discussed at the informal ECOFIN on 8 September 2018. I welcomed the opportunity to discuss the proposal with my EU counterparts and there was a healthy debate. While it is clear that there is widespread preference for a global solution, Ministers remain divided on the need for interim EU measures. Technical discussions on the proposal are also ongoing.

I expect that digital tax will be discussed again at the next Ecofin meeting in November and, given my concerns in relation to these proposals, I will be discussing the issue with my counterparts in other Member States over the coming weeks in advance of, and at, the Ecofin discussions.

Ireland continues to actively engage on this matter with our fellow Member States and at OECD level to meet the challenges and opportunities that arise from the digitisation of the economy.

*Question No. 52 answered with Question No. 19.*

### Motor Insurance Claims

53. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the liquidation of a company (details supplied); when the Insurance (Amendment) Act 2018 will be fully enacted; when he expects the next payment to take place; when he expects all claimants involved in the company will receive compensation in full; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44120/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Setanta Insurance was placed into liquidation by the Malta Financial Services Authority on 30 April 2014. As it was a Maltese incorporated company, the liquidation is being carried out under Maltese law. The Deputy will be aware that the Insurance (Amendment) Act 2018 (Act 21 of 2018) was signed into law in July this year. The Act, inter alia, provides for the payment of 100% of the compensation due to Setanta third party personal injury motor insurance claimants including the additional 35% to those who have settled their claims and have already received compensation of 65% of their claim.

The Act also provides for revised arrangements for the on-going administration of the Insurance Compensation Fund, including for the relevant applications to the President of the High Court. These revised arrangements have now been put in place.

I signed the Insurance (Amendment) Act 2018 (Commencement) (Part 4) Order 2018, which enacts Part 4 of the Act, on 13 September. This section of the Act establishes the new Motor Insurers Insolvency Compensation Fund. This was the final part of the Act left to be enacted, and will come into force on 1 December 2018.

Currently, no date has yet been fixed for the presentation of next tranche of payments to the High Court. However, I am informed by the State Claims Agency that much of the preparatory work has been completed, and while it was originally hoped that a court date could be arranged for the end of October, at this stage it may slip into the first half of November.

The Agency has advised that the next tranche will comprise (a) newly settled claims requiring 100% payment, (b) all those cases where 65% was previously paid and where the balance of 35% is due and (c) a number of third party legal costs payments. In total, it is expected that next tranche of claims will comprise in the region of 1,500 separate payments with a value of approximately €21million.

Finally, it should be noted that the process of settling claims is still ongoing and is subject in some cases to court procedures. The liquidator of Setanta estimates that the process of settling the vast majority of outstanding claims should be completed by end-2019.

*Question No. 54 answered with Question No. 47.*

### **Departmental Schemes**

55. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance the number of companies and employees that availed of the key employee engagement programme to date in 2018; the impact he expects to result from his proposed changes to the scheme in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44144/18]

101. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Finance the changes he plans to make to increase the take-up by SMEs in the employment investment incentive scheme and the key employee engagement programme. [44495/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 55

and 101 together.

The Key Employee Engagement Programme, KEEP, came into effect on 1 January this year to help SMEs to attract and retain employees in our highly competitive labour market. I am advised by Revenue that details of the costs and numbers availing of this programme will only be available once the relevant employer tax returns for 2018 have been received and processed. The first KEEP return is due on 31 March 2019.

Over the past year I have become aware that take-up has been less than expected and I decided to take early action in Budget 2019.

In my recent Budget speech, I announced my intention to increase the ceiling on the maximum annual market value of share options that may be granted to 100% of salary (i.e. to double the ratio of share options to salary). I will also be replacing the three-year limit with a lifetime limit and increasing the overall value of options that may be awarded per employee from €250,000 to €300,000. The €3,000,000 overall KEEP limit remains for companies and employees are not restricted in entering into future KEEP arrangements with future employers.

I expect that these changes will help support SMEs to compete for skilled staff.

### **Corporation Tax**

56. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance if the application of accounting rules known as the International Financial Reporting Standard 15 provided a one-off boost to profits and therefore a windfall effect to corporation taxes payable by information technology and pharmaceutical companies in 2018 which will not reoccur after 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43979/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Corporation tax receipts to end September, at €5.2 billion, are 6.3 per cent (€0.3 billion) ahead of profile. This mostly arises from the introduction of the International Financial Reporting Standard “IFRS 15” that replaces the existing standards on revenue.

This standard must be applied in respect of all financial reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2018 but early adoption is permitted. The “spreading” provisions introduced by Section 22 of Finance Act 2017 apply to all entities which applied IFRS 15 from the effective date (i.e. they apply to corporation tax returns for 2018 and subsequent years). However, where entities chose to early adopt IFRS 15, they had to elect to apply the “spreading” provisions in their 2017 corporation tax returns. Accordingly, it is expected that the bulk of the €0.3 billion surplus related to IFRS 15 is once-off in nature, will not reoccur and, accordingly, is not included in the 2019 forecast for corporation tax revenue. The Revenue Commissioners engaged with the companies affected to understand the impact and timing of the increase. They only became aware of the potential for IFRS 15 to significantly increase receipts in 2018 in the second quarter of this year. It should be noted these receipts arise from a small number of large companies. This issue was separately highlighted in the monthly *Fiscal Monitor* published by my Department in May, the *Summer Economic Statement 2019*, published in June, and, most recently, in *Budget 2019* .

*Question No. 57 answered with Question No. 34.*

*Question No. 58 answered with Question No. 32.*

### **Illicit Trade in Fuel and Tobacco Products**

59. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the concerns of small and local retailers regarding the threat of illegal selling of cigarettes' by continual increases in budget 2019; if the Revenue Commissioners have adequate resources to tackle smuggling and illegal sales; and if his attention has been further drawn to retailers' concerns for their business. [44235/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that it is satisfied that, having regard to its overall level of resources, it has the necessary means to tackle smuggling and illegal sales of cigarettes and tobacco. I remain open to discussing with Revenue any requirements that they may have as regards resources in the future to maximise their effectiveness in combatting smuggling.

### **Community Banking**

60. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Finance if the rebuttal published by an organisation (details supplied) has been examined in respect of the conclusions of the public banking investigation; the detailed refutation of the conclusions drawn by his Department in relation to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40658/18]

85. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Finance if he has examined the rebuttal published by an organisation (details supplied) in respect of the conclusions of the public banking investigation; the detailed refutation of the conclusions drawn by his Department's officials; if he will be raising the points raised by the organisation in its submission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38418/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 60 and 85 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, my Department and the Department of Rural and Community Development published a Report on Local Public Banking at the beginning of July of this year. The Report concludes that there is not a compelling case for the State to use Exchequer funds to establish a new local public banking system, however, there is a commitment from the Government to consider other means by which the objectives of local public banking may be achieved.

I have noted the rebuttal to the Report on Local Public Banking published by Irish Rural Link. As part of our continued engagement with key public banking stakeholders, my Department has consulted with Irish Rural Link and others in the development of the terms of reference which will form the basis of the evaluation that the external consultants will conduct. Officials in my Department are currently preparing for a tender process to engage an external consultant. It is envisaged that the tender process will be concluded by the end of this year, with a view for the evaluation process to begin in early 2019.

### **Defence Forces Reserve**

61. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the reason pay is being held up for members of the Defence Forces Reserve; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44243/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** In relation to

the pay of Reserve Defence Force (RDF) personnel, the relevant instruction in force provides that members are to be paid on the Friday of the week in which they have undertaken fulltime training. Nominations for attendance at paid training must be submitted to the Department of Defence by military units to arrive not less than 14 days in advance of the start of training. Actual attendance at paid training is then confirmed to the Department by the relevant unit on the Monday of the training week and, subject to all normal administrative requirements being met, payment is then authorised to issue on the Friday of the training week. Payrolls must, of necessity, operate within strict banking and payroll deadlines in order to ensure that personnel who are duly nominated for paid training are paid on time.

The foregoing procedures are of long standing and are designed to facilitate payment at the end of the training week to those who attended. The military authorities have been communicated with on this issue and requested to ensure full compliance with the requirement to forward initial nominations and confirmations of attendance on the basis set out in the relevant instruction.

In addition, specific protocols are in place when personnel exceed certain paid attendance thresholds and in such cases special permission must be sought in advance from the Department.

If the Deputy has a specific case in mind he can send me the details and I will have the matter examined.

### **Air Corps Recruitment**

62. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of Air Corps pilot applicants recruited in each of the past four years despite failing a colour blindness test, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44333/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I have requested the military authorities to outline the position and I will revert to the Deputy as soon as this is available.

### **Departmental Staff Data**

63. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the breakdown of staff in his Department by grade. [44352/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The breakdown of staff in my Department by grade on 15 October 2018 was as follows:

Grade	Number
Secretary General	1
Assistant Secretary	3
Principal	18
Assistant Principal	45
Higher Executive Officer	70
Administrative Officer	5
Executive Officer	103
Clerical Officer	92

Grade	Number
Service Officer	13
Total	350

In addition to the 18 Principals set out in the table above, I have two special advisors who are employed in an un-established capacity at that grade.

### Defence Forces Strength

64. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the strength in whole-time equivalent terms of the Permanent Defence Force with regard to all three services and all ranks in tabular form. [44405/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The table below sets out the current strength (as of 30 September 2018) in whole time equivalent of the PDF across all services and ranks.

Service	Strength (WTE)
Army	7,247
Air Corps	720
Naval Service	1,022

The Government remains committed to returning to, and maintaining the agreed strength of the Permanent Defence Force at 9,500 personnel as set out in the White Paper on Defence (2015).

In order to achieve this target, there are significant recruitment opportunities available in the Permanent Defence Force, at both enlisted and officer level, for eligible individuals who wish to have a rewarding and positive career in service to the State. The Permanent Defence Force continues to offer excellent career opportunities for serving personnel and for new entrants. Two general service recruitment campaigns, an officer cadetships competition, a competition for Air Corps apprentices, a competition for DF School of Music instrumentalists and the 2018 RDF recruitment campaigns all took place this year.

Recruits from the first general service recruitment campaign held earlier this year are being inducted between September and end November. The 95th Cadet Class of 85 recruits was inducted on the 24th September.

A second general service recruitment campaign was launched on 10 September 2018 and closed on 7 October 2018.

Final figures for numbers enlisted in 2018 will not be available until after year's end. As of 25 September 2018, 414 personnel have been inducted in 2018 and inductions will continue for the rest of the year. The bulk of inductions are weighted towards the second half of the year. Recruitment progress will be reviewed at year end and this will also inform the approach in 2019.

### Defence Forces Reserve Strength

65. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the strength in whole-time equivalent terms of the Defence Forces Reserve with regard to all three services and all ranks. [44406/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** As of 30 September 2018 (the latest date for which figures are available), the effective strength of the Reserve Defence Force was as follows:

Service	Total Personnel
First Line Reserve (FLR)	278
Army Reserve (AR)	1,620
Naval Service Reserve (NSR)	125

I am aware that there is a difference between these figures and the establishment for the AR and NSR which provides for 4,069 personnel. To address this difference, I directed the military authorities to maximise recruitment to the Army Reserve and the Naval Service Reserve, having regard to training demands arising from significant ongoing recruitment to the PDF.

A total of 1,363 applications were received for the recent RDF General Service Recruitment campaign. Applications for this recruitment campaign, which ran between 23 April and 4 June 2018, are currently being processed. A total of 124 members have been inducted into the RDF in 2018 (as of 12 October 2018).

I can assure the Deputy that I remain committed to the on-going development of the RDF within the framework set out in the White Paper on Defence.

### Defence Forces Data

66. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of additional recruits the Permanent Defence Force has taken to date in 2018 with regard to all three services; the gender breakdown of same in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44407/18]

67. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of additional recruits the Defence Forces Reserve has taken to date 2018 with regard to all services; the gender breakdown of same in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44408/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 66 and 67 together.

The table sets out the number of recruits inducted into the Permanent Defence Force in 2018 (as of 24 October 2018), together with a gender breakdown:

	Male	Female	Total
Army	239	9	248
Naval Service	56	7	63
Air Corps	20	0	20
Total	315	16	331

In addition to the above, 85 cadets of which nine are female have been inducted this year.

The Government remains committed to returning to, and maintaining the agreed strength of the Permanent Defence Force at 9,500 personnel as set out in the White Paper on Defence (2015).

In order to achieve this target, there are significant recruitment opportunities available in the Permanent Defence Force, at both enlisted and officer level, for eligible individuals who wish to have a rewarding and positive career in service to the State. The Permanent Defence Force continues to offer excellent career opportunities for serving personnel and for new entrants. General service recruitment campaigns, an officer cadetships competition, a competition for Air Corps apprentices, a competition for DF School of Music instrumentalists and the 2018 RDF recruitment campaigns all took place this year.

Arising from the general service recruitment campaign held earlier this year, new recruits will be inducted between September and end November.

A second general service recruitment campaign was launched on 10 September 2018 and closed on 7 October 2018.

Final figures for numbers enlisted in 2018 will not be available until after year's end. The bulk of inductions are weighted towards the second half of the year. Recruitment progress will be reviewed at year end and this will also inform the approach in 2019.

The table sets out the number of inductions to the Reserve Defence Force in 2018 (as of 24 October 2018), together with a gender breakdown of same:

	Male	Female	Total
Army Reserve	102	13	115
Naval Service Reserve	11	2	13
Total	113	15	128

A total of 1,363 applications were received for the recent RDF General Service Recruitment campaign. Applications for this recruitment campaign, which ran between 23 April and 4 June 2018, are currently being processed.

I can assure the Deputy that I remain committed to the on-going development of the RDF within the framework set out in the White Paper on Defence.

### Army Bomb Disposals Data

68. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of suspect devices that the Army disposal unit has dealt with to date in 2018, by county in tabular form. [44409/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Department of Justice and Equality and An Garda Síochána have primary responsibility for the internal security of the State. Among the roles assigned to the Defence Forces in the White Paper on Defence is the provision of Aid to the Civil Power which, in practice, means to assist An Garda Síochána when requested to do so.

The Defence Forces Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams respond when a request for

assistance is made by An Garda Síochána in dealing with a suspect device. The number of EOD callouts, which include viable devices, hoaxes, false alarms, post-blast analysis and the removal of unstable chemicals in laboratories dealt with from 1 January 2018 to 22 October 2018, by county, are set out in the tabular statement below:

County	No.
Louth	8
Monaghan	1
Clare	1
Cork	6
Dublin	17
Galway	1
Kerry	2
Kildare	5
Mayo	1
Sligo	1
Tipperary	3
Waterford	2
Wexford	2
Wicklow	2
TOTAL	52

#### Naval Service Data

69. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of days spent at sea by members of the Naval Service Reserve in 2017 and to date in 2018. [44410/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The military authorities inform me that it has not been possible, within the time allowed, to collate the information required to reply to this question. I will forward the information to the Deputy as soon as it becomes available.

#### Defence Forces Personnel Data

70. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of sick days taken by members in each service of the Defence Forces to date in 2018. [44411/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** In line with other sectors, sick leave statistics for the Defence Forces are compiled annually and provided to the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform (D/PER). These statistics are used in order to track the levels of absenteeism across the public service. The absence rates for the public service are then published by D/PER.

The total number of sick leave days claimed by members of the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps as of the 23rd October is outlined in the tabular format below.

Service	Sick leave days 2018
Army	55,242

Service	Sick leave days 2018
Naval Service	5,420
Air Corps	6,889
Total	67,551

### Departmental Budgets

71. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the breakdown of the €106 million capital allocation, that is, Vote 36 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44551/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The National Development Plan provides for an overall capital allocation of €541m for Defence for the period 2018 to 2022, including an allocation of €106m for 2019, as confirmed in the recent Budget. This capital funding will allow the Defence Organisation to undertake a programme of sustained equipment replacement and infrastructure development as identified in the White Paper, over the lifetime of the Plan.

The following major projects are being progressed during 2019:-

- Mid-life upgrade of the Mowag Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) fleet;
- Procurement of Fixed Wing Utility aircraft (Pilatus) as replacement for Cessna aircraft;
- Procurement of replacements for the two CASA 235 Maritime Patrol aircraft;
- Mid-life refit of the Naval Service vessels LÉ Niamh and LÉ Róisín and ongoing planning for the acquisition of a multi-role vessel;
- Virtual Desktop Architecture (VDA) project for Defence Forces IT infrastructure;
- Investment in the Defence Forces built infrastructure, including the following specific projects -
  - Secure storage facilities in the Defence Forces Training Centre, Curragh Camp;
  - Target range facilities in the Defence Forces Training Centre;
  - Training facilities in Sarsfield Barracks, Limerick and Stephens Barracks, Kilkenny;
  - Accommodation facilities in the Defence Forces Training Centre and Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin;
  - Accommodation upgrade in Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnell;
  - Catering facilities in Custume Barracks, Athlone;
  - Fuel storage safety system upgrade in the Naval Base, Haulbowline.

These projects are multi annual and precise expenditure timeframes are not finalised. Accordingly, the Department is not in a position to provide a more detailed breakdown of the 2019 allocation. However, I am satisfied that the capital allocation for Defence for 2019 and for the period to 2022 will allow the Defence Organisation to undertake a programme of sus-

tained equipment replacement and infrastructural development as identified and prioritised in the White Paper.

### **Military Neutrality**

72. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he maintains the position asserted in September 2018, that he supports Irish neutrality, in view of the 2003 judgment in a case (details supplied). [44363/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** As has been repeatedly stated, the Government is fully committed to that longstanding policy of military neutrality, which is characterised by non-participation in military alliances. This commitment was most recently detailed in the White Paper on Defence published in August 2015. This reaffirmed that Ireland's policy of military neutrality is a core element of Irish foreign policy, as had been previously articulated in the 2015 review of Foreign Policy, "The Global Island". This Government upholds, and will continue to uphold, this deeply rooted, publicly valued policy. Whilst the judgment of Mr. Justice Kearns in the 2003 High Court case of *Horgan v Ireland* did include certain observations on the customary international law of neutrality, these were not relevant to the outcome of the case. The plaintiff's action failed on other grounds.

### **Human Rights Cases**

73. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if Ireland has taken action at intergovernmental or bilateral levels on the human rights violations perpetrated by the Nicaraguan Government against its people which are documented in reports (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44246/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I continue to be deeply concerned about the situation in Nicaragua.

The violence, intimidation and arbitrary arrest and detention of those seeking to peacefully protest is wholly unacceptable and I have unreservedly condemned these actions on a number of occasions. The right to freedom of expression and to peaceful demonstration are fundamental to a functioning democracy.

I am aware of the OHCHR, IACHR and Amnesty reports to which the Deputy refers. These reports highlight a worrying number of human rights abuses, which are yet to be addressed. Compounding this climate of impunity is a lack of official cooperation with the international missions investigating human rights abuses.

The Deputy will be aware that the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was expelled from the country following the publishing of its report. I would once again urge the Government of Nicaragua to allow the OHCHR officials to re-enter the country and continue their valuable work.

Ireland regularly engages on this issue with our European partners. Earlier this month, we supported the declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the situation in Nicaragua.

The statement expresses the EU's serious concern at the situation, and urges the government of Nicaragua to allow the return of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) to enable it to continue its mission, as well as calling on the

government of Nicaragua to stop the disproportionate use of force against demonstrators, halt arrests based on laws which criminalise peaceful protest, allow free peaceful demonstrators and re-establish the full respect of due process for all detainees.

The EU and its Member States, including Ireland, call on the government of Nicaragua to act on the findings and recommendations of the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) and UNOHCHR, to ensure full accountability for perpetrators of human rights abuses and the disarming and disbanding of armed groups.

I support the EU call on the government of Nicaragua to resume the national dialogue. I believe that inclusive dialogue remains the only way of negotiating a peaceful and democratic resolution to this crisis, and of restoring the trust of the Nicaraguan people in the country's institutions.

Ireland also supports EU action taken to support international and local initiatives to address the human rights situation, promote a culture of peace, and to provide support to victims of the crisis and their families.

Officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, both in Dublin and in our Embassy in Mexico, which has responsibility for diplomatic relations with Nicaragua, have been monitoring the situation closely. The Deputy Foreign Minister of Nicaragua, Valdrack Jaentschke, was met by officials in my Department on 1 October last and was informed of our strong attachment to the European Union position on Nicaragua. He was also advised of the importance we attach to the establishment of a genuine national reconciliation process. We have been engaging regularly with partner organisations on the ground, and raising the issue at international level where appropriate. Ireland greatly values the work of these partner organisations and will continue to engage with them.

### Departmental Staff Data

74. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the breakdown of staff in his Department by grade. [44356/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The number of full time equivalent staff by grade in my Department as at 30 September 2018 is outlined in the table.

Grade	Number of Staff
Secretary General	1
Second Secretary General	4
Deputy Secretary General	1
Assistant Secretary	23
Counsellor	84
Principal Officer	20
Principal Development Specialist	3.9
Senior Development Specialist	10
Assistant Legal Adviser	8
First Secretary	140
Assistant Principal	76.6
Professional Accountant	5.8

Grade	Number of Staff
Development Specialist	33.6
Architect	3
Third Secretary	129
Administrative Officer	5
Higher Executive Officer	94.9
Systems Analyst HEO	4
Executive Officer	163.9
Executive Officer Trainee Systems Analyst	1
Clerical Officer	482.5
Civilian Driver	4
Cleaner	12
Services Officer	29
Services Attendant	1
Night Watchman	3
Political Appointees	7
Temporary Clerical Officers	130
Total	1480.2
Local Staff	380.8
Total	1861

### Military Aircraft Landings

75. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the reason conditions are not imposed on all civilian aircraft on contract to the US military that are approved by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in view of the position of his Department (details supplied) and in further view of the presence of an aircraft. [44364/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The regulation of civil aircraft is governed by the Convention on International Civil Aviation (the Chicago Convention). From that Convention and subsequent international treaties, international rights and freedoms of air for civil aircraft, including the right to refuel, are derived.

Ireland's rights and obligations under the Convention have been incorporated into Irish law through the Air Navigation and Transport Act 1946 (as amended). The legislation provides that the Minister for Transport has primary responsibility for the regulation of civil aircraft, including those chartered to other States.

Under the Air Navigation (Carriage of War, Weapons and dangerous Goods) Order 1973, as amended, civil aircraft are prohibited from carrying weapons or munitions in Irish sovereign airspace or into Irish airports unless they receive an exemption from the Minister for Transport.

In considering such applications, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport seeks the advice of relevant Government Departments, including the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Consistent with our stated policy my Department recommends against the carriage of munitions, with exceptions made for unloaded personal weapons or those intended for international crisis management and peace support operations.

In the first six months of this year, my Department has recommended against approval of 12 applications for exemptions.

### Passport Applications Data

76. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of passport applications made from outside Ireland in the past three years to date; the number of those passport applications that were refused; the number of foreign applications for passports that were granted by an Irish embassy or consulate (details supplied); the number of passports issued by way of online application since the scheme commenced to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44413/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The number of passport applications received in the categories and years requested are outlined below.

	2016	2017	2018*
Applications received from outside of Ireland	190,905	227,223	191,271

\*1 January to 30 September

All Passport applications must meet the requirements of the Passports Act, 2008 as amended (“the Act”) before they can be processed. In all cases, the Passport Service must be satisfied as to the identity of the applicant and that the applicant is an Irish citizen. Furthermore, all guardians must provide consent for a minor’s application or if unavailable or unwilling, submit a court order as appropriate.

Section 12 of the Act makes provision to refuse a passport in certain circumstances. The Passport Service does not compile data on the number of applications which are refused. However, in general the number of applications that do not result in the issuance of a passport is small. Where applications are incomplete, applicants will often be contacted for clarifications or requested to provide further documentation.

The figures below provide the number of passports issued per Embassy or Consulate in the years requested. Many Irish Embassies are accredited to, and provide passport services for, Irish citizens in more than one country. The following table is organised by Mission.

Passports issued per Embassy	2016	2017	2018*
LONDON (Passport Office)	63,452	65,678	47,217
NEW YORK	7,032	6,297	3,786
CANBERRA	6,828	5,002	3,134
SAN FRANCISCO	4,331	4,220	2,438
SYDNEY	3,850	2,982	1,654
PRETORIA	3,207	2,969	1,771
OTTAWA	3,346	2,754	1,841
AUCKLAND	2,254	1,814	1,149
PARIS	2,205	1,985	993
BOSTON	2,027	1,597	1,360
CHICAGO	1,126	2,046	1,435
BERLIN	1,959	1,548	919
ABU DHABI	1,667	1,449	1,053

Passports issued per Embassy	2016	2017	2018*
MADRID	1,662	1,480	900
WASHINGTON	1,117	1,013	600
BERNE	941	762	444
THE HAGUE	928	663	435
BRUSSELS	813	596	344
HONG KONG	548	574	394
SINGAPORE	539	496	338
ROME	524	403	232
RIYADH	451	424	281
BANGKOK	411	294	252
ABUJA	268	265	226
LUXEMBOURG	325	246	162
STOCKHOLM	324	227	133
VIENNA	294	220	138
COPENHAGEN	232	232	103
TEL AVIV	229	152	142
BEIJING	193	169	132
BUENOS AIRES	168	188	93
LISBON	155	153	132
KUALA LUMPUR	174	147	107
MEXICO	180	158	78
CAIRO	140	158	113
NEW DELHI	153	124	128
WARSAW	119	156	114
TOKYO	185	137	58
OSLO	182	125	62
ATHENS	169	118	87
NICOSIA	137	134	77
BRASILIA	131	128	79
SHANGHAI	114	113	97
PRAGUE	121	110	87
HANOI	131	115	70
VALETTA	127	100	65
ANKARA	112	96	81
MOSCOW	94	92	72
LUSAKA	97	89	61
HELSINKI	102	70	37
SEOUL	97	65	47
BUCHAREST	95	54	53
JAKARTA	68	70	53
BUDAPEST	72	60	37
LJUBLJANA	55	35	22
SOFIA	31	43	36
DAR-ES-SALAAM	42	35	15

Passports issued per Embassy	2016	2017	2018*
MAPUTO	39	35	17
VILNIUS	32	31	30
KAMPALA	43	31	11
BRATISLAVA	25	26	20
LILONGWE	14	30	17
ADDIS ABABA	18	20	16
RIGA	17	14	7
TALLINN	11	9	8
MANILA	0	2	5
NAIROBI	0	0	4

\*1 January to 30 September.

Since the launch of the Online Passport Application service on 30 March 2017 to 30 September 2018, a total of 270,187 passports were issued using this service.

### Departmental Budgets

77. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the details of the €5.5 million capital allocation under A, our people, in Vote 28 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within his Department for 2019 by specific project in tabular form; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44539/18]

78. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the details of the €4 million capital allocation under D, our prosperity, in Vote 28 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within his Department for 2019 by specific project in tabular form; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44540/18]

79. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the details of the €9 million capital allocation under E, our influence, in Vote 28 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within his Department for 2019 by specific project in tabular form; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44541/18]

80. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the details of the €2.5 million capital allocation under international co-operation, in Vote 27 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within his Department for 2019 by specific project in tabular form; the projects that will commence in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44542/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 77 to 80, inclusive, together.

The total capital allocation for my Department in 2019 across its two Votes – Vote 27: International Co-operation and Vote 28: Foreign Affairs and Trade – will be €21 million, €17 million of which had been allocated under the National Development Plan 2018-2027. The 2019 allocation will represent an increase of €8m on the 2018 capital allocation.

The main focus of capital investment in 2019 will be the cost of constructing and main-

taining State properties overseas under the Global Ireland Initiative, the Passport Reform Programme and the continuing investment in ICT to support the Department's global ICT network and Ireland's participation at EXPO 2020.

The main project under the Global Ireland Initiative in 2019 will be the development of a new Embassy/Ireland House in Tokyo. The allocation for EXPO 2020 is towards the cost of a pavilion, to be designed and built by the Office of Public Works, for Ireland's participation at EXPO 2020 in Dubai as envisaged in the Global Ireland Initiative.

The breakdown of the 2019 total capital allocation of €21 million, across the various areas referred to above, is as follows:

2019	
State properties overseas	€8.5 million
Passport Reform Programme	€5.5 million
EXPO 2020	€4.0 million
ICT	€3.0 million
Total	€21 million

The breakdown of these allocations by specific project is currently in the process of being finalised.

### Motor Insurance Costs

81. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance the reason motor insurance costs are still rising; and if his attention has been drawn to the fact that this is making it almost impossible for young drivers to get cover when starting out on their own. [44242/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I nor the Central Bank of Ireland can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature, and are determined by insurance companies based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept. This position is reinforced by the EU framework for insurance which expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products. Consequently, it is not possible to direct insurance companies as to the pricing levels or terms or conditions that they should apply in respect of particular categories of drivers.

However, in relation to the Deputy's main contention that insurance costs are still rising, I disagree. In this regard, it should be noted that the most recent CSO data (for September 2018) indicates that private motor insurance premiums have decreased by 21.5% since peaking in July 2016. I appreciate that these figures represent a broad average; however, we have to recognise that these are the same figures that showed the large increase that many commentators regularly reference. Therefore, I am satisfied that the overall trend currently is downward, which is welcome.

The above said, I am aware that some policyholders, like younger drivers, may not be seeing reductions in their insurance premiums, and may indeed have difficulty obtaining cover at a reasonable price. Unfortunately, younger drivers have historically tended to face higher

premiums as they are seen by insurers as a category which poses a higher risk. In making their individual decisions on whether to offer cover and what terms to apply, insurers will also use a combination of rating factors, which include the age and type of the vehicle, as well as the age of the driver, the relevant claims record and driving experience, the number of drivers, how the car is used, etc. My understanding is that insurers do not all use the same combination of rating factors, and as a result prices and availability of cover varies across the market. In addition, insurance companies will price in accordance with their own past claims experience, meaning that in relation to the age of the driver, and the relevant experience they may have, different insurance companies will price the risk differently.

In conclusion, I am hopeful that with the continuing implementation of the recommendations of the Cost of Insurance Working Group there will be a further positive impact on pricing over the next 12 months or so.

### **Tax Data**

**82. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the report on tax expenditures of October 2018; the key components and estimated total cost of tax expenditures as a percentage of total voted expenditure and of GNI in 2017; the likely costs in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43863/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I refer the Deputy to my reply to his two parliamentary questions of 24 July this year (Nos. 221 and 222; reference Nos. 33483/18 and 33484/18).

My Department's Report on Tax Expenditures for 2018 is now available and can be found on the Budget 2019 website at:

*<http://www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2019/Documents/Tax%20Expenditures%20Report%20Budget%202019.pdf>*

The annual Tax Expenditure Reports (of which there have been four to date) do not purport to be a complete record of all revenue foregone through tax expenditures in a given year. This is due to a number of factors including:

- data for many tax expenditures for the most recent full year may not be available due to filing dates for returns for a given year falling late in the following year (so that returns for 2017 may not have been returned and/or collated by the time the report is published);
- there is a concern on the part of Revenue that the release of data on some tax expenditures availed of by a small number of taxpayers could present a risk that they could be identifiable;
- the data necessary is not required to be provided to/gathered by Revenue;
- the tax expenditure has recently been abolished; or
- the tax expenditure concerned may be new so data is not yet available.

Pages 307 to 328 of the Tax Expenditures Report 2018 list 165 tax expenditures. This presents the revenue foregone in the most recent year for which information is available, which may in some instances include figures for 2016 or estimates and comes to a total of just below €3 billion. Revenue foregone data on 74 of the listed tax expenditures is not available for the reasons listed above.

Due to the challenge of providing the full cost of revenue foregone figure for tax expenditures in 2017, it may not be useful to compare this figure to the GNI\* for 2017 of €181,175 million (nominal and rounded to nearest €25 million) or the gross provisional outturn figure (current and capital) of €58,525 million for 2017.

I am aware of the recent report on tax expenditures from the Parliamentary Budget Office “Tax Expenditures in Ireland: Key Issues for Consideration”. My Department is reviewing the main issues raised in the report.

### **Fiscal Policy**

83. **Deputy Jonathan O’Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the relationship between the withdrawal of funds from the rainy day fund and the EU fiscal rules under the Stability and Growth Pact; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43898/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Fiscal Responsibility Act 2012 imposes a duty on the Government to endeavour to comply with the fiscal rules. The National Surplus (Reserve Fund for Exceptional Contingencies) Bill 2018, which was approved by Government this week and will be published in a matter of days, does not amend or change this obligation. In setting out the circumstances for drawing down funds from the Rainy Day Fund - which will formally be known as the National Surplus (Exceptional Contingencies) Reserve Fund - I have been careful to make a clear link with the existence of “exceptional circumstances” within the meaning of the Stability and Growth Pact. I look forward to presenting and debating the detail of the Bill at second stage in the Dáil in the coming weeks.

### **Bank Branch Closures**

84. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Finance if the diminution of banking services in rural Ireland will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40596/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I should stress at the outset that the Government has no formal role in the commercial decisions of the banks as to their future business model and whether or not they will close particular branches.

The Deputy will no doubt appreciate that the provision of services by banks, including the location of branches, is a commercial decision for the Boards and management of the institutions.

That said, I expect that any bank closing branches will do everything that it can to mitigate the impacts of the branch closures on local communities, including technology and the use of alternative means of service delivery. I also expect that the bank will ensure that customers are kept informed about developments and provided with the appropriate assistance to move branches, switch to other banks and avail of alternative means of accessing financial services. The Central Bank will also have a role in ensuring that consumer protection rules are followed.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Report on Local Public Banking by my Department and the Department of Rural and Community Development has now been published.

Specifically, the Report examined a proposal from Irish Rural Link and the Savings Bank Foundation for International Cooperation for 8-10 local public banks, starting with a pilot local public bank in the Midlands. The suggested locations in the proposed pilot in the Midlands are

already serviced by existing banks, credit unions and post offices.

The Report concludes that there is not a compelling case for the State to establish a new local public banking system in Ireland using €170 million of Exchequer funds, based on the proposed model. However, as set out in the Report, my Department will commission an independent external evaluation to establish whether the objectives of local public banking, are necessary, and if so, could be achieved by other possible means in Ireland. The Terms of Reference for this evaluation are currently being progressed.

*Question No. 85 answered with Question No. 60.*

### **Irish Aid**

86. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Finance the dates on which funds from budget 2018 were drawn down by Irish Aid through Vote 27; the amount of each draw-down; if the total of over €500 million has been drawn down to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44256/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I refer the Deputy to Order 36 of Dáil Éireann's Standing Orders Relative to Public Business.

As Minister for Finance I have no responsibility in relation to the matters raised in your question. It should, therefore, be readdressed to the appropriate Minister.

### **Ministerial Meetings**

87. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 105 of 18 October 2018, if he will provide copies of all briefing notes and minutes provided by all parties at the meeting between the former Minister and a company (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44309/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** It is not my Department's practice to pass out briefing of the type requested in response to a Parliamentary Question. Documents related to the meeting between my predecessor as Minister for Finance and representatives of Enet on 14 December 2016 are currently the subject of an FOI request and subject to the outcome of that process will be available once the FOI process is completed.

### **Tax Forms**

88. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the Revenue Commissioner's decision to make P60s available on an online basis only; the position regarding taxpayers that do not have access to a computer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44322/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that P60 Forms are issued by employers to their employees at the end of each tax year. The P60 is a statement of the employee's earnings and statutory deductions for that year and is an important part of the current PAYE system.

Under the current PAYE system, pay, tax and USC deducted information from the P60

is available to employees through Revenue's online PAYE Services if they are registered for 'MyAccount' and they can also receive any end of year 'Balancing Statements' electronically. At this point nearly 650,000 PAYE taxpayers have expressed a preference to receive electronic output in this manner rather than paper copies and I am aware that this figure is continuing to increase. Alternatively, PAYE taxpayers can submit a paper copy of their P60 to Revenue and have a hard-copy 'Balancing Statement' posted to them should they wish to do so. These arrangements will remain in place for tax years up to and including 2018.

With effect from 1 January 2019 the administration of PAYE is undergoing significant change with the move to real-time reporting under the PAYE Modernisation programme. These changes will bring improved accuracy and transparency for all stakeholders, including employers, employees and Revenue, while also significantly streamlining the entire administration process. The streamlining will include the abolition of the current employer reporting obligations via P30, P35, P45, P46 and P60 forms.

As a result, employers will no longer be required to provide their employees with a P60 from the 2019 tax year onwards. Instead, Revenue will make an automatic End of Year Statement available to all employees. The first End of Year Statement will be available in early 2020 (in respect of the 2019 tax year) and will detail the employee's pay and deductions based on employer submissions for the year. This will include salary, any taxable Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection payments and any other income returned by the person, as well as applicable tax credits and reliefs. The End of Year Statement will be available online through the PAYE Services/MyAccount service in the same manner as the current system. In circumstances where a person is unable to access Revenue's online services for whatever reason they will be able to request a paper copy of their End of Year Statement by contacting Revenue directly.

### **Electric Vehicle Grants**

89. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the €50,000 cap on the original market value of a vehicle in the context of the 0% benefit-in-kind, BIK, rate for electric vehicles will apply to directors that were provided with an electric car during 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44331/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I extended the benefit-in-kind exemption for electric vehicles until 31 December 2021 to support policies to reduce carbon emissions in the transport sector. This forms part of a broader series of measures to support the uptake of electric vehicles, including VRT relief of up to €5,000, an SEAI grant of up to €5,000, very low motor tax of €120 per annum, 50% discount off tolls fees and 0% BIK on electric charging.

Having regard to value for money and tax equity considerations, a cap of €50,000 on this exemption is applied such that an electric vehicle with an original market value exceeding €50,000 will be subject to BIK on the amount in excess of €50,000. The cap will take effect from the 2019 tax year in respect of all electric vehicles made available to employees in 2019 with an original market value greater than €50,000.

In examining value for money and tax equity considerations, the quantum of tax expenditure provided annually to qualifying taxpayers in relation to the use of high end cars must be taken into account. To take the example of an electric vehicle with an original market value of, say, €150,000 that has been purchased by the employer for the use of a Director, where the employer has already benefitted from VRT relief and an SEAI grant. Without the imposition of a €50,000 cap, the tax expenditure on such a vehicle is the equivalent of an annual grant from

the taxpayer to the employee or Director of up to €23,400, for a single tax year (i.e. the tax liability of the taxpayer would be reduced by up to this amount in a single tax year). This amount is equivalent to 7 or 8 home insulation grants to low income households under the SEAI Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme, where the benefit of these grants will last for many years. Or, that the same amount, under the National Fuel Allowance Scheme, is equivalent to an allowance for about 37 low income households for one year.

I am encouraged by the fact that registrations of new electric vehicles has doubled in the year to September and am satisfied that the cap has been set at a reasonable level which maintains a strong incentive for the take-up of electric vehicles while having due regard for value for money and tax equity.

### Departmental Staff Data

90. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the breakdown of staff in his Department by grade. [44355/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I wish to inform the Deputy that the breakdown of staff in the Department of Finance at end September 2018 is shown, as Whole-time Equivalents (WTE) in the table.

Secretary General	1
Assistant Secretary	6
Principal Officer	26.90
Assistant Principal	71.60
Administrative Officer	69.80
Higher Executive Officer	20.63
Executive Officer	38.30
Clerical Officer	55.33
Service Officer	18
Total	307.56

There are also 10 Specialists seconded from the NTMA to the Shareholding and Financial Advisory Division in the Department of Finance.

### Tax Data

91. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number and value of instances of capital gains tax on the sale of company shares in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44370/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the available information in respect of Capital Gains Tax (CGT) on the sale of company shares is the total amount of consideration received by individual taxpayers in respect of the sale of any quoted or unquoted shares.

Consideration is the gross amount before base cost, reliefs, personal exemption and loss-

es are deducted to arrive at the chargeable gain to which CGT at a rate of 33% would be applied. Therefore, the total amount of consideration is not a reflection of the actual value of the CGT liability.

It is not possible to separately identify the actual amount of CGT paid as the tax on shares is included with the tax on gains from other assets in the relevant tax returns.

Revenue's records indicate that the number of cases involving the sale of any quoted or unquoted shares was 26,644 for the tax year 2015 and was 25,663 for the tax year 2016. Information in respect of 2017 will not be available until returns in respect of that year have been filed.

### **Loan Books Purchasers**

92. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if unregulated loan owners are allowed to have direct contact with borrowers including face-to-face meetings or to send correspondence direct to the borrower without going through a credit servicing agent; if an unregulated loan owner can write directly to a borrower that has an active loan account with that unregulated loan owner regarding a guarantee provided by the borrower associated with that loan account; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44412/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I have been advised by the Central Bank of Ireland that when a consumer takes out a loan from a regulated lender ("the original lender") it is subject to all the relevant Irish and EU consumer protections. Most loan agreements include a clause that allows the original lender to sell the loan on to another firm.

When a loan is sold on to another regulated entity, the relevant Irish and EU consumer protections continue to apply.

In the past, if the original lender sold a loan to another person who was not regulated by the Central Bank ("an unregulated firm"), the consumer could lose the protections they previously had under the various Central Bank Statutory Codes of Conduct. In July 2015, the Consumer Protection (Regulation of Credit Servicing) Act 2015 ("the 2015 Act") was introduced to fill the consumer protection gap where loans are sold by the original lender to an unregulated firm. Under the 2015 Act, if the firm who bought the loans from the original lender is an unregulated firm, then the loans must be serviced by a 'credit servicing firm' which is authorised and regulated by the Central Bank. Credit Servicing Firms are typically firms that manage or administer credit agreements such as mortgages or other loans on behalf of unregulated entities. Credit Servicing Firms are required to obtain authorisation from the Central Bank in order to conduct 'credit servicing' activities as defined in the 2015 Act.

Credit servicing firms must act in accordance with Irish financial services law that applies to 'regulated financial service providers'. This ensures that consumers, whose loans are sold to another firm, maintain the same regulatory protections that they had prior to the sale, including under the various statutory Codes of Conduct issued by the Central Bank, such as the Consumer Protection Code 2012 and the Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears 2013.

For the purposes of the Act, 'Credit servicing' means managing or administering the credit agreement, including—

(a) notifying the relevant borrower of changes in interest rates or in payments due under the credit agreement or other matters of which the credit agreement requires the relevant borrower to be notified,

- (b) taking any necessary steps for the purposes of collecting or recovering payments due under the credit agreement from the relevant borrower,
- (c) managing or administering any of the following:
  - (i) repayments under the credit agreement;
  - (ii) any charges imposed on the relevant borrower under the credit agreement;
  - (iii) any errors made in relation to the credit agreement;
  - (iv) any complaints made by the relevant borrower;
  - (v) information or records relating to the relevant borrower in respect of the credit agreement;
  - (vi) the process by which a relevant borrower's financial difficulties are addressed;
  - (vii) any alternative arrangements for repayment or other restructuring;
  - (viii) assessment of the relevant borrower's financial circumstances and ability to repay under the credit agreement, or
- (d) communicating with the relevant borrower in respect of any of the matters referred to in paragraphs (a) to (c).

'Credit servicing' currently does not, however, include taking such steps as may be necessary for the purposes of enforcing a credit agreement, provided that such action is not taken in a manner that if it were so taken by a regulated financial service provider it would be a prescribed contravention.

Therefore, it may be permissible in some circumstances for an unregulated loan owner to contact a borrower directly if this is necessary for the purposes of enforcing a credit agreement. However, this contact must not be made in such a manner that if it were so taken by a regulated financial service provider it would be a prescribed contravention.

### **Electric Vehicle Grants**

93. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance the reason there is a cap on the original market value of the vehicles as part of the 0% benefit-in-kind, BIK, tax on electric vehicles; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that this cap could discourage persons from buying electric vehicles; if his attention has been further drawn to the fact that this cap was never mentioned in documentation relating to this initiative when it was announced; the reason this change has been made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44417/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I extended the benefit-in-kind exemption for electric vehicles until 31 December 2021 to support policies to reduce carbon emissions in the transport sector. This forms part of a broader series of measures to support the uptake of electric vehicles, including VRT relief of up to €5,000, an SEAI grant of up to €5,000, very low motor tax of €120 per annum, 50% discount off tolls fees and 0% BIK on electric charging.

Having regard to value for money and tax equity considerations, a cap of €50,000 on this exemption is applied such that an electric vehicle with an original market value exceeding €50,000 will be subject to BIK on the amount in excess of €50,000. The cap will take effect from the 2019 tax year in respect of all electric vehicles made available to employees in 2019

with an original market value greater than €50,000.

In examining value for money and tax equity considerations, the quantum of tax expenditure provided annually to qualifying taxpayers in relation to the use of high end cars must be taken in account. To take the example of an electric vehicle with an original market value of, say, €150,000 that has been purchased by the employer for the use of a Director, where the employer has already benefitted from VRT relief and an SEAI grant. Without the imposition of a €50,000 cap, the tax expenditure on such a vehicle is the equivalent of an annual grant from the taxpayer to the employee or Director of up to €23,400, for a single tax year (i.e. the tax liability of the taxpayer would be reduced by up to this amount in a single tax year). This amount is equivalent to 7 or 8 home insulation grants to low income households under the SEAI Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme, where the benefit of these grants will last for many years. Or, that the same amount, under the National Fuel Allowance Scheme, is equivalent to an allowance for about 37 low income households for one year.

I am encouraged by the fact that registrations of new electric vehicles has doubled in the year to September and am satisfied that the cap has been set at a reasonable level which maintains a strong incentive for the take-up of electric vehicles while having due regard for value for money and tax equity.

### Budget 2019

94. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the way in which the figure of €295 million cited as impact of new measures on budget 2019 forecast tax buoyancy was computed in respect of table 9 on page 19 of the Economic and Fiscal Outlook of budget 2019; the basis on which it is included in the table; and if it has been used in the calculation of the amount of fiscal space that has been used up in budget 2019. [44421/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Table 9 of the Economic and Fiscal Outlook sets out the impact of the various taxation and expenditure measures introduced in Budget 2019 on next year's fiscal position. These have a positive short-run impact upon aggregate demand, which in turn generates taxation revenue. The additional tax revenues or 'buoyancy' arising from these second-round effects is estimated to be of the order of €295 million next year. This represents buoyancy of approximately 26 per cent on the full net budget package, which is within the usual range.

In terms of its calculation, this represents the difference between the extra taxes projected for 2019 on a no-policy change basis i.e. the White Paper scenario and the forecast tax take following the introduction of Budget 2019, less the net change in tax yields arising from the introduction of the new measures. Therefore in summary, this represents the additional projected net tax yield arising from the implementation of Budget 2019.

It should be noted, buoyancy is not used in the calculation of fiscal space as this is an expenditure-driven concept. Under the expenditure benchmark, the fiscal rules take account of discretionary revenue measures, such as an increase in tax rates or other structural revenue-raising measures. Increases in revenue due to buoyancy from the economic cycle should not be used in the calculation of fiscal space.

At present, the fiscal rules - both the structural balance rule and, especially, the expenditure benchmark rule - are not well-suited to guide budgetary policy, given our position in the economic cycle. I highlighted this in the Summer Economic Statement and I note that the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council, in its pre-Budget statement, also addressed this issue.

Accordingly, the more important framework for guiding fiscal policy is ‘fiscal stance’ - what is right for the economy at a particular point in time, so as to support sustainable, incremental improvements in public services and living standards. Given the range of potential challenges facing the economy, it is only possible to assess the appropriate fiscal stance on a year-to-year basis at present.

### **Fiscal Policy**

95. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the projected fiscal space for each of the years 2019 to 2024 net of known carryover costs, public pay deal commitments, national development plan commitments, demographics, rainy day fund transfers and other pre-commitments. [44423/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** At present, the fiscal rules - both the structural balance rule and, especially, the expenditure benchmark rule - are not well-suited to guide budgetary policy, given our position in the economic cycle. I highlighted this in the Summer Economic Statement and I note that the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council, in its pre-Budget statement, also highlighted this issue.

Essentially, the problem boils down to the fact that full allocation of ‘fiscal space’ would lead to a repeat of pro-cyclical budgetary policies that would threaten the living standards of Irish people. Pro-cyclical budgetary policies should be avoided; this is especially true when we are facing serious issues such as the exit of the UK from the European Union (and a non-negligible possibility of a ‘disorderly’ exit).

With this in mind, the more important framework for guiding fiscal policy is ‘fiscal stance’ - what is right for the economy at a particular point in time, so as to support sustainable, incremental improvements in public services and living standards.

The correct ‘fiscal stance’ can only be ascertained once account is taken of the position in the economic cycle. If the economy is operating at full capacity, then it would be incorrect to adopt an expansionary budgetary policy. On the other hand, if there is spare capacity in the economy, then it may be appropriate to use tax and expenditure policy to help absorb the spare capacity.

Given the many issues facing the economy and the heightened level of uncertainty (such as what form the UK’s exit from the EU will take), it is only possible to assess the appropriate fiscal stance on a year-to-year basis at present.

### **Financial Services Regulation**

96. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance when legislation updating the laws on limited partnerships will be introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44450/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Investment Funds Industry has been a successful and significant element of the Irish financial services landscape for many years. This success has been underpinned by various periodic relevant changes in the legislative landscape that have made Ireland an attractive domicile for promoters in Asia, across Europe, the U.S., and further afield. This success has also benefitted from the fact that we have a regulatory regime which provide a robust and consistent approach to the supervision that pro-

motes confidence in Ireland as a location for investment funds.

Due to changes in the global private equity market in both structure and relevant European legislation, it has been decided that there is a case to update the Investment Limited Partnership Act 1994. The IFS2020 Action Plan commits to developing amendments to the Investment Limited Partnership Act 1994 so as to make the structure more attractive to fund managers.

Consequentially, my Department sought and obtained approval from the Government for the preparation of the necessary “Heads” for legislation in 2017. My officials have developed the Heads and these have been sent to the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel for their consideration. A drafter has been assigned to work on the drafting of the legislation and the Bill is a priority on the Government’s legislative programme for 2018. The draft legislation is currently being prepared and my officials are working with the draftsman to arrive at a publish Bill. I am aiming for the Bill to be considered by the Houses of the Oireachtas before the end of the year.

### **Credit Union Services**

97. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on enabling credit unions to avail of debit cards for their members; if legislative changes are required; if it is solely a decision for the Central Bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44451/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Credit Union Act, 1997 (1997 Act) sets out the services that a credit union may provide to its members. In addition, the Credit Union Act 1997 (Regulatory Requirements) Regulations 2016 (2016 Regulations) provides for services exempt from additional services requirements. Where a credit union wishes to provide services to its members, other than those services that are provided for under the 1997 Act or the list of services exempt from the additional services requirements set out in the 2016 Regulations, an application may be made to the Central Bank for approval to provide such additional services, in accordance with the provisions in sections 48-52 of the 1997 Act.

Debit card provision is subject to formal application and approval by the Central Bank, whether it be direct provision or distribution of third party debit cards under sections 48 and 49 of the Credit Union Act. There is no requirement for additional legislation.

There is currently a fully defined current account service including debit cards, called Members Personal Current Account Services (MPCAS), which is available to eligible credit unions as an additional service. The current eligibility criteria include a suggested minimum asset size of €75 million, reflecting the need for significant initial investment in start up initiatives of this nature. This also recognises the importance of transaction volume necessary for scale discounts which requires the participation of larger credit unions.

The business of providing payment service instruments such as debit cards on current accounts is a complex, sophisticated and regulated business activity requiring a distinct business model and associated risk management capabilities and capacities. Furthermore, the provision of such services requires on-going investment, volume pricing and access to technical expertise which given typical credit union size is likely to require a shared service model.

The suggested limit of €75 million may be re-examined once the framework is established and operational, at which stage, smaller credit unions will have greater clarity regarding cost, experience and operational considerations necessary for informed decision making on participation.

Details and applications forms are available on the Central Bank website. [www.centralbank](http://www.centralbank).

ie/docs/default-source/Regulation/industry-market-sectors/credit-unions/applying-for-approvals/mpcas-application-form.pdf. The Central Bank has also indicated it is open to applications for alternative debit card proposals and recommends the MPCAS framework as a scalar template for such alternative proposals.

The Central Bank has approved 47 credit unions for MPCAS and have another 5 in progress. Combined these 52 credit unions have €7.6 billion in assets.

The Government wants not only strong, vibrant credit unions offering a safe and secure place for members' savings but also credit unions being appropriately positioned to offer their members a wide range of services including loans, debit card facilities and new products and services based on the needs of their membership.

### Departmental Budgets

98. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance the breakdown of the €945,000 capital allocation in the economic and policy division, that is, Vote 7 of the budget 2019 expenditure report of his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44463/18]

99. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance the breakdown of the €945,000 capital allocation in the banking and financial service policy division, that is, Vote 7 of the budget 2019 expenditure report of his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44464/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 98 and 99 together.

My Department received a Capital Allocation of €1,890,000 in the 2019 Estimates.

Due to changes in the programme structure for 2019 it has been decided to allocate certain support costs such as IT and Office Premises Costs on a 50:50 basis to my Department's two remaining programmes. As such the Capital Allocation which is a provision for Office Premises and IT and Office Equipment expenditure has been allocated on that basis.

The Capital budget for 2019 is to cover the projects outlined in the table below.

The amount relating to Various Office Premises Projects is a provision to allow us to engage OPW to carry out various necessary works on our buildings on a case by case basis as their resources become available.

As of today's date it is planned that projects will be commenced and completed in 2019 that will use the entire allocation.

#### Capital Expenditure Estimate 2019

Description	€
Various Office Premise Projects (Including new meeting rooms)	1,630,000
IT Capital	150,000
Registry Scanning project	80,000
Data Connection to Finglas	30,000

Description	€
Total	1,890,000

### Departmental Budgets

100. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance the breakdown of the €24 million capital allocation to the Revenue Commissioners, that is, Vote 9 of the budget 2019 expenditure report for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44465/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that continued investment in information and communications technology (ICT) has been a major driver of productivity growth in Revenue, as well as enabling better service levels for the public. Every year, Revenue needs to develop and implement a series of urgent ICT projects that ensure Revenue's ICT infrastructure can support budgetary and legislative changes as introduced by the Government or the EU, very frequently within tight timeframes.

While Revenue's capital expenditure largely relates to expenditure on ICT, it also must maintain its wider infrastructure including its fleet of vehicles, mobile scanners and other specialised equipment. In addition, it must maintain appropriate accommodation and furniture to support its 6,496 staff.

A table of target outputs for capital expenditure in 2019 is set out below.

Project	Capital Allocation
ICT External Development: This is to assist Revenue's internal ICT staff in meeting the required timelines for IT projects, while maintaining the high levels of confidentiality, integrity and availability expected within Revenue's systems. Major initiatives such as the introduction of PAYE real-time, a new Debt Management System and an Intelligence Management solution will be released in 2019. Ongoing work to implement the new EU driven Union Customs Code (UCC) system will continue through 2019 for release in 2020. A series of Maintenance & Enhancement (M&E) projects for Revenue's existing systems will also be delivered in 2019.	€14m
ICT Hardware Infrastructure: Revenue need to invest in ICT equipment and software on an ongoing basis. Circa €6m investment covers the acquisition of both new technologies and the upgrading/replacement of end of life equipment. This also covers technologies including storage, network and other infrastructure hardware and software. All investments are subject to public procurement.	€6m
Motor Vehicles and Equipment Maintenance: This subhead provides for the purchase, maintenance and running costs of official motor vehicles, Revenue Cutters, X Ray scanners and specialised equipment (e.g. detector dogs, diesel testing kits, radio equipment). This expenditure can vary from year to year depending on motor vehicle requirements, etc.	€2m

Project	Capital Allocation
Furniture and Fittings: This includes the provision of new furniture, repairs to existing furniture and replacing damaged floor coverings. It also includes some repairs/refurbishment of existing accommodation. In 2019 Revenue will also undertake refurbishment to accommodate additional staff for Trade Facilitation roles. This work is planned and implemented in conjunction with the OPW.	€2m
Total:	€24m

*Question No. 101 was answered with Question No. 55.*

### **Banking Sector**

102. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the establishment of the stakeholder forum on foot of the conclusions of the public banking investigation report; when a tender for the independent evaluation of the local public banking concept will issue; if the stakeholder forum will be involved in the selection of the external evaluator; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44524/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As the Deputy will be aware, my Department and the Department of Rural and Community Development published a Report on Local Public Banking at the beginning of July of this year. The Report concludes that there is not a compelling case for the State to use Exchequer funds to establish a new local public banking system.

However, as set out in the Report on Local Public Banking, my Department will be commissioning an independent, external evaluation to establish if there is a requirement for local and community banking in Ireland and, if so, whether there are other possible ways in which the broad objectives of local and community banking, could be furthered in Ireland.

Officials in my Department are currently preparing for a tender process to engage an external consultant. It is envisaged that the tender process will be concluded by the end of this year, with a view for the evaluation process to begin in early 2019. Part of the remit of the external evaluator will be to assemble and hold a stakeholder forum which will provide an opportunity for interested parties to share their views.

### **Inflationary Pressures**

103. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance if inflationary tendencies in the economy have been detected which may arise from enhanced house prices leading to higher mortgage repayments which might lead to higher wage demands; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44578/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** For the first nine months of the year, inflation as measured by the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP) averaged just 0.7 per cent on an annual basis. House price inflation is not included explicitly in the calculation of the general level of inflation. However, accommodation costs are reflected in the HICP through rent costs which increased by 5.8 per cent in the year to September 2018. This reflects house price inflation of 8.6 per cent on an annual basis.

In general, higher house prices will, all things being equal, lead to increased accommodation costs which may lead to higher wage demands. However, such impacts are likely to be marginal in terms of the general labour force. The key issue for housing at present is to increase supply to match demand, and the Government has a comprehensive set of measures in place to achieve this, most notably Rebuilding Ireland.

A more important factor in relation to wage pressure is the rate of unemployment. The continued decline in the unemployment rate is expected to put upward pressure on wages, with wage inflation set to accelerate from 2.4 per cent this year to 3.0 per cent next year, as outlined by my Department's macroeconomic forecasts published with Budget 2019.

The Government will continue to implement policies that increase the supply of housing and in turn help reduce inflationary tendencies in the housing market.

### **Brexit Issues**

104. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the degree to which adequate provisions have been put in place to safeguard the economy in advance of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44579/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Government is fully aware of the scale of the political, economic and diplomatic challenge posed by Brexit. It has been clear and consistent about Ireland's priorities: minimising the impact on trade and the economy; protecting the Northern Ireland Peace Process; maintaining the Common Travel Area; and influencing the future of the European Union.

Over recent years, Ireland has laid the foundations for a solid and sustained economic recovery. Indicators such as consumer spending and labour market developments are consistent with an economy that is maintaining momentum.

The economic and fiscal policies implemented over recent years have placed Ireland in a stronger position to ensure that the economy will continue to remain competitive in the face of future economic headwinds.

Budget 2019 continued the overall approach of prudent financial management to strengthen the resilience of Ireland's economy against the backdrop of heightened uncertainty, including from Brexit. It also builds on other Government initiatives, namely:

- investing in the future of the country through Project Ireland 2040, an ambitious and strategic vision for Ireland's investment in critical infrastructure;
- the opening of new markets for businesses through the Global Ireland 2025 strategy;
- policies to adapt to changes in the world of work - such as artificial intelligence and automation through the Future Jobs Programme, which will be launched early next year.

Budget 2019 will ensure that the economy is prepared for the challenges of Brexit through continued prudent management of the public finances, including through:

- Eliminating the headline deficit;
- Achieving the medium term budgetary objective
- Building up the Rainy Day Fund;

- Reducing the debt burden;
- Investing in infrastructure to boost competitiveness and productivity; and
- Investing in education.

The focus of Government budgetary policy is on having the appropriate fiscal stance. This facilitates the building-up of fiscal capacity which can help mitigate against future negative risks and potential shocks. In an increasingly unpredictable external environment, continued fiscal sustainability remains a priority.

Building on the measures announced in Budgets 2017 and 2018, Budget 2019 will help to ensure that Ireland is in the best possible position to respond to the challenges - and indeed the opportunities - that Brexit will bring. The measures introduced in Budget 2019 continue the process of ensuring that Ireland's economy remains competitive and resilient against the backdrop of heightened uncertainty, including from Brexit.

### **Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears**

105. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance when the Central Bank will formulate a new code of conduct to regulate the repossession of properties in circumstances in which the borrowers have consistently made payments in line with their ability even though not to the satisfaction of the lender in view of the fact that the lending institutions in the first instance were culpable in the financial collapse (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44581/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** A key priority for the Government and the Central Bank is ensuring that the interests of consumers of financial services are protected. A key element of the Central Bank's role is ensuring that the consumer protection regulatory framework is fit for purpose and ensures that consumers best interests are protected.

Within the remit of the Central Bank's responsibilities for safeguarding stability and protecting

consumers, its approach to mortgage arrears resolution is focussed on ensuring the fair treatment of borrowers. This is realised through a strong consumer protection framework and ensuring that lenders have appropriate arrears resolution strategies and operations in place.

The Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears (CCMA) forms part of the Central Bank's Consumer Protection Framework. It is a statutory Code first introduced by the Central Bank in February 2009, with the current CCMA becoming effective from 1 July 2013. The CCMA provides a strong consumer protection framework, aimed specifically at the process to be followed by relevant firms, to ensure borrowers in arrears or pre-arrears in respect of a mortgage loan secured on a primary residence are treated in a timely, transparent and fair manner.

Banks, retail credit firms and credit servicing firms servicing loans on behalf of unregulated loan owners are all required to comply with the CCMA. The overriding objective of the CCMA is to ensure the fair and transparent treatment of consumers in mortgage arrears or pre-arrears, and that there is due regard to the fact that each case of mortgage arrears is unique and needs to be considered on its own merits. The CCMA recognises that it is in the interests of borrowers and regulated firms to address financial difficulties as speedily, effectively and sympathetically as circumstances allow. It sets out the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP), a four-step process that regulated entities must follow:

Step 1: Communicate with borrower;

Step 2: Gather financial information;

Step 3: Assess the borrower's circumstances; and

Step 4: Propose a resolution

Each regulated entity must consider the borrower's situation in the context of the solutions they provide, which may differ from firm to firm. The CCMA does not prescribe the solution which must be offered.

In relation to the Deputy's question about formulating a new code of conduct to regulate repossessions, already under the CCMA a regulated entity may only commence legal proceedings for repossession where it has made every reasonable effort to agree an alternative repayment arrangement (ARA) with the borrowers and other clear requirements are met or the borrower has been classified as not co-operating. This framework requires lenders to exhaust the options available from the suite of ARAs offered before taking action which may result in the borrower losing his/her home (whether by voluntary sale or repossession). During the legal process, borrowers have opportunities to re-engage with lenders to find a solution. In some circumstances, however, loss of ownership may be unavoidable.

As you will recall, earlier this year, I asked the Governor of the Central Bank to review the CCMA to ensure that it continues to be effective in the context of loan sales. The Central Bank submitted their Report to me at the end of last week and I intend to bring it to Government at our next Government meeting on 6 November 2018.

### **Brexit Issues**

106. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which inward investment is likely to be affected by Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44582/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** There have been a number of studies of the economic impact of Brexit, a number by my Department, some in conjunction with the ESRI. Recent analysis in an OECD staff working paper found that the boost to the Irish economy from additional Foreign Direct Investment would be modest with a 0.1 per cent increase in GDP compared to a no Brexit scenario.

The Government is taking the following approach to mitigate the economic impact of Brexit and to maximise opportunities:

- prudent management of our economy and the public finances to enable us to meet future challenges;
- negotiating effectively, as part of the EU27, with the objective of reaching an agreement that sees the closest possible relationship between the EU and the UK while also ensuring a strong and well-functioning EU;
- supporting business and the economy through a broad range of Government measures, programmes and strategies;
- exploring existing and possible future EU measures that could potentially assist Ireland in mitigating the effects of the UK's withdrawal on specific Irish businesses and economic sec-

tors while also, in the light of developments, making a strong case at EU level that the UK's withdrawal represents a serious disturbance to the Irish economy overall and that we will require support; and

- maximising any economic opportunities arising from the UK's decision to leave the EU.

While the future trade path between the UK and EU is still unknown, it is nevertheless crucially important that we prepare our economy for the challenges and opportunities ahead. The Government has already taken a number of important steps both to prepare our economy for the challenges of Brexit and to maximise any opportunities that arise, including in Budgets 2017, 2018 and 2019, the Action Plan for Jobs 2018, our Trade and Investment Strategy and Project Ireland 2040.

In particular, Government and state agencies are working hard to exploit any opportunities from Brexit, including promoting trade and investment opportunities in Ireland, as an English speaking member of the EU with unfettered accesses to the EU market.

At the sectoral level new opportunities have also been identified – particularly in the international financial services sector which is heavily reliant on the need for access to the Single Market and ongoing compliance with EU regulatory standards. Brexit has already seen opportunities for Ireland to increase its share of financial services based inward investment. Public announcements to establish or expand operations have been made by a number of companies. In addition the Government will continue to leverage our IFS2020 Strategy to maximise those and other opportunities.

### **Fiscal Policy**

107. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance if he remains satisfied regarding the attainment of budgetary objectives in 2019 notwithstanding international developments, Brexit and international trade disputes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44583/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Against the potential challenges we face it is imperative to boost the resilience of the Irish economy in order to minimise – in so far as is possible – any future disruption brought on by potential international developments, including the UK's departure from the European Union. This is why eliminating the budgetary deficit forms a key part of the Government's policy response. Accordingly, in the recently published Budget 2019, I announced a balanced budget for next year. Thereafter we will see a return to surplus, better positioning the public finances to face into any uncertainty.

Our debt ratio has continued to improve. Having stood at 111 per cent of GNI\* in 2017, this is forecast to reduce further to 105 per cent in 2018 and 101 per cent in 2019. While this still remains elevated, provided we continue to adopt the correct policy choices, this is on an improving trajectory. At the same time, the Government is committed to using receipts from the resolution of the financial crisis for public debt reduction.

The MTO is broadly achieved next year, again standing the public finances in good stead to help withstand any potential future shocks. Separately the Government is also establishing a Rainy Day Fund in order to create a fiscal safety buffer to help absorb inevitable future shocks to our economy, while at the same time ensuring the long-term sustainability of Ireland's public finances.

Finally, my Department will continue to monitor fiscal developments very closely during

2019.

*Question No. 108 answered with Question No. 10.*

### **Housing Issues**

109. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance if the provision of affordable and local authority housing is deemed by the Central Bank to be an overheating issue in the economy (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44585/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The provision of affordable and local authority housing is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government.

Governor Lane addressed the issue that the Deputy is referring to in a pre-Budget letter to me on 3 August 2018. In his concluding paragraph, he stated, “Finally, the additional spending pressures associated with an increase in public investment require offsetting balancing fiscal measures if the economy is operating in the neighbourhood of full capacity. Otherwise, there is the prospect of short-term crowding out, with exporting sectors especially affected by the loss in competitiveness associated with a deficit-financed surge in public investment. In contrast, a fiscally-neutral increase in public investment would deliver the long-term gains without inducing short-term overheating.” The Governor’s letter is available in full at the following link:

*[www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/publications/correspondence/oireachtas-correspondence/03-august-2018-pre-budget-letter-to-minister-for-finance-paschal-donohoe.pdf](http://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/publications/correspondence/oireachtas-correspondence/03-august-2018-pre-budget-letter-to-minister-for-finance-paschal-donohoe.pdf).*

The issue was also addressed by the Central Bank, in a recent Central Bank Quarterly Bulletin article: “Irish Government Investment, Financing and the Public Capital stock”. This article considered the appropriate financing of increased public investment, including the provision of affordable and local authority housing, in the context of an economy, such as Ireland’s that was approaching full capacity. The conclusion of the article was that any increase in public investment should be financed in a budget neutral manner. This would mitigate short term overheating risks arising from the unavoidable boost to aggregate demand while maintaining the long-term benefits of such investment. The article is available in full at the following link:

*[www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/publications/quarterly-bulletins/quarterly-bulletin-signed-articles/irish-government-investment-financing-and-the-public-capital-stock-\(hickey-lozej-and-smyth\).pdf?sfvrsn=2](http://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/publications/quarterly-bulletins/quarterly-bulletin-signed-articles/irish-government-investment-financing-and-the-public-capital-stock-(hickey-lozej-and-smyth).pdf?sfvrsn=2).*

### **Household Savings Rate**

110. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the degree to which investment in property is competing with savings in financial institutions; if low interest rates appear to favour property investment instead of savings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44587/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Central Bank publishes quarterly statistics on the growth in household deposits. The latest figures show that in June 2018 household deposits increased by 3.4 per cent on an annual basis.

The growth in household deposits reflects our strong and growing economy, lower unem-

ployment and wage growth. This increase has occurred during a period of very low deposit rates. The ECB has maintained the interest rate on its main refinancing operations at zero since March 2016. In relation to household investment in the property market, the latest RTB data (Q2 2018) indicates that there has been no large scale increase in Buy to Let activity recently.

Taken together, the data do not provide evidence that low deposit rates are depressing household savings in Ireland, or encouraging a re-direction of capital into the property sector at a household level.

At a corporate level, the increasing presence of institutional funders in the property market has been well documented. Some of these investors may well be taking advantage of historically low interest rates to borrow funds on capital markets in order to invest in Irish property. There are a number of advantages of institutional investment in the housing market, not least a relative reduction in the volume of residential lending on the aggregate balance sheet of the Irish banking sector.

The main issue in the Irish housing market is a lack of supply. Private investors, whether diverting corporate or household savings into property investment or not, have a role to play helping to address this issue.

### **Household Savings Rate**

111. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which savings in the various financial institutions have fluctuated over the past ten years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44588/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am informed by the Central Bank that it publishes monthly data on the total household deposits (as distinct from savings) with financial institutions (banks and credit unions) in Table A11.1 (available at the following link:

CentralBankFinancialInstitutions Savings

The data show that since January 2009 household deposits declined from €98 billion to reach a low of €91 billion in November 2011, and have steadily increased since then to €103 billion in August 2018.

### **House Prices**

112. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the measures he plans to take to combat house price inflation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44589/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Government's primary response to mitigating house price inflation is to increase supply. 'Rebuilding Ireland: An Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness', which is the primary responsibility of my colleague the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, sets out a comprehensive package of actionable measures designed to address the ongoing structural constraints within the construction sector and restore the housing market to a sustainable equilibrium.

The latest data on housing activity shows continued strong growth. New Home Completions stood at 16,274 in the 4 quarters to Q2 2018 compared to 11,619 in Q2 2017, an increase of 40 per cent. Planning permission for 26,752 units was granted in the year to Q2 2018, this is an indicator of continued strong growth in home completions and is up 39 per cent on the

previous year.

€1.2 billion in capital funding was allocated in Budget 2019 to support the delivery of 10,000 social homes. This included a €310 million allocation for the Serviced Sites Fund out to 2021 to increase the supply of affordable housing. The funding will allow for a discount of up to €50,000 per affordable home. The Land Development Agency (LDA), announced earlier this year, will further contribute to achieving the Government's targets in the area of affordable housing – with a requirement that 30 per cent of all publicly owned lands developed by the LDA will be reserved for affordable housing purposes. By identifying and coordinating the development of State land the LDA will help drive increased supply and sustainable urban redevelopment.

In addition, the Central Bank of Ireland, as part of its independent mandate to preserve and protect financial stability in Ireland, introduced the macro-prudential measures for residential mortgage lending in February 2015. Although the rules do not explicitly target a reduction in home price inflation, the imposition of Loan to Income and Loan to Value limits, reduces the scope for potential price increases by limiting the amount of credit available to households.

More broadly, the actions taken to increase supply and reduce house price inflation under Rebuilding Ireland are monitored on an ongoing basis and reported publicly through quarterly progress reports.

### **Housing Loans**

113. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance if in the effort to combat the cost of the housing crisis, consideration will be given to allowing first-time or subsequent purchasers to buy a rundown property at its current value and the loan to cover the cost of renovation in circumstances in which it is possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44591/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Central Bank has advised that under the Central Bank loan-to-value rules there is no restriction on the type of lending that the Deputy refers to. The definition of “value” in Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013 (Section 48), (Housing Loan Requirements) Regulations 2015 (S.I. No. 47 of 2015, as amended by S.I. No. 568 of 2016 and S.I. No. 559 of 2017) allows for the value to be the current market value of the land and buildings, plus the estimated cost of construction (including renovation) at the time of entering into the loan agreement. If this value is higher than the market value of the property after the all construction works take place, as estimated at the time of entering into the loan agreement, then that estimated market value must be used when calculating LTV.

### **Departmental Budgets**

114. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which he expects all Departments to observe the budgetary situation as set out in the Budget Statement 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44580/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Expenditure Report 2019 set out total gross voted expenditure of €66.6 billion for 2019. Of this, €59.3 billion is gross voted current expenditure, while €7.3 billion is gross voted capital expenditure. The Departmental allocations outlined in Expenditure Report 2019 will be set out in further

detail in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV) to be published in December.

A key responsibility of each Minister and Department is the effective and efficient delivery of public services within budgetary allocations. In relation to spending, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is in regular contact with all other Departments and Offices to ensure that expenditure is being managed within the overall fiscal parameters. The drawdown of funds from the Exchequer is reported on each month against expenditure profiles in the Fiscal Monitor published by the Department of Finance.

Sound public finances are necessary to underpin sustainable economic growth and to support Departments and Ministers in delivering public services. This requires effective and efficient management of overall expenditure. To support this goal, my Department engaged throughout 2018 with a range of Departments on year two of the Spending Review process, with a view to reinforcing a systematic analysis of existing spending programmes, focusing on an assessment of efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. The Spending Review papers, published both this year and last year, provide an evidence base to inform choices regarding Departmental budgetary allocations and to identify areas of existing spend that require ongoing analysis to ensure value for money is being achieved. These processes, along with the ongoing development of initiatives such as performance budgeting and equality budgeting will continue to support Departments and Ministers during 2019 in ensuring that public expenditure is used in the most effective and sustainable way.

### **Project Ireland 2040**

115. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which he expects the various targets in Project Ireland 2040 to be achieved on time and within budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44586/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I should first explain that the overall objective of Project Ireland 2040 is to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the development and implementation of policy regarding spatial planning, climate action and infrastructure investment and delivery. Project Ireland 2040 is the overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of our country. It includes the National Planning Framework (NPF), backed up by a €116 billion capital investment plan for the period from 2018 to 2027 as set out in the National Development Plan (NDP).

Clearly, all of the targets and budgets set out in Project Ireland 2040 are included because they are expected to be achievable. That said, I also expect that challenges will emerge in the course of implementation.

For that reason, the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 is being overseen by the Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board, which is jointly chaired by the Secretaries General of my Department and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and is being supported by an Infrastructure Projects and Programmes Office established within my Department. The Delivery Board consists of the Secretaries General of the main capital spending Departments, and will report to Government through the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure.

The Delivery Board will monitor and oversee the implementation of structures and performance targets across the various sectors to ensure a co-ordinated and collaborative whole-of-Government approach to the successful delivery of the NDP and NPF. In addition, a Construction Sector Group has also been established, to ensure regular and open dialogue between Government and the construction sector in relation to significant issues relating to the success-

ful delivery of the NDP on a value-for-money basis for the Exchequer.

The leadership provided by the Delivery Board will ensure that implementation challenges are addressed, and Project Ireland 2040 secures the transformational benefits expected.

### **Flood Relief Schemes**

116. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if compensation was paid for structural damage which occurred to private properties during the construction of flood relief measures and consequent to these works carried out by the Office of Public Works at O’Neill Crowley Quay and Ashe Quay, Fermoy, County Cork. [44268/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Office of Public Works is not aware of and does not accept that there was any structural damage to properties in the O’Neill Crowley Quay and Ashe Quay areas in Fermoy arising from the flood relief works carried out on the Blackwater River. No compensation claims have been submitted by property owners in this regard.

### **Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Programme**

117. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to establish a national support mechanism for the maintenance of rivers and watercourses in order to ensure that flood relief works can be carried out in affected areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44275/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The OPW is responsible for the maintenance of Arterial Drainage Schemes and catchment drainage schemes designated under the Arterial Drainage Acts of 1945 and 1995. The OPW carries out an annual programme, on an average five-yearly cycle, of statutory Arterial Drainage Maintenance to a total of 11,500 km of river channel and approximately 730 km of embankments nationally.

Drainage Districts are areas where drainage schemes to improve land for agricultural purposes were constructed under the Arterial Drainage Acts from 1842 up to 1943. Of the 293 schemes carried out, 170 remain covering 4,600 km (2,860 miles) of channel. The statutory duty of maintenance for 4,600 km of river channel benefitting from these schemes rests with the Local Authorities concerned.

These maintenance of watercourses are one element of a whole of Government approach to flood risk management across three strategic and policy areas:

- Prevention e.g. avoiding construction in flood-prone areas,
- Protection e.g. taking feasible measures, both structural and non-structural, to protect areas against flooding, and
- Preparedness e.g. informing the public about dealing with flood risk and a flood.

The Interdepartmental Flood Policy Coordination Group, that I chair, coordinates and recommends policies and measures that could support individuals and communities to respond effectively to flood risks. Implementing the National Flood Risk Policy, launched with the Flood Risk Management Plans on 3 May, 2018, provides an update of progress by the Group’s implementation of the national flood risk policy. This report is available on [www.floodinfo.ie](http://www.floodinfo.ie).

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 3 May, 2018 of 29 flood risk management plans which propose 118 new outline flood relief works on top of the 42 major projects already completed and the 33 major schemes within the existing capital works programme of the 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. The key conclusion of the Plans is that 95% of properties assessed through CFRAM can be protected through continued investment in flood relief schemes.

Local flooding issues are a matter, in the first instance, for each local authority to investigate and address. It is open to all local authorities to submit a funding application to the OPW under its Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme. The Scheme's eligibility criteria, including a requirement that measures are cost beneficial, is published on the OPW website, [www.opw.ie](http://www.opw.ie). The OPW consider each application in accordance with the scheme's eligibility criteria and having regard to the overall availability of resources for flood risk management. Some 500 minor works projects have been delivered under the Scheme providing local flooding solutions to approximately 6,500 properties.

The Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Working Group, was established in 2016 and is chaired by the OPW. The Group took a decision in October 2016 to trial the lowering of the lake levels on Lough Allen, within the existing statutory framework, during the Winter 2016/2017 to help mitigate potential flood risk. A protocol was finalised between ESB, Waterways Ireland and the OPW to lower the late Autumn and Winter minimum lake levels in Lough Allen by approximately 0.7 metres with the first reduction implemented in October 2016. The trial was repeated for the Winter 2017/2018 and is being repeated for this coming Winter. Planning for a strategic maintenance programme of the River Shannon is also being advanced by the Group.

The OPW will be publishing on <http://flooding.ie/> guidance to landowners in relation to the maintenance of watercourses on or near their lands in the context of managing flood risk. This website is undergoing a review and it is expected that an updated website with some guidance will be available before the end of this year.

### **Public Procurement Regulations**

118. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the specific circumstances or criteria under which the Office of Government Procurement is used to advise on or implement a tendering process in Departments or State organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44295/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Procurement is a key element of the Government's Public Service Reform agenda and, given the volume of the State's spend, it is essential that the Public Service operates in a co-ordinated and efficient way and delivers sustainable savings for the taxpayer.

The Office of Government Procurement (OGP) leads the reform programme and sets the overarching policy framework for public procurement in Ireland.

The OGP together with four key sectors (Health, Defence, Education and Local Government) has responsibility for sourcing goods and services on behalf of the Public Service.

The OGP has established a wide range of framework arrangements since it became opera-

tional in 2014. These arrangements are in accordance with EU Directives, national legislation and procurement best practice and support public bodies in delivering value for money and compliantly procuring goods and services to meet their needs.

The OGP also supports public sector bodies with bespoke competitions on a case by case basis. Guidelines and template documentation are available on the OGP website. Furthermore, the OGP proactively engages with Government Departments, public bodies and industry to assist, support and provide advice and guidance in relation to public procurement.

### **Public Procurement Regulations**

119. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if it is standard procedure as part of a tendering process for the State to pay the costs of tendering for a Government contract to a third party that is tendering for that contract; if there are Office of Government Procurement rules regarding such a practice; the rules in relation to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44296/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Public Procurement is governed by EU and National rules and guidelines. The aim of these rules is to promote an open, competitive and non-discriminatory public procurement regime which delivers best value for money. These rules do not prohibit a public body from providing some form of compensation to a supplier for the costs of tendering for a Government contract. However, this approach would be taken only in exceptional circumstances for very complex or innovative procurement projects that would be costly for suppliers to prepare for. It is not the standard procedure or common practice.

### **National Broadband Plan**

120. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his Department has been involved either through the Office of Government Procurement or otherwise to date with the tendering process for the national broadband plan; if so, the details of such involvement; if his Department will be involved with the tendering process for the National Broadband Plan; if so, the details of that involvement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44297/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Officials in my Department with responsibility for the Vote of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment have been appraised periodically by that Department of progress on the procurement process but have had no involvement or input in that process or any evaluation of same.

The Office of Government Procurement was represented in an advisory role on the Procurement Board for this project. The primary aim of this Board is to independently review the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment's oversight of the evaluation stages of the procurement process but has no decision making role in the procurement process. This is a matter for the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment.

### **Departmental Staff Data**

121. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the

breakdown of staff in his Department by grade. [44360/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The breakdown of staff by grade within the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, based on data of 30th September 2018, is set out in the following table:

Grade	FTE	Headcount
Secretary General	1	1
Chief Information Officer	1	1
Assistant Secretary/Director	7	7
Chief Medical Officer	1	1
Principal Officer	34.6	36
Assistant Principal	123.01	127
Administrative Officer	62.05	63
Higher Executive Officer	97.25	101
Executive Officer	46.7	49
Clerical Officer	35.5	38
Temporary Clerical Officer	1	1
Occupational Physician	3	3
Occupational Health Nurse	1.5	2
Intern	2	2
Totals	416.61	432

#### Civil Service Staff Data

122. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the rules that apply to recruitment campaigns that are limited to existing civil or public servants in terms of when such campaigns may be used; the grades they apply to; the percentage of posts they may apply to; and the legislation upon which such a policy is based. [44373/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As the Deputy will be aware, Government departments have been working under delegated sanction arrangements for their recruitment and staffing issues since 2015. Under these arrangements, there are multi-annual pay ceilings agreed and set and thereafter decisions about recruitment and promotion and overall grade composition up to and including Principal Officer level are devolved.

In general selection competitions within the Irish 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

Candidates who are successful at a competition are ranked in order of merit and are placed on panels to await appointment when and if a vacancy arises. Recruitment and promotions are made on the basis of an agreed method of sequence. Within the civil service, sequences vary for each grade and usually involve a combination of open, interdepartmental and internal panels.

Sequences for general service civil service grades are agreed under the Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme and are as follows

grade	open	interdepartmental	internal
Clerical Officer	100%	nil	nil
Executive Officer	40%	30%	30%
Higher Executive Officer	nil	50%	50%
Administrative Officer	100%	nil	nil
Assistant Principal	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%
Principal Officer	66.6%	nil	33.3%

Sequences are monitored by my department on a quarterly basis.

### Seirbhísí Oileán

123. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe cén dul chun cinn atá déanta ag Oifig na nOibreacha Poiblí chun áit páirceála shábháilte a chur ar fáil do rothair, carráistí capall agus busanna gar do láthair Dhún Aonghusa in Árann; cad iad sonraí na gcomhráití a bhí ag an Oifig le Comhairle Contae na Gaillimhe leis na leas-sealbhóirí eile le trí mhí anuas; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [44387/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Mar a tugadh le fios sa gceist parlaiminte níos luaithe, tá plean curtha le chéile ag Oifig na nOibreacha Poiblí chun sábháilteacht a fheabhsú ag an mbealach bóthair go dtí suíomh Séadchomhartha Náisiúnta Dún Aonghusa.

Níl aon réiteach go fóill ar na saincheistanna easaontais le páirtaithe leas-shealbhóirí áirithe. Cé go raibh comhráití leis an bpríomh úinéir talún, níl aon dul chun cinn déanta leis an togra.

Ta súil ag Oifig na nOibreacha Poiblí dul i dteagmháil le na leas-shealbhóirí go luath, le iarracht a dhéanamh a theacht ar réiteach le go gcuirfí na hoibreacha riachtanach ar an mbóthar príomháideach san áireamh i bPlean Gnó 2019.

Ní raibh aon chomhráití le gairid idir Oifig na nOibreacha Poiblí agus Comhairle Contae na Gaillimhe maidir leis an mbóthar poiblí chuig an suíomh, mar go bhfuil sin taobh amuigh dá gcúram.

### Departmental Expenditure

124. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the expenditure ceilings for each Department in each of the years 2019 to 2024. [44424/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Expenditure Report 2019 sets out gross voted current expenditure ceilings on a Ministerial level for the period 2019 - 2021. Building on the multi-annual ceilings published in the Mid-Year Expenditure Report 2018, these ceilings reflect the impact of Budget 2019 decisions, certain demographic pressures and the cost of pay agreements. Expenditure ceilings beyond this period have not yet been agreed on a Ministerial level. The resources to be allocated for 2020 and 2021 will be allocated as part of the Budget 2020 and Budget 2021 processes to provide for new measures or

for the carryover impact of Budget 2019 measures.

**Gross Voted Current Expenditure 2019 - 2021**

	2019	2020	2021
	€ million	€ million	€ million
Agriculture, Food and the Marine Group	1,341	1,341	1,341
Business, Enterprise & Innovation Group	330	330	330
Children and Youth Affairs Group	1,479	1,479	1,479
Communications, Climate Action & Environment Group	391	391	391
Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht Group	264	264	264
Defence Group	888	888	888
Education & Skills Group	9,822	9,876	9,922
Employment Affairs & Social Protection Group	20,484	20,744	21,004
Finance Group	481	481	481
Foreign Affairs Group	781	781	781
Health Group	16,360	16,497	16,645
Housing, Planning & Local Government Group	1,919	1,919	1,919
Justice Group	2,572	2,572	2,572
Public Expenditure and Reform Group	1,052	1,052	1,052
Rural & Community Development	152	152	152
Taoiseach	189	189	189
Transport, Tourism and Sport	755	755	755
Cumulative Cost of Public Service Stability Agreement	-	390	651
Resources to be Allocated 2020	-	606	606
Resources to be Allocated 2021			725
<b>Total Gross Current Expenditure *</b>	<b>59,259</b>	<b>60,706</b>	<b>62,146</b>

\* Rounding affects totals.

**Departmental Budgets**

125. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Departmental capital allocations applying to each Department in each of the years 2019 to 2024. [44425/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The multi-annual Exchequer capital allocations agreed under the National Development Plan underpin each Department's capital planning process for a five-year period from 2018 to 2022. These five-year allocations will be reviewed and extended annually on a rolling basis to include a new fifth year, as part of the annual Estimates process. This will provide Government with an annual opportunity to review the allocations in light of any implementation issues arising and/or new priorities which may emerge as the National Development Plan is implemented.

The latest multi-annual capital expenditure allocations for each Department are set out on page 228 of the recently published Budget 2019 Expenditure Report and cover the period 2019

to 2022. The capital allocations for 2023 will be determined as part of the finalisation of the 2019 estimates process and will be published in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019. The allocations for 2024 will be established next year, as part of the Estimates process for 2020.

### Departmental Budgets

126. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the breakdown of the €84,000 capital allocation in the public expenditure and sectoral policy division, that is, Vote 11, of the budget 2019 expenditure report of his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44466/18]

127. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the breakdown of the €4,331,000 capital allocation in the public service management and reform division, that is, Vote 11, of the budget 2019 expenditure report of his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44467/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 126 and 127 together.

The capital allocation for Vote 11 – Department of Public Expenditure and Reform – is €4.33 million in 2019.

The information requested by the Deputy regarding Vote 11 is set out in the following table:

Subhead	Area of Spend / Project	Planned Completion Date	Allocation
Programme A - Public Expenditure and Sectoral Policy			
A.2	Office Equipment	End 2019	€84,000
Programme B - Public Service Management and Reform			
B.2	Office Equipment	End 2019	€196,000
B.2	Office Premises	End 2019	€35,000
B.6	Office of the Government Chief Information Officer	End 2019	€3,500,000
B.10	Civil Service Learning and Development Project	End Q1, 2019	€544,000
B.10	Civil Service Learning and Development Operations	End 2019	€56,000
			€4,331,000

The primary purpose of the capital investment undertaken from Vote 11 is to deliver greater effectiveness and efficiency across the Civil and Public Service. The main areas of spend in this regard are the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) and Civil Service Learning and Development (OneLearning).

The OGCIO is the largest area of capital spend and this supports investment in ICT as part of the implementation of the Public Service ICT Strategy, including the ongoing roll-out of the Build to Share Programme and the eGovernment Strategy. OneLearning is the new Learning and Development Centre for the Civil Service, which is a key element of the Civil Service Renewal Plan. OneLearning is responsible for all core training that is common across the Civil

Service and it will be enabled by a new learning and development technology platform.

### Departmental Budgets

128. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the breakdown of the €687,000 capital allocation in the Office of Government Procurement for 2019, that is, Vote 39 of the budget 2019 expenditure report by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44468/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Office of Government Procurement has been allocated a capital budget of €687,000 for 2019. This allocation is for a mixture of project based and routine ongoing capital spend.

Below is a summary of the project based work. All projects are anticipated to be completed during 2019.

Project	2019 spend	Description
eTenders ESPD	€20,000	eESPD project completion.
CRM	€292,000	Microsoft Dynamics365 implementation and development.
Works on Dublin and Regional offices	€171,500	Necessary works to be carried out to improve facilities and expand capacity
Total Project Based Spend	€483,500	

### Departmental Budgets

129. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the breakdown of the €76,262,000 capital allocation in the flood risk management division of the Office of Public Works, that is, Vote 13 of the budget 2019 expenditure report for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44469/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The 2019 capital allocation for the Flood Risk Management area will allow (i) the continued implementation of the existing programme of major flood relief projects and the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme; (ii) the further development and progression of the initial tranche of 50 projects arising from the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Plans (FRAMPs) which I announced on 3rd May and (iii) continued work on a range of other programmes which include Voluntary Home Relocation/Remedial Works, Second Cycle of the Flood Directive and National Flood Forecasting and Warning Service.

Table A below sets out the breakdown of projected expenditure in these areas for 2019:

Table A

Programme	Projected expenditure
Existing Capital Projects to be at Construction stage during 2019	€54m
Existing Capital Projects at Design Stage	€5m
Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme	€3m

Programme	Projected expenditure
New Projects arising from Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Plans (FRAMPs) - mainly design costs and other pre-construction costs eg site investigations surveys etc. Some of the smaller new projects may reach construction stage in 2019.	€7m
Other Programmes	€7m

There are currently ten major projects at construction with six of these expected to be substantially completed and operational by the end of 2019. These include, Bandon and Skibbereen in Co Cork, Ennis Lower in Co Clare, Bellurgan in Co Louth and Claregalway and Dunkellin in Co Galway. Construction works on projects in Athlone in Co Westmeath, River Dodder in Dublin City, Clonakilty in Co Cork and Templemore in Co Tipperary will continue beyond 2019.

The following major projects are expected to commence construction before the end of 2019:

- Blackpool, Co Cork
- Glashaboy, Co Cork
- Douglas, Co Cork
- Ennis South, Co Clare
- Lower Morell, Co Kildare
- Sandymount, Dublin City
- Whitechurch Stream, Co Dublin
- Ashbourne, Co Meath
- Morrison's Island, Cork City – subject to planning approval (Part Public Realm and part Flood Defence Scheme)
- Crossmolina, Co Mayo

The further project level design and planning of the initial 50 schemes arising from the FRAMPs, launched in May of this year, is underway and will continue during the course of the next year as well.

### **Departmental Budgets**

130. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the breakdown of the €105,787,000 capital allocation in the estate management division of the Office of Public Works, that is, Vote 13 of the budget 2019 expenditure report for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44470/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** A breakdown of the €105,787,000 capital allocation in the Estate Management Division of the Office of Public Works 2019, is set out below. The allocations are indicative estimates only and are subject to change and reallocation during 2019.

**Office of Public Works – Estate Management Capital Budget for 2019 - Summary**

Expenditure Category	€' 000
New Works Alterations and Additions	73,981
Administration	3076
Grants for Refurbishment Works and Services	250
Purchase of Sites and Buildings	3,480
Unitary Payments (Convention Centre, Dublin)	25,000
Total	105.787

**Breakdown of New Works Alterations and Additions – Total Expenditure of €73.981 million**

Expenditure Category	Planning/Enabling Works €'000	Commencing €'000	On Site €'000
Planning and Architectural Services	1,901		
Garda Building Programme			
Athlone Garda Station			4000
Portlaoise Garda Station		2,600	
Donegal Garda Station		2,300	
Athlone Garda Water Unit			950
Garda Station Cell Upgrade Programme			2500
Fabric Upgrade Programme (Garda Stations)			1000
Cultural and Heritage			
Leinster House			5680
Cultural Institutions			2000
Historic Properties			3200
Universal Access Programme			500
Mechanical & Electrical Programme Including Energy Conservation			14000
Minor New Works			
Security Works Programme			500
Health & Safety Programme			500
Fabric Upgrade Programme			2500
Office Rationalisation and Fit Out Programme			
Leeson Lane, Dublin 2		14,200	
Tom Johnson House, Dublin 4	1,250		
22-25 Clare Street, D2	100		
Merrion Square/Fenian Street, D2	100		
94 Merrion Square, D2		5,000	
Hawkins House, D2	2,200		
Office Accommodation fit-outs		7,000	
Sub-totals	5,551	31,100	37,330

### Departmental Budgets

131. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the breakdown of the €2,500,000 capital allocation in the Public Appointments Service, that is, Vote 17 of the budget 2019 expenditure report for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44471/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Public Appointments Service (PAS) has been provided with a capital allocation of €2,500,000 in 2019.

This funding will enable PAS to commence two capital projects in 2019 - Project Nova (€1m in 2019) and a project to upgrade the organisation's office premises (€1.5m in 2019). Details of both projects are outlined in the table below.

While both projects will commence in 2019, Project Nova is expected to conclude in 2021.

This funding will help to ensure that PAS can maintain and enhance its provision of quality recruitment and resourcing solutions across the public service.

Project	Description	2019 Allocation
Project Nova	A three-year project to:- Streamline, enhance and harmonise the recruitment and selection business processes of PAS;- Deliver necessary enhancements to the current online recruitment platform to allow for efficiency gains in the short to medium term; - Replace the current online recruitment platform with a fit-for-purpose, future-proofed IT platform that meets the strategic and operational needs of PAS.	- The €1 million provided for in the 2019 Budget is the first part of a three year investment in PAS's critical IT recruitment and selection platform that will involve total estimated funding of €3.5 million over the period to 2021. The 2019 investment is expected to commence by mid-year.
Offices Premises Expenses	A year long project to:- Upgrade recruitment facilities for candidates to ensure optimal configuration and addition of interview suites to meet the evolving needs of the organization;- Upgrade staff work spaces to reflect new work streams that have opened within the Public Appointments Service in line with the aforementioned harmonisation project; and - Open additional staffing and customer spaces	- The project work relating to this €1.5 million funding provided in the 2019 Budget is expected to commence by the end of quarter one 2019 and be completed by end year.

### Departmental Budgets

132. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the breakdown of the €10,900,000 capital allocation in the National Shared Services Office, NSSO, function of his Department, that is, Vote 18 of the budget 2019 expenditure report for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44472/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The NSSO

Function, a business Division of the National Shared Services Office (Vote 18), will receive a capital allocation of €10,900,000 in 2019.

A breakdown of the €10,900,000 capital allocation in the NSSO Function is as follows:

Project	Cost	Commenced in 2019	Completed in 2019
Financial Mangement Shared Services Project (FMSS)	€8,256,000	No	Ongoing project with system to 'go-live' in 2019
Fixtures & Fittings	€35,000	Yes	Yes
IT Capital Expenditure	€2,609,000	Yes	Yes

**Further supporting information is available as follows:**

**FMSS Project - Financial Management Shared Service**

The introduction of Financial Management Shared Services for the Civil Service is progressing.

In January 2016 the Government approved a feasibility study and business case which identified a significant opportunity to improve the delivery of financial management services across Government bodies through the establishment of a centralised Financial Management Shared Services

Financial Management Shared Services is expected to commence provision of services in 2019 to a number of the 48 Government organisations who will eventually benefit from the project.

**IT Capital Expenditure**

IT capital expenditure relates to IT support and development costs of all HR and Payroll solutions in operation in the National Shared Services Office, including Core HR and Peoplesoft. These costs include delivering on operational objectives of organisation scalability, process efficiency, data convergence and integration, and improved end-user experience.

**Departmental Budgets**

133. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the breakdown of the €100,000 capital allocation in the human resource shared services division of the National Shared Services Office for 2019, that is, Vote 18 of the budget 2019 expenditure report by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44473/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Human Resources Shared Services Division of the National Shared Services Office (NSSO) will receive a capital allocation of €100,000 to enable the upgrade of the Division's facilities in 2019.

A breakdown of the €100,000 capital allocation is as follows:

Project	Cost	Will Commence in 2019	Will be completed in 2019
Pensions Room	€20,000	Yes	Yes

Project	Cost	Will Commence in 2019	Will be completed in 2019
Communal Canteen	€80,000	Yes	Yes

#### Pension Room

The NSSO is required to hold unique records of officers' service in paper format. The current facility requires an upgrade to provide additional capacity, and the project will also enable the NSSO to comply with fire regulations, health and safety and GDPR obligations.

#### Communal Canteen

This project will create a single communal canteen for the NSSO and enhance staff welfare.

### Brexit Issues

134. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the exact amount of Exchequer funding that his Department, including the Office of Public Works, has allocated and expended in each of the years since June 2016 on upgrading infrastructure at Dublin and Rosslare Ports in order to prepare for the possibility of the UK becoming a third country with the EU and the increased export certification, sanitary and phytosanitary controls required; and, if not, the reason. [44515/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Office of Public Works has engaged in extensive consultations with the Office of the Revenue Commissioners, Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, Department of Health, Health Service Executive, Department of Transport and An Garda Síochána to identify additional infrastructural requirements in ports and airports. This work is ongoing and includes facilities for customs controls and sanitary and phytosanitary checks.

There has been no expenditure to date and the issue of funding has not been addressed.

### Student Grant Scheme

135. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated full year cost of continuing the restoration of postgraduate grants with the restoration of the partial band rate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44240/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy will be aware, additional funding of €7m was secured in Budgets 2017 and 2018 to facilitate the reinstatement of full maintenance grants from September 2017, for the most disadvantaged postgraduate students. This benefitted circa 1,000 postgraduate students who met the eligibility criteria for the special rate of maintenance grant for the academic year 2017/18 and reversed the budgetary cut that was imposed on this cohort of students in 2012.

If postgraduate supports and numbers were returned to the pre-2012 level, it is estimated that additional funding of €44.1m would be required on top of the additional €7m secured in recent budgets.

### Schools Grievance Procedures

136. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the

case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44255/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** On 20 September 2018, an independent appeals committee held a full hearing on the appeal taken under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 by the person referred to by the Deputy. The appeal has been upheld and the decision of the appeals committee was forwarded to the appellant last week.

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

137. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the additional supports being put in place for a person (details supplied). [44269/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** My Department's policy is that all children with Special Educational Needs can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in school settings through the primary and post primary school network.

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

Enhanced pupil teacher and Special Needs Assistant ratios are provided to special schools to support them in dealing with pupil's educational and care needs.

In regard to School Transport, Bus Éireann has confirmed that a school transport service is being provided for the child in question.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

138. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44288/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the school in question submitted an application for major capital funding to my Department.

The Deputy will be aware that the National Development Plan (NDP) provides for an €8.4 billion investment in school buildings over the period 2018 to 2027 to deliver on NDP and National Planning Framework objectives through addressing the twin priorities of catering for demographics and ensuring a strengthened focus on refurbishment of existing school stock. This investment will result in an almost doubling of the capital budget for school buildings - €540m in 2018 rising to an annual average of circa. €1 billion in the second half of the NDP period.

The strengthened focus on refurbishment of existing school stock will have different strands including prefab replacement, PE hall and school laboratory build and modernisation programmes as well as the commencement and progression of a deep energy retrofit of primary and post-primary schools built prior to 2008.

The application from the school referred to by the Deputy remains available to be considered in this context.

## Teacher Recruitment

139. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the steering group set up earlier in 2018 to address the problems with teacher recruitment; and the progress of its work to date. [44320/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Steering Group on Teacher Supply was established in March 2018. The Steering Group is chaired by the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills and it includes nominees of the Department, HEIs providing primary and post primary initial teacher education, the Teaching Council, the HEA, primary and post primary school management bodies, as well as an independent expert. The Steering Group has met on four occasions, most recently on September 10th.

The Group is considering the issues that impact on teacher supply, including: initial teacher education policy, provision, funding and support; data/research requirements; policies and arrangements for schools and teachers that impact on teacher mobility/supply; and promotion of the teaching profession. In undertaking its task, the Group is cognisant of the requirement that all persons wishing to teach in recognised schools must meet the professional registration standards and criteria set by the Teaching Council, which is the professional regulatory body for the teaching profession.

## Psychological Services

140. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason psychological services are no longer available at a school (details supplied); when the services ceased; when they will resume; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44332/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy may be aware my Department's National Educational Psychological Service provides educational psychological support to all primary and post-primary schools. This involves direct support in the event of a critical incident, access to national and regional support and development work to build school capacity to support students, access to a NEPS psychologist for responses to queries arising, and access to individual pupil casework via a NEPS psychologist or through the Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments (SCPA).

All mainstream schools in Galway City and County receive a service from NEPS psychologists based in the Galway Office. While there are currently two psychologist vacancies in this office, all schools continue to have access to support and development, critical incident and advisory support from NEPS and pupil casework via their assigned NEPS psychologist or via SCPA. The school to which the Deputy refers in his question is receiving assessment services via SCPA. This situation is temporary and replacement staff are currently being sought from recruitment panels administered by the Public Appointments Service. These are expected to be engaged by the end of this calendar year.

My Department remains committed to the maintenance of our educational psychological service and the valuable supports it provides to our schools and would instance the announcement, in the context of last weeks' Budget, of a further staffing increase of 10 psychologist posts for NEPS as tangible evidence of this ongoing commitment.

## Schools Building Contractors

141. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the certification process undertaken at a school (details supplied) with regard to the standard of construction works completed in 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44335/18]

142. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the contingency plans in place at a school (details supplied) as a result of the closure of a school building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44336/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 141 and 142 together.

My Department was made aware of structural issues that were identified during opening up works at the school referred to by the Deputy and is working closely with the Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education Training Board in dealing with the issues.

Following advice from a consultant structural engineer and in consultation with the relevant Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education Training Board a decision was taken to close a section of the school in question. A number of students have been accommodated in the section of the school that remains open and a number transition year students were requested to remain at home for one week.

The school in question was constructed in two phases and the portion of the school that is currently closed was constructed in 2009 under a Design and Build contract. A copy of certificates of compliance were forwarded to the Department at the time the school building was handed over in 2009.

I want to reassure the Deputy that at all times the key priority of my Department is the safety of students and staff.

### **Site Acquisitions**

143. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to re-view the sale of a stadium (details supplied) to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44337/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Department acquired the Harold's Cross Greyhound Stadium site from the Irish Greyhound Board in line with the DPER Circular 11/15: Protocols for the Transfer and Sharing of State Property Assets. This circular requires the Valuation Office to provide a determination of market value of the property to be disposed which is binding on both the disposing and acquiring Government Department or State body.

In line with my undertaking to the Deputy last week, I published the Valuation Office Report in respect of this site on my Department's website on 19 October 2018 - link as follows:

[www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/valuation-report-of-harold%E2%80%99s-cross-greyhound-stadium-site-by-valuation-office-update-note-.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/valuation-report-of-harold%E2%80%99s-cross-greyhound-stadium-site-by-valuation-office-update-note-.pdf)

In addition, the Valuation Office provided a recent update to my Department on matters related to the valuation. This update, which was requested by Department and received on the week beginning 15 October 2018 was also published on my Department's website on 19 October 2018 - link as follows:

[www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/valuation-report-of-](http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/valuation-report-of-)

harold%E2%80%99s-cross-greyhound-stadium-site-by-valuation-office-update-note-.pdf.

I trust both these documents outline the considerations the Valuation Office applied to the market valuation of the site. I have also asked my officials to directly contact the Deputy regarding this process.

### **Teacher Data**

144. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of unfilled teaching posts by school; the number which have been vacant for over six months in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44338/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Teacher allocations to all schools are approved annually by my Department in accordance with established rules based on recognised pupil enrolment. The criteria for the allocation of posts are communicated to school management annually and are available 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 recruitment and appointment of teachers to fill teaching posts as permitted by the staffing schedule is a matter for the individual Board of Management of each school, subject to procedures agreed under Section 24(3) of the Education Act 1998 (as amended by the Education (Amendment) Act 2012). The deployment of teaching staff in the school, the range of subjects offered and ultimately the quality of teaching and learning are in the first instance a matter for the school management authorities.

Teachers are employed by the managerial authorities of schools and the onus is on the managerial authorities to fill all vacancies as permitted by the staffing schedule. Proposals for appointments to schools are submitted by the managerial authorities. The processing of applications for payment is ongoing at present in the payroll sections of my Department. The deadline for submission of appointments to posts for the 18/19 school year is the first working day in November.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

145. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the completion of schools and colleges contained within the schools bundle 5 public private partnership; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44339/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Schools Bundle 5 Public Private Partnership (PPP) programme comprises five school buildings and one further education college across four sites in Bray, Wexford, Carlow and Kells. Completion of these projects was delayed due to the liquidation of Carillion Construction Ltd in January of this year and the examinership and subsequent liquidation of Carillion's sub-contractor, Sammon Contracting Ireland Ltd (SCIL).

A replacement contractor was appointed in June 2018 and three of the six schools, Coláiste Ráithín and Ravenswell Primary school in Bray and Loreto Secondary School in Wexford, have achieved service commencement and are now fully operational.

The replacement contractor is now completing the remaining three buildings, Tyndall College and Carlow Institute of Further Education in Carlow, and Eureka Secondary School in

Kells. These projects are currently targeted for completion by end December 2018/January 2019.

### School Transport Eligibility

146. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there is a provision for awarding the remote area grant to a person that has been refused same on the basis that there is a school closer to their residence under the patronage of their preferred ethos in cases in which they were unable to secure a place in the closer school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44341/18]

**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.

In the 2017/18 school year over 117,000 children, including over 12,000 children with special educational needs, were 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 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 eligible for school transport but for whom no transport service is available may, following an application for transport within the prescribed time limits, receive a Remote Area Grant towards the cost of private transport arrangements.

This grant is also payable for eligible children who may have to travel 3.2 kilometres or more to or from a designated pick up/set down point.

In cases where the Department is satisfied that the nearest school is full, eligibility for school transport will be determined based on the distance that children reside from their next nearest school having regard to ethos and language. Further information in this regard is available on my Department’s website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

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

### Departmental Staff Data

147. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the breakdown of staff in his Department by grade. [44353/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The information requested by the Deputy is set out below in the table.

Grade	Headcount
Secretary General	1
Assistant Secretary	10
Principal Officer (and equivalent)	167

Grade	Headcount
Assistant Principal Officer (and equivalent)	355
Higher Executive Officer	178
Administrative Officer	20
Executive Officer	312
Clerical Officer	307
Other	27

### School Accommodation Provision

148. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 133 of 9 October 2018, his views in relation to further correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44366/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department is currently considering the school's request for a revision in the scope of works proposed at the school. My Department expects to be in a position to convey a decision to the school shortly.

### National Educational Psychological Service

149. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary and secondary schools in counties Roscommon and Galway in which psychological services are no longer available; the reason the services were removed; when the services ceased; when they are expected to resume; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44378/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy may be aware my Department's National Educational Psychological Service provides educational psychological support to all primary and post-primary schools. This involves direct support in the event of a critical incident, access to national and regional support and development work to build school capacity to support students, access to a NEPS psychologist for responses to queries arising, and access to individual pupil casework via a NEPS psychologist or through the Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments (SCPA).

Mainstream schools in Counties Galway and Roscommon receive a service from NEPS psychologists based in the NEPS offices in Galway City and Roscommon town. While there are currently two psychologist vacancies in the Galway office, all schools continue to have access to support and development, critical incident and advisory support from NEPS and pupil casework via their assigned psychologist or via SCPA. Some 61 schools in Galway (52 primary, 9 post-primary) and 37 schools in Roscommon (35 primary and 2 post-primary) currently receive assessment services via the SCPA scheme. This situation is temporary and replacement staff are currently being sought from recruitment panels administered by the Public Appointments Service. These are expected to be engaged by the end of this calendar year.

My Department remains committed to the maintenance of our educational psychological service and the valuable supports it provides to our schools and would instance the announcement, in the context of last weeks' Budget, of a further staffing increase of 10 psychologist posts for NEPS as tangible evidence of this ongoing commitment.

### DEIS Data

150. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the primary and secondary schools in County Donegal that have successfully obtained DEIS status and maintain DEIS status in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44380/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The information requested by the Deputy is available on the Social Inclusion Section of my Departments website, see - DEIS school list 2018 - 2019 school year, at the following link:

[www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools/](http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools/).

### DEIS Data

151. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the schools in County Donegal that do not have DEIS status in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44381/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The information requested by the Deputy is available on my Departments website, see - Post Primary Schools 2017/18 and Primary All Schools 2017/18, at the following link:

[www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Data-on-Individual-Schools/](http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Data-on-Individual-Schools/).

### DEIS Status

152. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a school (details supplied) in County Donegal does not have DEIS status; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the surrounding schools to this school have DEIS status and that the same socio-economic criteria apply to all the schools in that hinterland but the school in question has not received DEIS status; if his further attention has been drawn to the fact that perceived gross and unfair anomalies exist at present in the criteria and mechanisms used in awarding DEIS status; if his further attention has been drawn to the fact that this is leading to many eligible schools failing to obtain DEIS status; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44382/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy is aware, my Department has introduced an objective, statistics based model for assessing which schools merit inclusion in the DEIS Programme, so that all stakeholders can have confidence that we are targeting extra resources at those schools with the highest levels of concentrated disadvantage.

The key data sources used in the DEIS identification process are the DES Primary Online Database (POD) and Post-Primary Online (PPOD) Databases, and CSO data from the National Census of Population as represented in the Pobal HP Index for Small Areas which is a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area. Variables used in the compilation of the HP Index include not only single parent rate, but those related to demographic growth, dependency ratios, education levels, overcrowding, social class, occupation and unemployment rates. This data is combined with pupil data, anonymised and aggregated to small area, to provide information on the relative level of concentrated disadvantage

present in the pupil cohort of individual schools. This data is applied uniformly to all schools in the country in a fair and objective way, to identify the relative level of concentrated disadvantage present in each school.

The calculation of the level of disadvantage in each school is based on the socio-economic background of their pupil cohort using centrally held data as previously outlined. It is not based on the location of the school but on the geographical CSO Small Areas where the pupil cohort resides. Therefore it is important to understand that the demographic of neighbouring schools will not necessarily be the same and can indicate different levels of disadvantage based on the actual pupil cohort in each individual school.

A detailed document explaining the methodology used in the Identification process is available on the Department's website at

*[www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Identification-Process.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Identification-Process.pdf)*.

DEIS Plan 2017 states that the improved data on the socio-demographic of schools resulting from the new identification model will have an impact not only on the assessment of schools for inclusion in the programme but also on the scaling of resources to allow for more graduated levels of support. This in turn allows for the ultimate objective of allocating resources to best meet the identified need of individual schools.

In order to achieve this, the current identification model needs to be as accurate as possible and this will be facilitated by the use of Eircode to ensure correct inputting of addresses. Further analysis is also required to examine other variables known to be strong predictors of educational disadvantage in the context of resource allocation.

### **Special Educational Needs**

153. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the action he has taken with regard to six children with special needs who were due to commence school in County Kildare in September 2018 but are still awaiting accommodation (details supplied); the supports or assistance which can be provided in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44434/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** This Government is committed to ensuring every child with special educational needs has the opportunity to fulfil their full potential.

Funding for special education provision in 2018 will amount to some €1.75 billion, up 43% since 2011 and equivalent to 18.7% of the gross overall current allocation for education and training.

The Deputy will be aware that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO's), for the development, delivery and co-ordination of education services to children with Special Educational Needs, including the establishment of special class and special school placements, in consultation with the relevant education partners and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The NCSE is aware of emerging need from year to year, and where special provision is required in an area it is planned and provided for.

The NCSE sanctioned a new special class in the school referred to by the Deputy to meet the identified needs of students in Kildare and the relevant teaching and SNA support has been allocated to the school.

To this end, my Department is providing a stand-alone extension to the school. My Department devolved the project for delivery to the Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB).

When a building is completed, certifications for the constituent components are required to be registered with the Local Authority for the purposes of demonstrating that the building complies with building control regulations. This was done on the 22 of October last. The Local Authority is required to turn this around within three weeks. Assuming that there are no issues with the documentation submitted, the building can be occupied once the Local Authority signs off on the documentation. This means that every child with special needs who is waiting to occupy the new building in St. Conleth's Vocational School should be able to do so within a three-week timeframe.

KWETB, supported by my Department, has always been focussed on ensuring that every child with special needs who is waiting to occupy the new building in the school could do so as soon as possible.

KWETB also continues to engage with the NCSE, parents and our education partners to explore temporary measures that may be put in place to ensure that each child has educational provision appropriate to their needs.

In the interim my Department's Home Tuition Grant Scheme can provide funding towards the provision of 20 hours home tuition per week for these children as a compensatory educational service until a school placement becomes available.

I want to reassure the Deputy that we are all continuing to strive to achieve these objectives. While we are close to the opening of the building, neither we, the NCSE nor KWETB will stop working until all the children who are waiting for the opening of this building are in it.

### **Apprenticeship Programmes**

154. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to roll out new curriculum area apprenticeship programmes in 2018 and 2019; the level of academic attainment they will sit at; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44460/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** This Government is committed to doubling the number of people on an apprenticeship programme by 2020 and expanding the apprenticeship model into new sectors of the economy. Arising from our two calls for apprenticeship proposals in 2015 and 2017 sixteen new apprenticeships have now been developed in a range of new occupations, including financial services, engineering, ICT, hospitality, logistics and biopharma leading to awards ranging from level 6 to level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Further new apprenticeships are scheduled to get underway later this year and throughout 2019 in a variety of sectors including construction, engineering, horticulture and agriculture. Details of these, including the target NFQ level, are set out in the following tables. It should be noted that the NFQ level can only be finally determined through the programme validation process.

#### **Apprenticeships due to be rolled out by the end of 2018**

	Apprenticeship	NFQ Level
1	OEM Engineer	6
2	Butcher	5
3	Manufacturing Data Integration Engineer	7
4	Sous Chef	8

### Apprenticeships due to roll-out in 2019

	Apprenticeship	NFQ Level
1	Advanced Quantity Surveyor	9
2	Applied Horticulture	6
3	Arboriculture	5
4	Associate Sales Professional	6
5	Baker	6
6	Bar Manager	7
7	CGI Technical Artist (Animation, Games, VFX)	9
8	Engineering Services Management	7
9	Equipment System Engineer	9
10	Executive Chef	9
11	Farm Manager	7
12	Farm Technician	6
13	Geo-Driller	6
14	Hairdressing	6
15	Healthcare Assistant	6
16	HGV Driver (2015)	5
17	ICT Associate Professional in Cybersecurity	6
18	International Financial Services Advanced Specialist	9
19	Lean Sigma Manager	9
20	Precision Turned Parts Manufacturing	6
21	Principal Engineer	10
22	Recruitment Practitioner	6
23	Retail Supervisor	6
24	Scaffolding	6
25	Science Aircraft Asset Management	7
26	Software System Designer	9
27	SportsTurf Management	6
28	Stud Farm Management	7
29	Supply Chain Associate	7
30	Supply Chain Manager	9
31	Supply Chain Specialist	8
32	Wind Turbine Maintenance	6

### Apprenticeship Data

155. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of male

and female apprentices in training by each employment sector and subsector at 30 September 2018 for craft based and consortia-led apprenticeships in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44486/18]

156. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of new apprenticeship registrations in each employment sector and subsector at 30 September 2018 for all craft based and consortia-led apprenticeships in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44487/18]

157. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the actual apprentice population in each employment sector and subsector as at 30 September 2018. [44488/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):**  
I propose to take Questions Nos. 155 to 157, inclusive, together.

The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

Apprenticeships 2018

	Registrations to end of September 2018	Population at 24th October 2018*		
		Female	Male	Total
Auctioneering and Property Services	44	22	29	51
Auctioneering and Property Services	44	22	29	51
BioPharmaChem	2	6	4	10
Laboratory Technician	2	6	4	10
Construction	1,036	12	3,546	3,558
Brick and Stonelaying	57		164	164
Cabinet Making	0		2	2
Carpentry and Joinery	403	3	1,406	1,409
Painting and Decorating	18	4	94	98
Plastering	24		74	74
Plumbing	460	4	1,557	1,561
Stonecutting and Stonemasonry	5		35	35
Wood Manufacturing and Finishing	69	1	214	215
Electrical	1,528	51	6,131	6,182

	Registrations	Population at 24th October 2018*		
	to end of September 2018	Female	Male	Total
Aircraft Mechanics	72	11	175	186
Electrical	1,236	30	5,046	5,076
Electrical Instrumentation	71	7	346	353
Electronic Security Systems	43	1	135	136
Industrial Electrical Engineering	20	1	54	55
Instrumentation	6	1	44	45
Refrigeration and Air Conditioning	80		331	331
Engineering	463	17	2,044	2,061
Farriery	7		25	25
Industrial Insulation	11		41	41
M.A.M.F.	125	4	612	616
Manufacturing Engineering (Level 6)	7	5	64	69
Manufacturing Engineering (Level 7)	8	4	46	50
Metal Fabrication	166	1	717	718
Pipefitting	37	1	114	115
Polymer Processing Technology	11	2	35	37
Sheet Metalworking	48		140	140
Toolmaking	43		250	250
Financial Services	148	167	208	375
Accounting Technician	67	81	56	137
Insurance Practice	76	76	122	198
International Financial Services Associate	3	4	15	19

Questions - Written Answers

	Registrations	Population at 24th October 2018*		
	to end of September 2018	Female	Male	Total
International Financial Services Specialist	2	6	15	21
Hospitality and Food	114	22	105	127
Butcher	0		3	3
Chef de Partie	24	6	21	27
Commis Chef	90	16	81	97
ICT	32	4	33	37
ICT Network Engineering	13		13	13
ICT Software Development	19	4	20	24
Logistics	24	7	19	26
Logistics	24	7	19	26
Motor	523	11	2,425	2,436
Agricultural Mechanics	29		152	152
Construction Plant Fitting	54		245	245
Heavy Vehicle Mechanics	142	1	557	558
Motor Mechanics	275	8	1,319	1,327
Vehicle Body Repairs	23	2	152	154
Printing & Paper	0		8	8
Print Media	0		8	8
New Consortia Total	410	240	597	837
Grand Total	3,914	319	14,552	14,871

### Apprenticeship Programmes

158. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the assessment by the Apprenticeship Council regarding the 77 proposals received in the second call for new apprenticeship categories which closed on 1 September 2017; the apprenticeships that have been

approved for roll-out to date; and the timeline for operationalising each new approved apprenticeship in tabular form. [44489/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):**

This Government is committed to expanding the apprenticeship model into new sectors of the economy. A key commitment in our Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship for last year was to issue a second call for apprenticeship proposals to refresh the pipeline of apprenticeship proposals established through the first call. The call closed on 1 September with 77 proposals received from a range of sectors, occupations and National Framework Qualification levels. Following the evaluation process 26 new programmes were approved for further development into national apprenticeships in various sectors including construction, engineering, horticulture and agriculture. Three programmes from the second call are already underway, Logistics Associate, Laboratory Analyst and Laboratory Technician.

Based on information from the consortia, the information requested by the Deputy in relation to the other 23 programmes is set out in the following table.

0	Title of proposed apprenticeship	Industry lead	Proposed coordinating provider	Target rollout date
1.	Advanced Quantity Surveyor Level 9 Duration 2 years	Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland	Limerick Institute of Technology	2nd half 2019
2.	Applied Horticulture Level 6 Duration 2 years	Teagasc	Teagasc	2nd half 2019
3.	Arboriculture Level 5 Duration 2 years	Caseys Tree Care Ltd, North West Tree Care, Kilcoyne Tree Care, Arborist Ireland	Galway Roscommon ETB	2nd half 2019
4.	Associate Sales Professional Level 6 Duration 3 years	Sales Sense	Mayo Sligo & Leitrim ETB	1st half 2019
5.	CGI Technical Artist (Animation, Games, VFX) Level 9 Duration 2 years	Animation Skillnet with Screen Training Ireland	Dublin IT	2nd half 2019
6.	Equipment Systems Engineer Level 9 Duration 2 years	SL Controls	University of Limerick	2nd half 2019
7.	Farm Management Level 7 Duration 4 years	Teagasc	Teagasc	2nd half 2019
8.	Farm Technician Level 6 Duration 2 years	Teagasc	Teagasc	2nd half 2019
9.	Geo-Driller Level 6 Duration 3 years	Geological Survey Ireland	IT Carlow	2nd half 2019

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0	Title of proposed apprenticeship	Industry lead	Proposed coordinating provider	Target rollout date
10.	ICT Associate Professional in Cybersecurity Level 6 Duration 2 years	FastTrack into Technology (FIT)	FIT	2nd half 2019
11.	Lean Sigma Manager Level 9 Duration 2 years	Teleflex	University of Limerick	2nd half 2019
12.	Principal Engineer-Professional Doctorate Level 10 Duration 4 years	SL Controls	University of Limerick	1st half 2019
13.	Professional Bar Manager Level 7 Duration 2 years	Vintners Association	Griffith College	2nd half 2019
14.	Professional Hairdressing Level 6 Duration 3 years	Hairdressing Council of Ireland	Limerick & Clare ETB & Image Learning and Development Training Network Ltd	2nd half 2019
15.	Professional Healthcare Assistant Level 6 Duration 2 years	Kiltipper Woods Care Centre	Griffith College	2nd half 2019
16.	Recruitment Practitioner Level 6 Duration 2 years	National Recruitment Federation	National College of Ireland	2nd half 2019
17.	Scaffolding Level 6 Duration 3 years	Construction Industry Federation	Laois & Offaly ETB	1st half 2019
18.	Software System Designer Level 9 Duration 2 years	Lero	University of Limerick	2nd half 2019
19.	SportTurf Management Level 6 Duration 2 years	Teagasc	Teagasc	2nd half 2019
20.	Stud Farm Management Level 7 Duration 2 years	Teagasc	Teagasc	2nd half 2019
21.	Supply Chain Associate Level 7 Duration 3 years	IPICS The Supply Chain Management Institute	University of Limerick	2nd half 2019
22.	Supply Chain Manager Level 9 Duration 2 years	IPICS The Supply Chain Management Institute	University of Limerick	2nd half 2019
23.	Supply Chain Specialist Level 8 Duration 2 years	IPICS The Supply Chain Management Institute	University of Limerick	2nd half 2019

## Departmental Budgets

159. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the breakdown of the €57,652,000 capital allocation in first, second and early years education (details supplied) within his Department for 2019, by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44535/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Capital Allocation available in 2019 under Subhead A will be expended as follows:

ICT Schools - €50m

Public Sector Reform - €4.9m

Department's Capital Requirements - €2.252m

Memorial for Victims of Abuse - €0.5m

Under the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020, €210m has been committed in funding for schools ICT Infrastructure. In 2019 (for the 2018-2019 school year), €50m will issue in grant funding to all recognised eligible primary and post-primary schools.

The allocation available for Public Sector Reform will be employed for the Education and Training Sectors Shared Services projects. These projects will bring Payroll and Finance Shared Services to the Education and Training Boards (ETB) sector, serving the sixteen ETB's providing education at primary and secondary school levels and providing further education and training through SOLAS training programmes and community based schemes. The Shared Services projects will also be bringing payroll shared service to the Higher Education sector and upgrading the Department's schools employees payroll services which currently serves over 115,000 payees employed by over 3,700 schools at both primary and secondary level.

The Department's capital requirements include the provision of necessary office equipment and IT services.

A sum of €0.5m is available for the design and installation of a memorial for the victims of abuse.

## Departmental Budgets

160. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the breakdown of the €13,176,000 capital allocation in skills development (details supplied) within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44536/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** Further Education and Training (FET) provides learners with key intermediate level skills, enhancing the productivity and adaptability of the Irish workforce. It is delivered in a range of settings throughout the country, with FET providers firmly embedded in local communities. A priority for my Department, is to improve the quality of the settings in which FET is delivered, in order to better respond to the needs of learners and employers.

The National Development Plan includes a €300m capital envelope for FET over the course of 10 year period 2018-2027. With €65m already agreed for 2018-21, this represents an additional €235m over the remaining period of Plan.

The total planned allocation for Further Education and Training purposes under the National Development Plan for 2019 to 2022 is outlined in the following table:

SUBHEAD	2019 (€m)	2020 (€m)	2021 (€m)	2022 (€m)
Further Education and Training	13.000	18.000	28.000	30.000

The additional capital supports will be prioritised to address issues with the condition of the existing capital stock, to roll out critical new apprenticeship syllabi and courses, and to consolidate the provision of further education and training in modern fit-for-purpose facilities that enable the delivery of high quality integrated programmes.

SOLAS, the state agency responsible for further education and training, is engaging with individual ETBs to identify the necessary capital requirements for 2019 through the service planning process. Given the lack of a dedicated capital budget for FET prior to 2018, some investment will be required in the existing capital stock as well as meeting equipment requirements in the apprenticeship area before major new building projects are initiated.

### Departmental Budgets

161. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the breakdown of the €47,770,000 capital allocation in higher education (details supplied) within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44537/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The 2018 funding under this subhead is provided to three organisations; the Irish Research Council (€34.05m), HEAnet (€5.45m) and the Irish Centre for High End Computing (€1.1m). The allocation of the additional €7m to the subhead in 2019 between these organisations is currently being finalised.

The Irish Research Council's remit is to support and enhance human capital development, in particular at postgraduate and early stage postdoctoral researcher levels, and to encourage independent exploratory research. Its remit covers the full range of disciplines spanning the humanities, social sciences, business, law, sciences, engineering and technology.

HEAnet is Ireland's National Education and Research Network, providing internet connectivity and associated ICT services to higher education and research organisations throughout Ireland. Its e-Infrastructure services underpin the academic research and education activity for the third level sector.

The Irish Centre for High End Computing is Ireland's national high performance computer centre, providing high-performance computing services, support, education and training for researchers in higher education institutions and enterprise.

### Departmental Budgets

162. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the breakdown of the €822,402,000 capital allocation in capital services (details supplied) within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44538/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Capital Allocation available in 2019 under Subhead D will be expended as follows:

Schools Sector - €622m

Higher Education - €90m

PPPs - €110m

The Department's Capital Costs - €0.402m

The School Sector allocation will be expended primarily on the delivery of large scale projects and on the Additional Accommodation Scheme. Funding will be available for large scale projects that commenced on site in 2018 or earlier and that will remain under construction in 2019 and for large scale projects that are positioned to commence construction in 2019.

Typically, expenditure of up to 80% of the capital allocation available to schools annually is in respect of the large scale projects and the Additional Accommodation Scheme. The balance available in 2019 will be expended on site acquisitions, the Summer Works Scheme, the Emergency Works Scheme, furniture and equipment provision and other smaller programmes.

The allocation available to the Higher Education Sector for 2019 is significantly higher than in recent years and will allow a number of priority infrastructure projects to progress, including, for example, a new Engineering, Energy and Environment Institute in TCD.

The allocation available for the PPP subhead will be expended primarily on unitary charges associated with the Schools Bundles delivered to date and on the Cork School of Music and the National Maritime College of Ireland.

The Department's capital requirements associated with capital services include the provision of necessary office equipment and IT services.

### **Deportation Orders Re-examination**

163. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the deportation order will be revoked in regard to a person (details supplied). [44323/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised that the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order made on 7 September 2018, following the refusal of the international protection claim made by the person concerned. That Order remains valid and in place.

Representations have been received requesting that the Deportation Order be revoked in this case, and these representations will be considered.

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.

The Deputy may wish to note that queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Services (INIS) of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose.

## **Direct Provision System**

164. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the contracts between direct provision providers and RIA include requirements for the provision of menstrual hygiene products; and if not, the reason therefor. [44326/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** As the Deputy is aware, as a result of the recommendations in the McMahon Report, accommodation centres for persons in the protection process are all moving to an independent living model (which includes either self-catering or communal catering). In this model, each resident is assigned a number of points depending on their family composition and residents can procure food, personal toiletries and hygiene products at a food-hall type facility provided by the contractor.

As part of a wide ranging public procurement project, a series of open procurement processes are underway between now and the end of 2019 for accommodation centres throughout the state for persons seeking international protection. This tender specifies that only bids that conform to the independent living model, as set out above, will qualify.

While the present contract requires each resident to be provided with certain toiletry items (soap, shampoo, toothpaste and toilet paper), there is no contractual obligation to provide other personal items for women or men such as menstrual hygiene products or razors.

My understanding is that the costs of such items was to be covered by the payment of the direct provision allowance. This allowance will be increased to €38.80 for each adult and €29.80 for each child in March 2019. This will result in increases in this allowance of 103% for adults and 91% for children since 2017.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, I am making arrangements that for those centres that do not yet have the independent living model in operation and in which women and girls are resident, that supplies of menstrual hygiene products will be made available as required.

## **Asylum Applications Data**

165. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of bisexual asylum seekers granted asylum in each of the years 2014 to 2017. [44334/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Section 8 of the International Protection Act 2015, commenced on 31 December, 2016, sets out the applicable reasons for persecution when considering an application for international protection on the grounds referred to by the Deputy. Applications are processed by the International Protection Office (IPO).

The Chief International Protection Officer and the International Protection Officers of the IPO are independent by law in the exercise of their international protection functions. They are also bound by confidentiality provisions in respect of applicants, as set out in the 2015 Act.

I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the International Protection Office does not keep statistics specific to the grounds on which protection applications are granted.

All applicants for international protection are carefully interviewed and their cases are individually assessed by experienced caseworkers. The circumstances of each individual case are assessed having regard to both the subjective elements (the applicant's own account or personal

history) and objective elements (up-to-date information on the applicant's country or place of origin). Supporting documentation submitted by applicants is also taken into account. Country of Origin information is obtained from a variety of legitimate sources such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Amnesty International and other NGOs, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the US State Department and the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board.

### Road Traffic Offences

166. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there are penalties in cases (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44342/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Garda authorities that it is not an offence for individuals to not wear high visibility clothing when walking in the dark.

As the Deputy may be aware, S.I. 182/1997 Road Traffic (Traffic and Parking) Regulations 1997, as substituted by Road Traffic (Traffic and Parking) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2012 include Rules for Pedestrians (Article 46). These rules include that a pedestrian shall exercise care and take all reasonable precautions in order to avoid causing danger or inconvenience to traffic and other pedestrians.

It is also part of the work of the Roads Safety Authority (RSA) to help provide a safe environment for all road users and promote the efficient use of our road network.

The RSA also works toward promoting good safety habits among all road users, and the Deputy will be familiar with RSA campaigns such as 'Be Safe Be Seen' which highlights the importance of using high visibility clothing when using our roads. There is no question that wearing bright or reflective clothes makes it easier for a person to be seen from greater distances and gives drivers more time to adjust their course.

I would encourage all road users, particularly our young and most vulnerable in society, to wear high visibility clothing in dark conditions. The reality is that this simple, but very important act can prevent serious accidents.

### Departmental Staff Data

167. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the breakdown of staff in his Department by grade. [44359/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The following table outlines the breakdown of staff in my Department by grade as of 15/10/2018. These figures include staff in a range of agencies under the Department's aegis, including the Probation Service, Forensic Science Ireland, certain staff of the Irish Prison Service, Insolvency Service Ireland, and the Data Protection Commission.

Grade	Total
Secretary General	1
Deputy Secretary*	3
Assistant Secretary*	19
Principal Officer*	109

Grade	Total
Assistant Principal Officer*	305
Higher Executive Officer*	298
Administrative Officer*	325
Executive Officer	430
Clerical Officer*	861
Service Officer	43
Total	2394

\*Technical/professional posts have been included with the general Civil Service grade for which they are analogous.

The Deputy Secretary General grade includes the posts of State Pathologist and Director General of Irish Prisons.

### Court Judgments

168. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 273 of 29 November 2017, if he will direct the Chief State Solicitors Office to make an appropriate payment in view of the conclusion of a court case (details supplied). [44368/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As indicated in response to a previous Parliamentary Question by the Deputy, I am aware of the case referred to.

I would again point out that I was not a party to these legal proceedings. However, I have had further enquires made with the Chief State Solicitor's Office and I understand that that office has been in recent contact with the individual in question in connection with the matter.

### Departmental Budgets

169. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the difference between the capital allocation for his Department under the national development plan for 2019 given as €241 million in Annex 1 of the plan and the lower figure of €220 million that is set out on pages 7 and 121 of the budget 2019 expenditure report. [44422/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As part of the recent Estimates process some €20 million of the capital allocation for the Justice sector in 2019 per the National Development Plan has been reprofiled to 2020. This reprofiling is to more accurately reflect when it is envisaged expenditure will fall due in relation to the multi-year project for the provision of a new Forensic Science Laboratory in Backweston, Co. Kildare. Enabling works have been carried out on the site and it is expected that the construction of the new laboratory will commence in 2019 and be completed by 2021. Following this reprofiling there remains capital funding of over €43 million in the Justice Vote for the project in 2019.

There was also a technical adjustment required in relation to €0.560 million in capital in respect of the Property Registration Authority Vote. This arose due to a transfer of functions from this Department to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, and the capital allocation for this Vote is now reflected under that Department's Vote group for 2019 and

subsequent years.

These adjustments account for the difference in the capital figures for 2019 between the National Development Plan and the recent Budget 2019 Expenditure Report.

### **Protected Disclosures**

170. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the cultural and administrative dysfunction in An Garda Síochána that was identified in the Charleton Report; the way in which he plans to respond to these issues; and the timescale for same. [44435/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Third Interim Report of the Disclosures Tribunal addresses matters at the heart of policing in Ireland. Its findings and conclusions are, as I have already said in the House, stark. Mr. Justice Charleton does not mince words and is very clear about where serious failings took place, how they were allowed to happen and who allowed them to happen.

It is clear that there are consequences for certain individuals and much of that will fall to the Garda Commissioner. There are also important recommendations to be taken on board by the organisation as a whole. I met with Commissioner Harris earlier this week to discuss the report and I assured him of my support as he addresses its findings. Both he and I are determined that our response to the matters raised in this report must be forward-looking and contribute to the development of a modern police force for the twenty-first century.

In this respect, the Deputy will be aware that the independent Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland has just reported following its root and branch analysis of policing in Ireland and sets out a plan for the future of policing in this country. Like Judge Charleton's findings, this report makes clear that transparency, good governance and accountability in An Garda Síochána is fundamental. The implementation of that report will be the cornerstone of the necessary transformation in An Garda Síochána. I will be bringing an implementation plan in relation to the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland report to Cabinet before the end of the year and I will ensure that this takes careful account of the conclusions of Mr Justice Charleton.

In parallel, I agree with Mr Justice Charleton that new structures will not of themselves create the culture that would avoid the repetition of bad practice that has been highlighted now in a number of reports on the Garda Síochána. This will require significant cultural change, embedding consistent good practices and conscientious supervision by those in management ranks. This was discussed in some detail with Commissioner Harris during our meeting, and I was encouraged to see that this report is being held up as a call to action within An Garda Síochána to address these very serious issues. I can assure the Deputy that Commissioner Harris will have the full support of myself and my Department in bringing about the reform called for in this report.

### **Insurance Fraud**

171. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views in relation to the establishment of a Garda fraud squad to tackle insurance fraud specifically; his plans in relation to the establishment of such a unit; his views on whether the unit should be publicly funded or funded by the industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44453/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Cost of Insurance Working Group proposed exploring the possibility that a specific unit, funded by the insurance industry, be established within the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) to tackle insurance fraud.

I understand that the GNECB has engaged with Insurance Ireland in relation to this matter and submitted a mechanism for establishing an insurance fraud unit to Insurance Ireland in the first half of 2017. Following receipt of the reply from Insurance Ireland in July 2018, I met with the GNECB and the Assistant Commissioner, Special Crime Operations, on 30 August 2018 to discuss this recommendation further. Following those discussions, I understand the recommendation is receiving further consideration within An Garda Síochána.

### **Personal Injuries Commission**

172. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he will request that the judicial council compile guidelines for appropriate general damages for various types of personal injury as recommended by the Personal Injuries Commission; when the judicial council will be established; the interim measures being commenced in the area of personal injury damages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44455/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is aware, the Second and Final Report of the Personal Injuries Commission made recommendations aimed at positively impacting the overall Irish personal injury claims environment. One of these recommendation refers to the Judicial Council, on establishment, compiling guidelines for appropriate general damages for various types of personal injury and further recommends that, in the event of any delay to the establishment of the Judicial Council, as a contingency arrangement, a formal framework, inclusive of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB), should be established to enable the judiciary to complete guidelines in advance of the renewal deadlines for the next Book of Quantum.

I would like to inform the Deputy that the Judicial Council Bill 2017, which provides for the establishment of the Judicial Council, is a legislative priority for the Government and my intention is to make significant progress towards the enactment of the Bill by the end of this year. Once established, it is my intention to request the Judicial Council to compile guidelines for appropriate general damages for various types of personal injury.

With regard to the interim position pending the establishment of the Judicial Council, my Department is currently examining options in that regard and will report to me shortly. As the Deputy will appreciate a number of stakeholders who would be involved in any possible interim arrangement will have to be consulted in that regard.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Cost of Insurance Working Group was established by the Minister for Finance in July 2016 and is chaired by Minister of State, Michael D'Arcy TD. The objective of the Working Group is to identify and examine the drivers of the cost of insurance, and recommend short, medium and longer term measures to address the issue of increasing insurance costs, taking account of the requirement for the need to ensure a financially stable insurance sector.

Among the significant themes addressed by the Working Group in its reports, which are available with action updates on the Department of Finance website, are improving the personal injuries litigation framework and reviewing the level of damages in personal injury cases.

In addition to the establishment of the Personal Injuries Commission, the Working Group

has also made a number of other recommendations in the field of personal injuries, including:

- the Law Reform Commission to be requested to undertake a detailed analysis of the possibility of developing constitutionally sound legislation to delimit or cap the amounts of damages which a court may award in respect of some or all categories of personal injuries,
- the amendment the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004 to ensure that defendants are notified of a claim been lodged against them and to improve the use and effectiveness of provisions relating to the verifying affidavit,
- facilitating training and information supports for the judiciary in relation to the assessment of damages in personal injury cases,
- tackling fraudulent or exaggerated personal injury claims, in particular, through a renewed focus on the reporting of suspected fraudulent claims to An Garda Síochána.

### **Legislative Measures**

173. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he expects the Judicial Council Bill 2017 will go to committee stage in Seanad Éireann; when he expects it will be introduced in Dáil Éireann; when he expects the Bill to be passed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44456/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy notes, the Judicial Council Bill is currently awaiting Committee Stage in Seanad Éireann, having completed Second Stage on 22 November 2017. The Bill provides for the establishment of a Judicial Council, the function of which will be to promote and maintain excellence in the exercise by judges of their judicial functions. It will also provide a formal mechanism for the investigation of complaints about judges.

The Bill is a legislative priority for the Government and my intention is to make significant progress towards its enactment by the end of this year. My Department is currently developing a package of amendments in cooperation with the Office of the Attorney General. Those amendments, which are at varying stages of development, include provisions in relation to sentencing guidelines, a Register of Interests for judges and associated matters in relation to the hearing of complaint proceedings in public.

This Bill has been developed in close collaboration with the judiciary and my Department is also maintaining contact with the judiciary in relation to the proposed amendments.

### **Personal Injuries Commission**

174. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his interaction with the Law Reform Commission in relation to the third recommendation of the Personal Injuries Commission in its second and final report; when the report from the Law Reform Commission will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44457/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The matter raised by the Deputy is also the subject of Recommendation 5 of the Cost of Insurance Working Group made in its Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance published in January of this year. As the Deputy will be aware, the Cost of Insurance Working Group, chaired by Minister of State Michael D'Arcy TD, brings together the relevant Departments and Offices involved

in undertaking a review of the factors which are influencing the increased cost of insurance. Its objective is to identify immediate and longer term measures which address increasing costs, while bearing in mind the need to maintain a stable insurance sector. Under Recommendation 5, the Law Reform Commission was requested to undertake a detailed analysis of the possibility of developing constitutionally sound legislation to delimit or cap the amounts of damages which a court may award in respect of some or all categories of personal injuries. As tasked by the Working Group, my Department wrote to the Law Reform Commission in relation to this recommendation on 9 February 2018.

It is my understanding that the Law Reform Commission has now included this proposal for consideration as part of its draft Fifth Programme of Law Reform and that a Memorandum will shortly be proposed to Government in conjunction with the Office of the Attorney General who liaise with the Commission on these matters. On that basis, it would be anticipated that the Fifth Programme will be finalised by the end of this year at which point the timeline for the delivery of its various outputs by the Law Reform Commission will be determined.

### **Departmental Budgets**

175. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the breakdown of the €43,920,000 capital allocation in the justice division within his Department for 2019, that is, Vote 24 of the budget 2019 expenditure report by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44474/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Capital funding of €43.570 million in 2019 relates to the construction of a new Forensic Science Laboratory in Backweston Co. Kildare. While certain enabling works have already been carried out on the site it is expected that the construction of the new laboratory will commence in 2019 and is expected to be completed by 2021. The balance of the capital allocation of €0.350 million relates to ICT expenditure.

### **Departmental Budgets**

176. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the breakdown of the €51,517,000 capital allocation in the courts service within his Department for 2019, that is, Vote 22 of the budget 2019 expenditure report by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44475/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is aware, following the publication by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform of the Estimates for Public Services on 9 October 2018, the capital allocation for 2019 for the Courts Service was confirmed at €51.517 million. It comprises €8.92 million for maintenance and development of new and existing Information Communication Technology (ICT) systems, €4.88 million for courthouse capital works and €37.717 million for unitary charge payments in relation to the Criminal Courts of Justice in Dublin and a number of regional courthouses provided under Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangements.

As the Deputy will also be aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that €6.1 million of the €8.92 million ICT allocation for 2019 is contractually committed and this includes managed services, software licences, hardware/software support, database/network administration as well as Lotus Notes support. The balance allows for a small number of system upgrades and other ICT projects.

A breakdown of the ICT allocation for 2019 is as follows:

ICT	Amount
Hardware and Software Upgrades	€1,363,500
New e-Filing Systems (Supreme Court and Legal Cost Adjudicator)	€625,000
New Websites	€385,000
Justice Hub Projects	€446,400
Contractual Committed	€6,100,100

The Courts Service has also provided a list of ICT projects due to be completed in 2019 as set out below:

- Firewall Replacement;
- Legal Cost Adjudicator;
- e-Filing Supreme Court;
- Courts Service Website;
- Supreme Court Website;
- Agresso Upgrade.

The Courts Service has advised that the allocation of €4.88 million for courthouse capital works will allow for ongoing preparatory work on a dedicated Dublin Family Court complex on Hammond Lane; possible further site acquisitions as a prerequisite step to enable future development of courthouses in a small number of County towns and a condition assessment survey of court buildings.

A breakdown of the Courthouse Capital allocation is as follows:

- €1.38 million for repayment of Cork Loan (principal only element) - 2019 repayments to Cork City Council in respect of the refurbishment it carried out to Washington Street Courthouse in 2003;
- €0.98 million for capital lease payments;

The balance of €2.52 million will be used to progress a variety of projects, which are in various stages of development and could include, depending on the availability of resources and other variables, the following during 2019:

- Ongoing preparatory work on a dedicated Dublin Family Court complex on Hammond Lane;
- A condition survey of approximately 70 court buildings nationwide (intended to be completed in 2019) to ascertain the physical condition of each courthouse building, to identify works required to bring each building up to an acceptable standard and to determine ongoing

maintenance requirements;

- Minor capital works required to enhance buildings and physical infrastructure in Dublin and nationwide;
- Site acquisitions as a prerequisite step to enable the future development/extension and refurbishment of courthouse facilities at a number of County town venues;
- Preparations for courthouse developments at Dungloe and Tuam.

The Courts Service has also advised that the contractual commitment relating to the PPP contracts for the Criminal Courts of Justice Complex in Dublin is €22.973 million and the seven Regional Courthouses is €14.744 million, amounting to €37.717m of the overall capital allocation for 2019.

### **Departmental Budgets**

177. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the details of the €92,340,000 capital allocation in An Garda Síochána within his Department for 2019, that is, Vote 20 of the budget 2019 expenditure report by specific project in tabular form; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44525/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will be aware that the Garda Commissioner is the Accounting Officer for the Garda Vote and as such is responsible for the effective and efficient use of the resources at his disposal. Those resources have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation for 2018 of more than €1.6 billion. And I can confirm that €1.76 billion has been allocated to the Garda Vote for 2019, which represents an increase of over 6% over the initial allocation for 2018.

The 2019 allocation includes a capital provision of some €92 million, which represents an increase of over €30 million as compared to 2018. The provision will facilitate investment of €65 million in Garda ICT, a further €10 million investment in the Garda fleet and an investment of €17 million in the Garda estate. This capital investment is a key enabler in the reform programme and will be one of the main pillars on which the future of policing will be built.

It is a matter for the Garda Commissioner to determine how the resources at his disposal can best be deployed. 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 their optimum use.

In terms of ICT investment, the provision of €65 million will enable An Garda Síochána to deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in delivering professional policing and security services for the community and deliver on reform. I understand from the Garda authorities that the specific list of projects to be undertaken in 2019 has yet to be finalised and as such it is not possible to provide a list of specific projects at this time.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the budget of €10 million available for the purchase and fit out of Garda vehicles in 2019 will enable the replacement of vehicles reaching end of life or beyond economic repair. While the funds made available are expected to enable increase in the size of the fleet, I am informed that the number of additional vehicles and the mix of types and the fit-out required will be determined by the Commissioner in accordance with operational priorities. Responsibility for the efficient deployment of all official Garda vehicles

in each Division is assigned to the Divisional Officer, who may allocate vehicles between districts and stations as required by operational requirements.

In relation to the Garda estate, 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. As Minister, I have no direct role in these matters.

I am advised by the Garda authorities that the €17 million allocated to the Garda estate will support a number of projects including commencement of works on the new Garda facility at Military Road to replace Harcourt Square, the refurbishment of the Fitzgibbon Street Garda Station (on which works have commenced in 2018), as well as supporting the continued progress in delivery of the Garda Building and Refurbishment Programme 2016-2021, which is benefiting over 30 locations nationwide based on Garda priorities.

### **Departmental Budgets**

178. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the details of the €100,000 capital allocation in the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission within his Department for 2019, that is, Vote 25 of the budget 2019 expenditure report by specific project in tabular form; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44526/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** As the Deputy is aware, the Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission (the Commission) is an independent statutory body, established on 1 November 2014 under the Irish Human Rights and Commission Act 2014.

The statutory mandate of the Commission is to protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland and to build a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding. The Commission is Ireland's National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) and National Equality Body (NEB).

I am informed that the allocation of €100,000 is estimated on the basis of spending for similar needs in previous years. The capital amount of €100,000 will be split two thirds for office equipment and external IT services, and one third for office premises. A total of €65,000 is expected to be spent primarily on the implementation of a new IT system (€50,000) and IT equipment for new staff (€15,000). A total of €35,000 is expected to be spent primarily on minor office adjustments, primarily to accommodate new staff, (€25,000) and associated office equipment for new staff (€10,000).

### **Departmental Budgets**

179. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the details of the €32,330 capital allocation in the Prisons Division within his Department for 2019, that is, Vote 21 of the budget 2019 expenditure report by specific project in tabular form; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44527/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The capital allocation for

the Prisons Vote in 2019 comprises €32.3 million of which the redevelopment of the Limerick Prison will account for the majority of the expenditure. The allocation also includes other building/refurbishment works to be carried out across various locations within the Prison Estate. In addition this expenditure will include investment in Cell Windows, CCTV, Security and Fire Safety Systems. The balance of the allocation relates to investment in ICT and replacement vehicles for the Prisons Transport Fleet. Details of the proposed expenditure are included in the table below.

Proposed Capital Expenditure for 2019 – Irish Prison Service;

2019	
Limerick Prison Complex	19,500,000
Estate Wide Projects	10,830,000
ICT & Fleet Investment	2,000,000
Total Proposed Expenditure	32,330,000

### Immigration Status

180. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current or expected residency status including update of stamp 4 in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44564/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I refer the Deputy to the reply given to his recent Parliamentary Questions No. 277 of Tuesday 18 September 2018 and No. 107 of Thursday 27 September 2018. The status of the person concerned is as set out in the issued replies:

I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned presented a new passport on 5 April 2018 at the Burgh Quay Registration Office. The passport was referred to An Garda Síochána technical bureau for examination and the matter is now being dealt with by An Garda Síochána.

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 Policy

181. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the previous coming to the attention of An Garda Síochána in the case a person (details supplied) prevents them from a successful application for naturalisation in view of the nature of their offences and notwithstanding their good behaviour in the interim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44565/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that there is no record of a current application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy. A determination on whether an applicant satisfies the statutory criteria attendant to naturalisa-

tion can only be made after an application is received and every application is considered on its individual merits, regardless of whether the applicant had applied previously.

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. The fact that a person may have had an application refused does not preclude or disqualify them from submitting a fresh application in the future. Indeed, the letter advising an applicant of a negative decision also informs them that they may re-apply for the grant of a certificate of naturalisation at any time. The letter advises that, when considering making such a re-application, they should give due regard to the reasons for the refusal which were contained in the submission attached to the refusal letter and that any further application will be considered taking into account all statutory and administrative conditions applicable at the time of application.

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 I know the Deputy will appreciate that it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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**

182. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current and-or expected residency status in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44566/18]

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

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

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

### **Immigration Status**

183. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when spousal

join permission will be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44567/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that a request from the person concerned for permission to reside in the State on Stamp 3 conditions was received on 5 January 2018. The Deputy will appreciate that applications are dealt with in chronological order.

I am also advised that INIS wrote to the person's legal representative on 23 October seeking further information. The matter will be given detailed consideration upon receipt of a response.

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.

### **Leave to Remain**

184. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current and expected position in regard to permission to remain or an alternative in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44568/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is aware, if an application for asylum or subsidiary protection has been made in the State, for confidentiality reasons it is not the practice to comment on such applications and the applicant or his legal representative should contact either the International Protection Office (IPO) or the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) directly, as appropriate.

The IPO may be contacted either by email to [info@ipo.gov.ie](mailto:info@ipo.gov.ie), by telephone to the IPO Customer Service Centre at 01 6028008 or in writing to Customer Service Centre, International Protection Office, 79-83 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2. The International Protection Appeals Tribunal may be contacted either by email to [info@protectionappeals.ie](mailto:info@protectionappeals.ie), by telephone at 01-4748400 (or Lo-Call 1890 201 458), or in writing to Corporate Services Division, The International Protection Appeals Tribunal, 6-7 Hanover Street East, Dublin D02 W320.

Following the commencement of the International Protection Act 2015 on 31 December 2016, new arrangements for the investigation and determination of applications for international protection (refugee status and subsidiary protection) and cases involving permission to remain in the State have been introduced. Such applications are now processed, as part of a single application procedure, by the International Protection Office (IPO) which has replaced the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) from that date. The staff of that Office (the Chief International Protection Officer and International Protection Officers) are independent in the performance of their protection functions.

For your information, on 27 February 2017, the Chief International Protection Officer, following consultation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), published a statement on the Prioritisation of Applications under the International Protection Act 2015 which is available on the website of the International Protection Office ([www.ipo.gov.ie](http://www.ipo.gov.ie)).

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the INIS of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically

established for this purpose. This service enables up-to-date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Immigration Status**

185. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current and-or expected position in regard to eligibility for permission to remain and-or naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44569/18]

**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, who currently has permission to reside in the State until 20 February 2019, is on-going.

A letter issued to the person concerned on 3 October 2018 requesting certain documentation and a reply is awaited. Upon receipt of the requested documentation the case will be further processed.

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.

### **Immigration Status**

186. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when permission to remain or naturalisation is likely in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44570/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the application for permission to remain in the State in respect of the person concerned is under consideration and a decision will issue by the end of November.

The Deputy may be aware that I launched a new scheme last week, which will allow certain non-EEA nationals, who came to Ireland to study between January 2005 and December 2010,

to apply for permission to remain in the State. The person concerned may also wish to consult the INIS website at [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie) for further information.

Under the scheme, eligible applicants may apply for a permission to remain in the State including the right to reside and work in the State and will be subject to renewal after two years. Modest fees will be charged under the scheme which will be open for on-line applications until 20 January 2019.

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

### **Residency Permits**

187. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when stamp 4 will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44574/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is aware, if an application for asylum or subsidiary protection has been made in the State, for confidentiality reasons it is not the practice to comment on such applications and the applicant or his legal representative should contact either the International Protection Office (IPO) or the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) directly, as appropriate.

The IPO may be contacted either by email to [info@ipo.gov.ie](mailto:info@ipo.gov.ie), by telephone to the IPO Customer Service Centre at 01 6028008 or in writing to Customer Service Centre, International Protection Office, 79-83 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2. The International Protection Appeals Tribunal may be contacted either by email to [info@protectionappeals.ie](mailto:info@protectionappeals.ie), by telephone at 01-4748400 (or Lo-Call 1890 201 458), or in writing to Corporate Services Division, The International Protection Appeals Tribunal, 6-7 Hanover Street East, Dublin D02 W320.

Following the commencement of the International Protection Act 2015 on 31 December 2016, new arrangements for the investigation and determination of applications for international protection (refugee status and subsidiary protection) and cases involving permission to remain in the State have been introduced. Such applications are now processed, as part of a single application procedure, by the International Protection Office (IPO) which has replaced the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) from that date. The staff of that Office (the Chief International Protection Officer and International Protection Officers) are independent in the performance of their protection functions.

For your information, on 27 February 2017, the Chief International Protection Officer, following consultation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), published a statement on the Prioritisation of Applications under the International Protection Act 2015 which is available on the website of the International Protection Office ([www.ipo.gov.ie](http://www.ipo.gov.ie)).

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

INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Immigration Status**

188. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding long-term residency and-or naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44575/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that there is no record of an application for Long Term Residency or Naturalisation from the person concerned.

In order to make an application for Long Term Residency in the State the person concerned must have been legally resident in the State for a minimum of 5 years (i.e. 60 months) on work permit/work authorisation/working visa conditions. Details of the application process are available on the INIS website at [www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/Long\\_Term\\_Residency](http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/Long_Term_Residency).

In addition, 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](http://www.inis.gov.ie).

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

### **Immigration Status**

189. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a person (details supplied) will have their residency status upgraded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44577/18]

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

The position in the State of the person concerned will now be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation. All representations submitted will be fully considered in advance of a final decision being made.

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

## **Visa Applications**

190. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a new application to join a spouse will be considered in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44592/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I refer the Deputy to my reply to Parliamentary Question No. 587 of 11 September 2017 (copied below for reference). I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that they have no record of a new visa application from the person referred to.

### **Reply to Parliamentary Question No. 587 of 11 September 2017.**

I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the visa application referred to was refused on 6 February 2017. An appeal was subsequently made against this decision, and refused on 26 July 2017. This decision was communicated to the applicant.

No further applications have been made. If one is made, the applicant should bear in mind the original refusal reasons communicated to them and be in a position to address them.

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

In addition, applicants may themselves e-mail queries directly to INIS (visamail@justice.ie).

## **Immigration Policy**

191. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the changes pending in relation to undocumented or long-time residents here that have been in this jurisdiction for a considerable time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44593/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The policy of the State remains that there are no plans to introduce a general regularisation scheme for those who are currently resident in the State without a valid residency permission, commonly referred to as "the undocumented". Any such proposal could give rise to unpredictable and potentially very costly impacts across the full range of public and social services. Furthermore, significant implications for the operation of the Common Travel Area can arise, particularly, in the context of the UK withdrawing from the European Union. Any proposals in this regard would have to be very carefully considered.

Where the immigration authorities encounter a person in an undocumented situation, it is always open to each individual to present their case, on its individual merits, to the immigration authorities. All such cases would be carefully considered before a final decision is made, taking into account all the circumstances of the particular case.

Arising from recent jurisprudence in the Courts a Special Scheme for non-EEA Students which I recently announced was launched on 15 October 2018. The scheme applies to non-EEA persons currently resident in the State who commenced such residence lawfully under a student permission between 2005 and 2010. The scheme will permit qualifying persons to remain in the State with a right to work for 2 years initially, and, where applicants adhere to the terms of this interim permission, they will be granted a further permission to reside and work in the State for 12 months. This permission is renewable after 12 months subject to continued adherence to the conditions of the permission. Full details of the scheme are available on the INIS website.

### **Immigration Controls**

192. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which immigration officers are visiting employers throughout the country with a view to identifying undocumented employees for deportation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44594/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I have been informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that immigration officers who are civilian staff within INIS do not carry out visits of the nature referred to by the Deputy.

The Deputy may be referring to immigration officers who are members of An Garda Síochána - usually as part of the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) - who carry out a range of immigration functions and enforce Deportation Orders issued by the Minister.

During the normal course of their duties members of An Garda Síochána may check individuals and premises where they have reason to believe that persons maybe in the State illegally or being employed illegally. Inspectors of the Workplace Relations Commission also have an important role in this area. Any persons found to be illegally in the State are referred to INIS for the formal procedures of consideration of whether to issue a deportation order or not in accordance with Section 3(6) of the immigration act. This is a detailed process with the person concerned having the opportunity to make representations and all aspects of each individual case is fully considered before a final decision is made.

### **Personal Injuries Commission**

193. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the steps she has taken to ensure the implementation of the second and final report of the Personal Injuries Commission in relation to the insurance industry; the number of recommendations that have been implemented to date; the number that are in the process of implementation; the number that have not yet had progress made on them; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44308/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Government believes that it is important that consumers and businesses can obtain insurance cover at a reasonable and fair price.

The cost of insurance is an issue of concern for consumers, businesses and community groups.

The Minister for Finance established the Cost of Insurance Working Group in 2016 to ex-

amine the factors contributing to the increasing cost of insurance and identifying what measures can be introduced to help reduce this cost, while maintaining a financially stable insurance sector.

The Personal Injuries Commission was established following a recommendation in the Cost of Insurance Working Group Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance published in January 2017.

I was pleased to submit the Second and Final Report of the Personal Injuries Commission to Government on the 18th September 2018. The publication of this Report now concludes the challenging work programme of the Personal Injuries Commission since its establishment in January 2017.

The Report makes ten recommendations, the implementation of which will be a matter for each of the bodies responsible. While the recommendations are not time-bound due to the nature of them, it is expected that they will be acted upon by the bodies responsible as soon as possible.

In this regard, I have written to relevant Government colleagues, the Minister for Justice and Equality and the Minister for Health, and other organisations including Insurance Ireland – the representative body for the Irish general insurance, health insurance, life assurance, reinsurance and captive management sectors; the Garda Commissioner; The Law Society; The Council of the Bar of Ireland; and the Law Reform Commission, seeking co-operation in advancing the implementation of the recommendations relevant to them.

The Personal Injuries Commission has made a total of 14 recommendations across its two reports, which are aimed at positively impacting the overall Irish claims environment.

In parallel with the work on advancing the implementation of the 10 recommendations of the Second and Final Report of the Personal Injuries Commission, work is also progressing on implementing the 4 recommendations of the First Report of the Personal Injuries Commission.

The Second and Final Report of the Personal Injuries Commission provides an update on the implementation of these recommendations from the First Report.

As the Personal Injuries Commission was established following a recommendation in the Cost of Insurance Working Group Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance published in January 2017, it is intended that further progress on implementation will be monitored and published through the Cost of Insurance Working Group Quarterly Progress Reports published by my colleague Minister of State Michael D'Arcy.

I believe that the cumulative effects of the implementation of all the recommendations from the two reports of the Personal Injuries Commission, alongside the reports of the Cost of Insurance Working Group, should include increased stability in the pricing of insurance for consumers and businesses and improved availability of insurance generally.

### **Small and Medium Enterprises Supports**

194. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which various sponsored funding remains available to small and medium enterprises; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44590/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Enterprise Ireland (EI) provides sponsorships for a number of national and regional events such

as conferences, seminars and awards for entrepreneurs and SMEs. Decisions on initiatives to be sponsored are made on a case by case basis where the business case for such sponsorships is aligned to the EI strategy of Building Scale and Expanding Reach. The sponsorships can vary by sector and type each year and every sponsorship application is evaluated and approved by an internal Enterprise Ireland Committee.

Applications for sponsorship funding from the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are also considered on a case by case basis and must be aligned to the LEOs strategic objectives.

### **Export Controls**

195. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if military and dual-use items that transit through Ireland from other EU states en route to their final destination are subject to the same export controls as exports of military and dual-use items from Ireland; and if not, the controls that apply. [44317/18]

196. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if military and dual-use items that transit through Ireland from non-EU states such as the United States of America en route to their final destination are subject to the same export controls as exports of military and dual-use items from Ireland; and if not, the controls that apply. [44318/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 195 and 196 together.

My Department is responsible for controls on the export of military items from Ireland. Under Irish law, military export licences must be sought in respect of the export from Ireland of military goods and technology, and any components thereof, listed in the EU Common Military List.

My Department is also responsible for licensing the export of dual-use items outside the EU pursuant to Council Regulation (EC) No. 428/2009 setting up a Community regime for the control of exports, transfer, brokering and transit of dual-use items.

Military and dual-use items that transit through Ireland from other EU Member States, en route to their final destination, are subject to the export controls applicable in the Member State from where the goods are exported.

As regards military and dual-use items that transit through Ireland from non-EU Member States, such items would, in the first instance, be subject to the export controls in place in the country of export.

In addition, the transit of Dual-use goods from non-EU states would fall within the scope of Council Regulation 428/2009, and would require an Irish export licence.

### **Departmental Staff Data**

197. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the breakdown of staff in her Department by grade. [44348/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Staffing resources are an ongoing priority to ensure my Department's continued ability to facilitate the wide mission and volume of work in a range of challenging policy areas. This will continue

with ongoing day-to-day review of the appropriate staffing mix across my Department in response to known and probable priority areas.

My Department liaises directly with the Public Appointments Service (PAS) and Top-Level Appointments Committee (TLAC) in relation to the filling of posts.

The table shows the current breakdown of staff by grade:

Grade	Number
Minister	1
Minister Of State	1
Accountant Grade 1	12
Administrative Officer	23
Assistant Principal Officer	119
Assistant Secretary	8
Deputy Chairperson (A/Sec) Labour Court	4
Civilian Driver	4
Cleaner	12
CO	256
Chairperson (D/SEC) Labour court	1
Deputy Head Service Officer	4
Digital Forensics Specialist (PO - ODCE)	1
Enforcement Lawyer (PO - ODCE)	2
Director (ODCE)	1
Director (Construction Contracts)	1
Director General (WRC)	1
Enforcement Portfolio Manager (PO - ODCE)	2
Executive Officer	223
Examiner (Patents)	3
Head Service Officer	1
Higher Executive Officer	135
Legal Advisor (PO)	3
Legal Advisor (AP)	2
Member (PO) Labour Court	9
Ministers Special Advisor	2
Minister's PA	0
Minister's Personal secretary	0
Principal Officer	40
Principal Solicitor	0
Registrar of the Labour Court	1
Secretary General	1
Senior Examiner (patents)	1
Services Attendant	5
Services Officer	20
Solicitor	2
Statistician (AP)	1

Grade	Number
Superintendent of Cleaners	1
Telephonist	2
Temporary Clerical Officer	7
Total	912

### Arms Trade

198. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 15 of 18 October 2018, if she will clarify that obstacles to the implementation of a presumption of denial policy in regard to the export of arms to Saudi Arabia in the absence of EU sanctions are diplomatic rather than legal and that it is a measure that Ireland has the power to implement independently in the Saudi Arabian case, in view of the provisions of the EU common position in regard to exports to countries in which there is a risk that arms will be used in the commission of serious violations of international law. [44415/18]

199. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 15 of 18 October 2018, if her attention has been drawn to the first joint report of session 2017–19 issued by the UK Parliament’s committees on arms export controls which recommended that the UK Government consider implementing a presumption of denial policy in regard to arms exports to countries which have not signed the arms trade treaty or that are on the UK’s human rights priority list notwithstanding the fact that EU arms embargoes are not in place in regard to all such countries; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44416/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 198 and 199 together.

Ireland exports a small volume of goods which have a military classification per the EU Common Military List. Each application for an export licence in respect of such goods is subject to a stringent examination on a case-by-case basis. Each application is reviewed against the 8 risk assessment criteria set out in Article 2 of the European Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment. The application is then reviewed against any EU Trade Sanctions that may be in place in respect of the destination country; for example, an arms embargo.

My Department also seeks observations from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in relation to foreign policy considerations that may be pertinent to each licence application. Observations from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade provide information on the end destination and the end user, in order to limit the risk of proliferation and the diversion of goods.

The “presumption of denial” is not a legal concept under Irish or EU law. My understanding is that the phrase originated in the US legal system.

Saudi Arabia is not currently subject to EU sanctions. EU sanctions, are a matter for my colleague, the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, and his EU counterparts on the Foreign Affairs Council.

While there is no legal basis for a formal “presumption of denial” policy in Ireland and, as such a practice could be open to legal challenge, the cumulative effect of the rigorous assessment applied by my Department and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to all applications for military export licences could be seen as equating in terms of practical outcomes to

such a presumption in respect of sensitive destinations such as Saudi Arabia.

Finally, while it is not appropriate for me to comment on proposals arising in other jurisdictions, I note that the proposals in question arose in the context of consideration of distinct foreign and trade policies for the UK outside the EU acquis, i.e. in a post-Brexit scenario.

### **Personal Injuries Commission**

200. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if an implementation report with timelines for the recommendations of the Personal Injuries Commission in its second and final report will be published; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44454/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Government believes that it is important that consumers and businesses can obtain insurance cover at a reasonable and fair price.

The cost of insurance is an issue of concern for consumers, businesses and community groups.

The Minister for Finance established the Cost of Insurance Working Group in 2016 to examine the factors contributing to the increasing cost of insurance and identifying what measures can be introduced to help reduce this cost, while maintaining a financially stable insurance sector.

The Personal Injuries Commission was established following a recommendation in the Cost of Insurance Working Group Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance published in January 2017.

I was pleased to submit the Second and Final Report of the Personal Injuries Commission to Government on the 18th September 2018. The publication of this Report now concludes the challenging work programme of the Personal Injuries Commission since its establishment in January 2017.

The Report makes ten recommendations, the implementation of which will be a matter for each of the bodies responsible. While the recommendations are not time-bound due to the nature of them, it is expected that they will be acted upon by the bodies responsible as soon as possible.

In this regard, I have written to relevant Government colleagues, the Minister for Justice and Equality and the Minister for Health, and other organisations including the Garda Commissioner, Insurance Ireland, The Law Society, The Council of the Bar of Ireland and the Law Reform Commission, seeking co-operation in advancing the implementation of the recommendations relevant to them.

As the Personal Injuries Commission was established following a recommendation in the Cost of Insurance Working Group Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance published in January 2017, it is intended that progress on implementation will be monitored and published through the Cost of Insurance Working Group Quarterly Progress Reports published by my colleague Minister of State Michael D'Arcy.

### **IDA Ireland Site Visits**

201. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA site visits by county in quarter 1, 2 and 3 of 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44484/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** IDA Ireland continues to highlight the benefits of expanding or locating in all counties of Ireland to its client base. It is important to remember, however, that the final decision as to where to invest always rests with the company concerned. It is also the case that site visit activity does not necessarily reflect investment potential, as almost 70% of all new foreign direct investment comes from existing IDA client companies.

Site visits nevertheless do represent an important tool through which investors can be encouraged to invest in regional areas and the IDA always does its utmost to ensure that investors consider all potential locations when visiting Ireland.

The table below sets out the number of IDA Ireland site visits to each county in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 of 2018. Figures for Quarter 3 of this year will be compiled by the end of October.

County	Q1 2018	Q2 2018
Dublin	69	72
Kildare	4	0
Meath	1	3
Wicklow	0	1
Laois	4	2
Longford	0	0
Offaly	0	1
Westmeath	3	9
Clare	4	3
Limerick	8	7
Tipperary	1	1
Cavan	0	1
Louth	6	6
Monaghan	0	1
Donegal	0	3
Leitrim	2	3
Sligo	5	3
Carlow	1	2
Kilkenny	0	2
Waterford	5	9
Wexford	0	1
Cork	10	14
Kerry	0	5
Galway	10	20
Mayo	2	2
Roscommon	0	1
Total	135	172

## Jobs Protection

202. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the actions she has taken to protect jobs at a company (details supplied); the supports that have been put in place for employees that will be made redundant; if she has spoken with the management of the company regarding these job losses; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44485/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The announcement by the Authentic Food Company that it is to close down is very disappointing. The Government's immediate concern is for those workers directly affected by this announcement in this very difficult time for them and their families. The Government will make every State support available to these employees.

My Department, through Enterprise Ireland (EI), has had a strong active engagement with the Authentic Food Company before, during and since they acquired their Dundalk facility. EI has supported the company with grant aid in the forms of Lean Transform, multiple Technical Feasibility Studies and an Innovation Partnership with Dundalk Institute of Technology. The EI Brexit Unit services were also made available to the company.

A total of 7 meetings between EI and the Authentic Food Company were held in 2017 and three meetings have taken place to date in 2018. In addition, as Mr Basran is based in the UK, two phone calls were held recently with Mr. Basran.

We will collectively, across Government, do our utmost to help these workers transition and find new employment opportunities. EI is also working with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection on an information day, which will take place on 1st November at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Dundalk. This will highlight start-up supports and programmes available to former employees of the Authentic Food Company. Several large companies in the region have been invited to attend.

Notwithstanding this extremely disappointing news, it's important to remember that the overall trend in terms of job creation in the region is positive. 2017, for example, was another record year for the State in terms of FDI and indigenous employment and investment, with continued strong employment growth reported so far in 2018.

Recent announcements for Louth include 400 jobs and a €325m investment by Wuxi in Dundalk in April; 70 jobs for Drogheda by PCI Pharma in April; an expansion by Almac at its Dundalk campus worth €34m in January; 250 roles by National Pen in Dundalk in December; and 300 jobs by Wasdell Group in Dundalk in November as part of a €30m investment.

There is every reason to be confident that we will find new investment and new opportunities for the employees of the Authentic Food Company.

## Jobs Initiative

203. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the date of the national jobs summit in November 2018. [44490/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Future Jobs summit will take place on the morning of the 22nd November 2018.

*Future Jobs* represents a new economic framework for Ireland aimed at strengthening our

economic resilience to future potentially adverse economic developments and at positioning our people and our businesses to grasp future opportunities.

Future Jobs will focus on:

1. increasing enterprise productivity especially among Irish SMEs;
2. ensuring we develop the talents our economy needs;
3. enabling people, especially women to join the workforce; and
4. addressing the challenges of transitioning our people and businesses to new economic models such as the low carbon and digital economies.

The Future Jobs initiative will drive our development over the coming years as a resilient, innovative, and globally connected economy, capable of coping with technological and other transformational changes ahead.

My Department, in partnership with the Department of the Taoiseach, is leading this whole of Government effort to develop Future Jobs and is engaging in extensive consultation with stakeholders. The centrepiece of this consultation will be the Future Jobs Summit to which the Deputy's question refers. At this event Government will consult on an emerging programme of actions with a broad range of stakeholders before Future Jobs 2019 is launched early next year. I envisage that the summit will present an opportunity for stakeholders to engage with each other and with Government Ministers with a view to suggesting options for development under the Future Jobs initiative.

### **Departmental Budgets**

204. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount announced by her Department in budget 2019 towards doubling Ireland's global footprint. [44491/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Expenditure Report 2019 set out the summary capital and current allocations for my Department in 2019. The gross allocation of €950.2million for my Department in 2019 as set out in the Report represents an increase of 9.1% on the Department's 2018 allocation of €871million and includes an increase in our capital funding from €555m to €620million in 2019 and also an increase in our current funding from €316million to €330.2million next year. The increase in our allocation next year has allowed me to provide a further €8m in current funding to the Department our Enterprise Agencies and Regulatory Bodies to enable them to enhance our Global Footprint and bolster the efforts to get Businesses Ready for Brexit.

Whilst the definitive 2019 allocations for the various Enterprise Agencies and Regulatory Bodies and the Department itself will only be determined as part of the Revised Estimates Volume process, it is my intention to increase Enterprise Ireland's and IDA's current funding in 2019 by €3m and 2m respectively. I also intend to provide a further €3m to the Department and its Regulatory Bodies. This additional funding will allow us to increase our staffing resources and promotional activities in 2019 thereby enhancing our Global Footprint and our ability to assist businesses to diversify into new markets.

### **Departmental Funding**

205. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount allocated to the seed and venture capital fund in each year since established; and the number of approved applicants. [44492/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Enterprise Ireland Seed and Venture Capital Scheme (SVC) has been in operation since 1994 and there have been four distinct programme periods. These are 1994-1999, 2000-2006, 2007-2012 and 2013-2018. Across the programme phases, Enterprise Ireland has committed approximately €510 million, which, using a co-investment model, has raised a total of €1.19 billion in seed and venture capital funding since 1994. All funds are independently managed by private sector fund managers who make the decisions regarding investments.

The SVC programme operates by allocating funding to Enterprise Ireland to support the venture capital sector. EI then issues calls for applications for funding from venture capital funds across the programme period. Funds which are successful in obtaining investment from EI are then required to raise the additional funding required to operate their fund from private capital sources or other public sources of capital. EI's contribution to any single fund is capped at 50%. The funds supported by the SVC programme make their investment decisions on a commercial basis. EI invests on a pari-passu basis, meaning the EI's investments are on the same terms as private investors in the fund. Also, important to note is the fact that the costs to the State of EI's intervention in the venture capital sector are offset by any returns from the investments undertaken by supported funds.

The table below breaks down the total amounts that have been allocated by Enterprise Ireland under the 4 programme periods to date, the total amounts invested under the scheme which includes those leveraged from other investors and the number of companies assisted.

Programme Period	Total Invested by Funds under the Scheme (€)	EI Allocation to Scheme (€)	Companies Assisted to date
1994-1999	129.3m	68m	177
2000-2006	366.3m	98m	152
2007-2012	491.4m	175m	335
2013-2018	204.4m	175m	76

The information in this table is accurate for each scheme from establishment until 30th June 2018.

It is important to note that the 2013-2018 programme is still making investments and we expect the total investment to be significantly higher once the investment period is finished.

### Enterprise Ireland Funding

206. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount allocated to regional innovation and technology clusters programme for SMEs by and in each year since established; and the number of approved applicants in tabular form. [44493/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** In Budget 2019 I announced an additional €2.75m to Enterprise Ireland for the creation of new 'Regional Innovation and Technology Clusters' via the Institutes of Technology, building their facilities, expertise and supportive capabilities as drivers of global enterprises in and across

the regions. This will support SME productivity and innovation, entrepreneurship and start-ups through inter-institutional collaboration across technologies, industries, sectors and skills, linked to future areas of potential.

Regional Innovation and Technology Clusters will see a further scaling of the capability of the Institutes of Technology (IoTs), in a planned, internationally ambitious way, that creates centres of excellence for both generating high-levels of entrepreneurship and spin-outs in the regions and also as key activators in supporting firm-level innovation, productivity, scaling and internationalisation.

This will support the national drive towards transforming the enterprise potential and performance in all regions, closing the gap in the regional productivity and providing quality and rewarding employment over the coming decades.

This programme has just been announced as part of a package of supports in Budget 2019 to drive regional development, and work is commencing to scope out the details of this initiative. There are therefore no approval numbers to report for this programme.

### Science Foundation Ireland Data

207. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount allocated to the strategic partnership programme for SFI in each year since it was established; and the number of approved applicants in tabular form. [44494/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The number of awards and budget allocation by year for the SFI Strategic Partnership Programme are shown in the below table. The awards are multi-annual in nature (i.e. the projects awarded in 2014 can involve funding in 2015 and 2016 etc.).

YEAR	No. of Awards	Total funding €
2014	3	2,386,145.30
2015	3	10,325,710.58
2016	5	11,077,846.50
2017	3	6,189,705.50

### Departmental Schemes

208. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount allocated to the retail online scheme in 2019. [44497/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Retail is the largest private sector employer in the country, and supports jobs in every city, town and village in the country. Digitalisation has increased the scope for competition in the sector, and online retailing has grown rapidly in Ireland.

As Chair of the Retail Consultation Forum I am committed to supporting the needs of the retail sector in developing their online capability and enhancing their competitiveness. In 2017, data from the CSO showed that while 66% of Irish enterprises in the Wholesale and Retail Sector reported having a website or homepage, only 28% were able to facilitate online ordering. All businesses, regardless of size or sector, in today's competitive environment must ensure to build their digital online capability.

The Retail Consultation Forum enables key issues affecting the retail sector to be discussed, with a view to identifying practical actions which could be taken by Government, or by industry itself, to support sustainable job growth in the sector. The new pilot Online Retail Scheme, administered by Enterprise Ireland for my Department, is a result of the work of the Forum's Working Group on the Digital Economy. My Department has worked closely with the Forum over the past two years to develop this scheme in line with the needs of the sector.

The pilot Scheme was launched in September with a fund of up to €625,000, which was later doubled to €1.25m as part of Budget 2019. The Online Retail Scheme will support retail businesses of 20 employees or more who are ready to strategically grow their online capability, under the areas of research, strategy development, implementation and training. The first call under the Scheme which will provide funding of up to €625,000 opened on the 24th October. The amount allocated to the scheme in 2019 is €1.25m.

The full details of the Scheme are published on the Enterprise Ireland website.

### **Foreign Direct Investment**

209. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the actions being taken to ensure Ireland is an attractive place for foreign direct investment to locate in following a report (details supplied) showing that total foreign direct investment here fell sharply in the first six months of 2018. [44498/18]

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

The reduction in foreign direct investment (FDI) in the report that the Deputy is referring to concerns the movement of cash assets following the enactment of the US Tax Cuts and Jobs Act in late 2017. While it is likely that US Firms have repatriated large amounts of cash and cash equivalents, there has been no discernible impact on the real operations of the foreign affiliates of US multinationals based here in terms of employment and value added from these repatriations.

Ireland's overall competitiveness performance remains positive. The World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Competitiveness Report 2018, published on 17 October 2018, ranks Ireland as the 23rd most competitive economy out of 140 countries. Ireland maintains its global competitiveness position from last year and continues to be the 8th most competitive economy in the Euro area and the 11th most competitive economy in the European Union. The World Bank's Ease of Doing Business report currently ranks Ireland as the 17th most competitive out of 190 economies.

It is important to remember that a real indication of Ireland's competitiveness is our ongoing strong employment growth across sectors and regions. In this regard, the impressive performance of clients supported by the enterprise agencies in winning exports, market share and job creation in the face of intense global competition is to be commended. The IDA has also made significant progress in diversifying their portfolio of client companies that invest here. There were, for example, 111 new name investments in 2017, an increase of 12% compared to 2016 which saw 99 new name investments. These figures reflect the competitiveness of the environment in which to do business in Ireland.

The Government is nevertheless conscious of the need to remain as competitive as possible.

It is therefore taking steps to ensure the economy is resilient to deal with competitiveness challenges and to build further on the progress that has been made. IDA Ireland, for its part, builds relationships with investors in order to aid their understanding of Ireland's enterprise environment and provide them with the assistance needed to overcome administrative obstacles. The Agency also maintains a direct relationship with investors and provides assistance as companies grow and diversify their Irish operations.

### **Work Permits Eligibility**

210. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on a case regarding the refusal to issue an employment permit to a person (details supplied); and the ruling issued. [44499/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Following the court proceedings in relation the application for an employment permit of the person concerned, my officials have reviewed the application and an employment permit has now been granted.

My officials having examined the Judges ruling, have reviewed and amended operational procedures to ensure they are now fully compliant with the judgement.

### **Departmental Budgets**

211. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the breakdown of the €251,945,000 capital allocation in jobs and enterprise development (details supplied) within her Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44511/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Expenditure Report 2019 which accompanied the Budget 2019 Statement by my colleague the Minister for Finance set out my Department's summary capital expenditure ceiling for next year. The proposed gross allocation of €950.2million for my Department in 2019, as set out in the Report, includes an increase in our capital funding from €555m to €620million in 2019. This represents an increase of 11.7% on Capital from 2018.

The capital allocation of €251.945million referred to by the Deputy relates to the 2019 allocation for my Department's Jobs and Enterprise Development Programme. The 2019 allocation represents an increase of 10.9% on the 2018 allocation of €227.2m for this Programme.

Whilst the definitive 2019 capital allocations for each of the Subheads in the Department's Jobs and Enterprise Development Programme will only be determined as part of the Revised Estimates Process, the additional funding being provided in Budget 2019 will enable me to increase the funding for Jobs and Enterprise Development, including through providing

- the initial funding to launch the new €300m Future Growth Loan scheme which addresses a specific lack of availability of finance to businesses, particularly SMEs, of loan terms longer than 5-7 years;

- €1m in additional funding for Intertrade Ireland which will enable it to meet the growing demand from businesses in border regions in its existing programmes, develop initiatives and support firms affected by Brexit;

- €5m in additional funding to the Local Enterprise Offices to enable them to expand the range of supports to indigenous enterprises across the various sectors, including through the provision of a new customs training programme for all businesses, exporters and importers, to be rolled out in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland;

- €10m in additional funding for the IDA's Regional Property Programme;

- €2.75m in funding to support a Regional Innovation and Technology Clusters Programme targeted at SMEs thereby building enterprise capability across the regions

The provision of this additional capital funding demonstrates the Government's determination to continue to support businesses through delivering jobs and enterprise development in all regions of the country in these challenging times.

### **Departmental Budgets**

212. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the breakdown of the €368,055,000 capital allocation in innovation (details supplied) within her Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44512/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Expenditure Report 2019 which accompanied the Budget 2019 Statement by my colleague the Minister for Finance set out my Department's summary capital expenditure ceiling for next year. The proposed gross allocation of €950.2million for my Department in 2019, as set out in the Report, includes an increase in our capital funding from €555m to €620million in 2019. This represents an increase of 11.7% in Capital from 2018.

The capital allocation of €368.055million referred to by the Deputy relates to the 2019 allocation for my Department's Innovation Programme. The 2019 allocation represents an increase of 12.28% on the 2018 allocation of €327.8m for this Programme.

Whilst the definitive 2019 capital allocations for each of the Subheads in the Department's Innovation Programme will only be determined as part of the Revised Estimates Process, as outlined in the context of Budget 2019 I propose that the additional funding will enable me to increase the funding for Innovation, including through

- The provision of €20million to roll out Phase one of Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund;

- The provision of an additional €2.75million in capital monies to meet the full year cost of European Southern Observatory membership;

- The provision of an additional €10million in capital funding to meet the full year cost of the new PhD/Research Masters Programme;

- The provision of an additional €500k in capital funding to support our membership of the European Space Agency

- The provision of additional €5million in capital to support the renewal of six SFI world-class research centres,

- The provision of an additional €1million in capital for SFI's Strategic Partnership Programme;

- The provision of an additional €1million in funding to support the development of the Tyndall Institute

The provision of this additional capital funding demonstrates the Government's commitment to supporting business to enable them to innovate and compete in a global marketplace and thereby helping to position Ireland as a Global Innovation Leader.

### **Disabilities Assessments**

213. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent on the hiring of private psychologists for the assessment of needs in south and north County Tipperary since 2008; and the average waiting time for assessment in early intervention therapies for ASD for the same time period. [44263/18]

**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.

### **Respite Care Services Data**

214. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Health the adult respite available in County Kilkenny; and the number of persons accessing this respite service. [44264/18]

**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.

### **Respite Care Services Provision**

215. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Health if a service (details supplied) in County Kilkenny provides adult respite both day and overnight. [44265/18]

**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 Provision**

216. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when he plans to introduce personal or individualised budgets for children with severe disabilities in order that they can choose the services they require from various service providers rather than been tied to one service provider; when the report from the taskforce on individualised budgets will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44483/18]

250. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when it is planned to introduce personal or individualised budgets for children with severe disabilities in order that they can chose the services they require from various service providers rather than been tied to one service provider; when the report from the task force on individualised budgets will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44385/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 216 and 250 together.

I wish to draw the Deputy's attention to the report of the Task Force on Personalised Budgets, which I published on 17 July 2018. The report is available on the Department of Health website. The report sets out how personalised budgets could work as a funding mechanism for people with a disability, providing them with greater choice and control over the services and supports they receive.

The Task Force, having reviewed the national and international research evidence and consulted with service users and their families, recommended that the Department of Health and the HSE should establish demonstration projects to test the delivery of personalised budgets with a view to identifying the best approach to the wider roll-out of these payment models following the initial demonstration phase.

My colleague the Minister for Health has given his full support to the Report's recommendations and the Government has approved the development of these demonstration projects to test the models identified in the Report of the Taskforce, as outlined in the Task Force recommendation. Work has already begun on a number of actions and funding of €1.3 million has been secured from the Department of Health budget for the set up and administration costs of demonstration projects.

The Department of Health, NDA and the HSE are in the process of designing demonstration projects, as recommended by the Task Force on Personalised Budgets. Selection criteria for inclusion in the demonstration projects have not yet been finalised. The Department's website will be kept updated with information on the roll out of the demonstration projects as it becomes available.

The introduction of personalised budgets represents a fundamental shift in the delivery of services for people with disabilities and presents very significant operational and procedural challenges to the HSE and service providers as it has done in other jurisdictions.

In light of these challenges, the Task Force has, from the outset, narrowed its focus to HSE funded disability services for adults with the intention that learnings from this cohort can inform the future roll-out of personalised budgets. The Task Force Report highlights the breadth of issues to be addressed in the initial demonstration sites and the substantial preparatory work needed.

I am satisfied that the preferred option is to continue with demonstration projects focussed on adult services in the first instance.

### **Home Help Service Data**

217. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of providing 2,000 extra homecare packages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44238/18]

218. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of providing one million additional home help hours; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44239/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 217 and 218 together.

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

### **Home Help Service Data**

219. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in receipt of home support services at 30 September 2018; the number that were approved and waiting for home support services for each CHO area at 30 September 2018; the number of persons waiting for more than one, three and six months, respectively for home support services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44250/18]

**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 Centres Provision**

220. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the status of the delivery of a primary health care centre in Rowlagh, Clondalkin, Dublin 22; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44251/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

### **Primary Care Centres Provision**

221. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the status of the delivery of a pri-

mary health care centre in Lucan village and Clondalkin village; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44252/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

### **Pharmaceutical Sector**

222. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health his plans for pharmaceutical assistants (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44257/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Pharmacy Act 2007 established the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI) and the functions of the Society are set out in the Act. The functions of the PSI are carried out on its behalf by the Council of the Society.

Section 30 of the Act provides for an exception to the general provision in the Act which requires the sale and supply of medicines at a pharmacy to be conducted under the personal supervision of a registered pharmacist, and specifies that no offence is committed where a registered pharmaceutical assistant “acts on behalf of a registered pharmacist during the temporary absence of the registered pharmacist”.

Section 30 also permits the Council to make rules as to:

1. What may or may not be done by a registered pharmaceutical assistant when acting on behalf of a registered pharmacist; and
2. What constitutes the temporary absence of a registered pharmacist.

On June 21, the Council of the Society approved for issuance for public consultation the proposed draft Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (Temporary Absence of Pharmacist from Pharmacy) Rules 2018. This public consultation commenced on 17 July and ran until 14 August and afforded any interested party the opportunity to make representations on the matter directly to the PSI.

Following completion of the public consultation phase, the Council of the PSI considered the proposed draft Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (Temporary Absence of Pharmacist from Pharmacy) Rules 2018 at its meeting on the 20th September 2018 where Council approved the draft rules without amendment.

My role in relation to this process is limited to the consideration of any such Rules once submitted for my approval. I must consider any Rules presented to me from a fair and impartial perspective, without prejudice or prejudgement.

I await the receipt of the Rules for my consideration from the PSI and, until that time, I am unfortunately not in a position to comment any further on the matter raised.

### **National Treatment Purchase Fund Eligibility**

223. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the schedule of types of medical treatments covered by the NTPF for 2017 and to date in 2018; the number of procedures and average fee paid for each treatment type; and if he will make a statement on the mat-

ter. [44258/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) has advised that in 2017 a total of 8,192 people were removed from the Active Inpatient Day Case (IPDC) waiting list as a result of accepting offers of treatment funded through the NTPF. As a result of the NTPF Scopes Initiative, 1,328 patients were removed from the GI Scopes waiting list. The total estimated cost of treatment for those who accepted offers in 2017 is €20.5m. (Please note that the 2017 Annual Financial Statements have not been finalised).

In the first 9 months of 2018, a total of 15,456 patients have accepted offers of NTPF funded treatment, broken down as follows:

Angiograms 1,135;

Cataracts 5,403;

Cystoscopies 2,121;

Joints 1,085;

Lesions 843;

Tonsils 866;

Varicose Veins 1,127;

Other Procedures 2,876;

**Total 15,456.**

In addition, 2,462 patients were removed from the GI Scopes waiting list this year to end of September 2018.

With regard to Inpatient / Day case (IP / DC), the following procedures are provided in Private Hospitals, funded through the NTPF:

Adenoidectomy;

Angiogram;

Arthroscopy of Ankle DC;

Arthroscopy of Ankle IP;

Arthroscopy of Shoulder DC;

Arthroscopy of Shoulder IP;

Arthroscopy of knee DC;

Arthroscopy of shoulder, diagnostic with or without synovial biopsy;

Arthroscopy of shoulder, surgical, with removal of loose body or foreign body, synovectomy debridement;

Bilateral hernia repair;

Cardioversion;

Carpal Tunnel;  
Cataracts;  
Cervical Discectomy IP;  
Circumcision DC Adults;  
Circumcision IP Adults;  
Circumcision DC Paeds;  
Circumcision IP Paeds;  
Colonoscopy;  
Correction of Protruding ears (Bilateral);  
Cystoscopy Day case;  
Endoscopy / Gastroscopy;  
Excision Lesion General;  
Excision Lesion Plastics;  
Excision of hydrocele, bilateral;  
Excision of hydrocele, unilateral;  
Grommets;  
Hip Replacement;  
Hysteroscopy with dilatation and curettage (diagnostic or therapeutic);  
Interruption of sapheno-femoral junction varicose veins;  
Knee Replacement;  
Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy daycase and inpatient;  
Laparoscopy with/without D&C and with/without biopsy;  
Lumbar Discectomy IP;  
Myringoplasty;  
Myringotomy bilateral and Grommets Paeds DC;  
Myringotomy bilateral paeds DC;  
Nasal/Sinus Endoscopy DC;  
Nasal/Sinus Endoscopy IP;  
Protoscopy/Sigmoidoscopy DC;  
Repair of incisional hernia;  
Repair of umbilical hernia;

Resection Ingrown Toenail DC;

Rhinoplasty DC;

Removal of Pin Screw Wire DC;

Removal of Pin Screw Wire IP;

Removal of Plate Rod Nail DC;

Removal of Plate Rod Nail IP;

Septoplasty DC;

Septoplasty IP;

Septorhinoplasty - ENT;

Septorhinoplasty - Plastics;

Strabismus procedure involving 1 or 2 muscles, one eye;

Surgical removal of unspecified number of teeth requiring removal of bone - to be performed by a maxillofacial surgeon;

Tonsils Adult;

Tonsils Paeds;

Transurethral resection of prostate [TURP];

Tympanoplasty IP Adult;

Tympanoplasty DC Adult;

Tympanoplasty IP Paeds;

Tympanoplasty DC Paeds;

Ureteroscope;

Urethroscopy, diagnostic, with or without biopsy; and

Varicose Veins.

The above is not an exhaustive list but covers most of the current procedures. There are also a broader range of procedures that are provided through public hospitals.

In addition, the NTPF has recently tendered for the following procedures:

Excision of chalazions, papillomas, dermoids or other cysts or lesions, one or both eyelids, involving skin, lid margin, tarsus and or palpebral conjunctiva;

Excision of pterygium;

Excision of pterygium and conjunctival graft;

Reconstruction of eyelid;

Syringing and/or probing of lacrimal passages, unilateral or bilateral;

Hallux valgus, bilateral;

Hallux valgus, unilateral;

Reconstruction of eyelid;

Excision of epididymal cyst, bilateral;

Excision of epididymal cyst, unilateral;

Orchidectomy, bilateral;

Orchidectomy, unilateral;

Orchidopexy for undescended testis, bilateral, with or without inguinal hernia repair;

Orchidopexy for undescended testis, unilateral, with or without inguinal hernia repair;

Repair of Varicocele;

Vasectomy, bilateral;

Cardiac electrophysiological study with radiofrequency ablation;

Anorectal examination;

Excision of anal skin tag;

Haemorrhoidectomy, external, multiple;

Cauterisation of ectropion;

Cauterisation of entropion;

Dacryocystorhinostomy [DCR];

Repair of epigastric hernia;

Fundoplasty, laparoscopic approach;

Orchidopexy for undescended testis, bilateral, with or without inguinal hernia repair; and

Orchidopexy for undescended testis, unilateral, with or without inguinal hernia repair.

Procedures with the Private hospitals are tendered through an open procurement process and the cost per procedure would be commercially sensitive.

### **Mental Health Services Provision**

224. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the supports available to the deaf community in accessing mental health supports, including the provision of mental health professionals fluent in sign language; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44259/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

## **Nursing Homes Support Scheme**

225. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the status of the implementation of the three year cap for the fair deal scheme for farm families and small business owners; when it will be put in place; if the cap will apply to fair deal recipients that are already on the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44271/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** The proposed policy change to the Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS), to cap contributions from farm assets at 3 years where a family successor commits to working the productive asset, has been approved by Government. My Department is working on the development of draft Heads of Bill while considering a number of ancillary policy and operational matters which may need to be addressed in the proposed legislation.

It is intended that this proposed policy change, the 3 year cap, will be extended to eligible existing participants in long term residential care so that they are not disadvantaged, but that there would be no retrospective recoupment of contributions for those who have paid contributions over and above the 3 year period. I expect to bring Heads of Bill to Government in the next session before this year end and that the changes will come into effect in 2019 subject to the legislative process.

## **Drug and Alcohol Task Forces**

226. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the budget 2019 allocation to drug and alcohol task forces in view of the fact that head B3 of the health Estimate shows a figure of €6,987,000 which is the same as the 2018 allocation; if further funding will be allocated to the task forces; if so, the location in which this is identified in the estimates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44276/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** Drug and Alcohol Task Forces play a key role in assessing the extent and nature of the drug problem and in initiating appropriate responses, so that there is a coordinated approach involving all sectors to the problem of substance misuse in local communities.

Over €27.85m has been allocated to Task Forces by the HSE and the Department of Health for community-based drugs initiatives this year. This included an additional €540,000 in one off funding to the Task Forces to support implementation of the national drugs strategy. In addition, Task Forces are being consulted by the HSE on the provision of €710,000 in one off funding for priority projects and services in CHO areas.

Implementing the health-led national drugs strategy continues to be a Government priority. Within the increased envelope of resources available in Budget 2019 for health services, my intention is to prioritise funding for community drug and alcohol projects in Task Force areas of greatest need, additional drug and alcohol midwives working with vulnerable mothers-to-be and enhanced treatment services to address existing and emerging needs.

It is intended that all Local and Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Forces will be notified of their 2019 funding allocations by the Department and the HSE as soon as the HSE National Service Plan for 2019 has been approved by the Minister for Health.

## **Services for People with Disabilities**

227. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health when additional placements will be available in a service (details supplied); if the request will be given urgent consideration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44277/18]

**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**

228. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive braces from the HSE. [44278/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Health Services**

229. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44282/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

### **Home Care Packages Provision**

230. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when an approved home support package will be in place for a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44283/18]

**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 Supply**

231. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health when a national biosimilar medicines policy will be produced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44284/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department and the HSE are engaging in a number of initiatives which will endeavour to lead to better access to medicines for patients, value for the taxpayer and the cost-effective provision of medicines in Ireland. To

address some of these issues, the Government is developing a National Biosimilar Medicines Policy to promote the rational use of biosimilar medicines and to create a sustainable environment for biological medicines in Ireland.

A public consultation on a National Biosimilar Medicines Policy was undertaken by the Department of Health in Q4 2017. The responses to the consultation and other possible policy levers are being considered by the Department along with plans for the involvement of stakeholders across the health service.

At an operational level, the Acute Hospitals Drugs Management Programme has a biosimilar strategy in place since 2017 which is using a collaborative approach led by hospital pharmacists with clinical teams to bring about changes in prescribing practice.

### **Respite Care Services Data**

232. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite care hours provided for the first half of 2017 compared to the first half of 2018 by CHO and LHO in tabular form. [44285/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Home Care Packages Data**

233. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of older persons waiting for home support packages; and the waiting lists for homecare packages by CHO and LHO in tabular form. [44286/18]

234. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of home support packages provided for the first half of 2017 compared to the number provided in the first half of 2018 by CHO and LHO in tabular form. [44287/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 233 and 234 together.

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

### **Pharmaceutical Sector**

235. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if he has received the report from an organisation (details supplied) with respect to the public consultation on pharmaceutical assistants; if so, the way in which he plans to proceed; if not, when he is likely to receive the document; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44289/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Pharmacy Act 2007 established the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI) and the functions of the Society are set out in the Act. The functions of the PSI are carried out on its behalf by the Council of the Society.

Section 30 of the Pharmacy Act 2007 provides for an exception to the general provision in

the Act which requires the sale and supply of medicines at a pharmacy to be conducted under the personal supervision of a registered pharmacist, and specifies that no offence is committed where a registered pharmaceutical assistant “acts on behalf of a registered pharmacist during the temporary absence of the registered pharmacist”.

Section 30 also permits the Council to make rules as to:

1. What may or may not be done by a registered pharmaceutical assistant when acting on behalf of a registered pharmacist; and
2. What constitutes the temporary absence of a registered pharmacist.

On June 21 2018, the Council of the PSI approved for issuance for public consultation the proposed draft Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (Temporary Absence of Pharmacist from Pharmacy) Rules 2018. This public consultation commenced on 17 July and ran until 14 August and afforded any interested party the opportunity to make representations on the matter directly to the PSI.

Following completion of the public consultation phase, the Council of the PSI considered the proposed draft Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (Temporary Absence of Pharmacist from Pharmacy) Rules 2018 at its meeting on the 20th September 2018 where the Council approved the draft rules without amendment.

To date, the PSI have not submitted the draft Rules to me for approval.

My role in relation to this process is limited to the consideration of any such Rules once submitted for my approval. I must consider any Rules presented to me from a fair and impartial perspective, without prejudice or prejudgement.

I await the receipt of the Rules for my consideration from the PSI and, until that time, I am unfortunately not in a position to comment any further on the matter raised.

## **EU Directives**

236. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 916 of 17 April 2018, if his departmental representatives have reported on whether chiropractors will be added to the register for those that may refer patients for radiological tests under the proposed transposition of medical provisions of the Basic Safety Standards Directive 96/29/Euratom (BSSD96). [44290/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The designation of referrers and practitioners for the purposes of the medical provisions of the Basic Safety Standards Directive (BSSD) is under consideration by my Department.

## **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Provision**

237. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) is not being provided with the necessary social needs supports by CAHMS or another service despite the significant change in their behaviour and level of need. [44293/18]

**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 Centres Data**

238. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Health the number of acute service centres available here for persons that suffer from migraine; the number of persons that visited each dedicated centre each year; if he has plans to establish new acute service centres in this regard; if so, when they will be established; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44307/18]

**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.

### **General Practitioner Services**

239. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health his plans to ensure that the HSE can continue to attract general practitioners to work in rural Ireland; his plans to increase the support for out of hours cover, the return of distance coding and increasing and improving the eligibility conditions for the rural practice allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44310/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** GPs play a crucial role in the provision of primary care services. The number of GPs on the specialist register continues to increase – up from 2,270 in 2010 to 3,669 in 2018 and the number of GPs with a GMS contract has also risen from 2,098 in 2008 to 2,508 as at 1 October 2018.

The Government is aware of workforce issues facing general practice, including the influence of demographic factors, and has implemented a number of measures to improve recruitment and retention in general practice.

GP training places have been increased from 120 in 2009 to 193 in 2018 and the Government's objective is to continue to achieve annual increases in the number of training places available while ensuring that all of the places are filled.

Further efforts to increase the number of practising GPs include changes to the entry provisions of the GMS scheme to accommodate more flexible GMS contracts and the retirement age has been extended to 72. In May 2016 an enhanced support package for rural practices was introduced with improved qualifying criteria and an increased financial allowance of €20,000 per annum. 257 GP practice units encompassing 347 individual GPs are now in receipt of financial supports under this framework, a significant increase on the 167 GPs who received a rural practice allowance prior to the introduction of the 2016 measures.

The Government remains committed to the continued development of GP capacity to ensure that patients across the country continue to have access to GP services and that general practice remains an attractive career option in all areas.

Officials from my Department and the HSE recently re-engaged with the Irish Medical Organisation to set out the State's position in relation to reform of the GMS contract. Agreement on the delivery of service improvements and contractual reform has the potential to facilitate a substantial increase in the resourcing of general practice on a multiannual basis.

The Deputy will understand that it would not be appropriate at this stage of the process to discuss the proposed package of reform and associated funding which has not yet been agreed.

## **General Practitioner Services**

240. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health his plans to provide extra support for Westdoc in order that it can provide a more comprehensive out of hours service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44311/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to a service matter, I have arranged for it to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

## **Long-Term Illness Scheme Coverage**

241. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health if he will expand the long term illness scheme to include mental illness beyond 16 years of age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44325/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Long Term Illness (LTI) Scheme was established under Section 59(3) of the Health Act 1970 (as amended). The conditions covered by the LTI are: acute leukaemia; mental handicap; cerebral palsy; mental illness (in a person under 16); cystic fibrosis; multiple sclerosis; diabetes insipidus; muscular dystrophies; diabetes mellitus; parkinsonism; epilepsy; phenylketonuria; haemophilia; spina bifida; hydrocephalus; and conditions arising from the use of Thalidomide. Under the LTI Scheme, patients receive drugs, medicines, and medical and surgical appliances directly related to the treatment of their illness, free of charge.

There are no plans to extend the list of conditions covered by the Scheme.

## **Health Services**

242. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 459 of 18 September 2018, when he expects to receive the Chief Medical Officer's report on mesh implants carried out here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44327/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** 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. At my request, the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) is preparing a report which will make recommendations in relation to the clinical and technical issues involved. I am informed that the CMO's Report is close to finalisation with an anticipated publication date in the first two weeks of November.

Pending finalisation of the CMO's report, a number of significant system actions in relation to mesh implants have already been advanced on foot of priority recommendations which were identified in the course of preparation of that report.

The CMO wrote to the Acting Director General of the Health Service Executive on 20 July 2018 to request that the Executive put immediate measures in place to:

1. Pause the use of all procedures involving uro-gynaecological/transvaginal mesh implants for the management of Stress Urinary Incontinence (SUI) or Pelvic Organ Prolapse (POP) in HSE funded hospitals, in cases where it is clinically appropriate and safe to do so.

2. Ensure that in situations where expert clinical judgment is that there is an urgency to carry out the procedure and no suitable alternative exists, surgery should proceed only if a delay would risk harm to the patient and should be based on multidisciplinary team decision and fully informed consent.

This pause is to remain in place pending confirmation of implementation by the Health Service Executive, working in conjunction with the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (IOG) and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), of three urgent recommendations relating to:

- (i) Surgical Training,
- (ii) Informed Consent and
- (iii) the Development of an agreed Dataset of Mesh Procedures.

The Department also wrote to the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and the Continence Foundation of Ireland on requesting that they assist the HSE in progressing these recommendations on an urgent basis.

It is anticipated that the Executive will be in a position to indicate to the Department that these recommendations have been implemented within a number of months. The HSE has published information concerning the pause on its website for patients affected.

The provision of appropriate aftercare for women suffering from mesh complications, including appropriate diagnostic facilities, has also been identified as a priority recommendation for immediate advancement by the Executive in the course of preparation of the CMO's report. 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 28 2018, requesting that the Executive commence work on (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, 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 all the recommendations above. A Learning Notice concerning mesh devices in uro-gynaecological procedures was circulated by the NWIHP on 26 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.

The HSE has informed the Department of Health that a Synthetic Mesh Devices Advisory Group has been convened by the NWIHP which includes three patient representatives, as well as representatives of the HPRA, the IOG, the RCSI, the CFI and all Hospital Groups to advise on and action all of the recommendations above.

The HSE advice is that all patients who have experienced complications due to mesh devices are advised to contact their consultant's clinic in the first instance. Each hospital group has nominated an individual to coordinate a response to this group of patients. If patients are having trouble accessing information they can contact the National Women & Infants Health Programme at [smi.nwihp@hse.ie](mailto:smi.nwihp@hse.ie) for help.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists Data**

243. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons awaiting oral maxillo facial services in Letterkenny University Hospital in tabular form; the number of persons on the waiting list over six, 12 and 24 months and in excess of these times for both outpatient appointments and for actual procedures respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44329/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Hospital Admissions**

244. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a bed at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital. [44330/18]

**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.

### **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Data**

245. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in each LHO area waiting for a CAMHS appointment; and the number waiting 0 to 12, 12 to 26, 26 to 52 and more than 52 weeks, respectively. [44344/18]

**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.

### **Cancer Screening Programmes**

246. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE has signed up to use a laboratory (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44346/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Screening saves lives. CervicalCheck has been successful in reducing cervical cancer rates in Ireland and, as Dr Scally stated in his report on the issues relating to CervicalCheck, which was published on the website of my Department on 12 September, continuation of the screening service in the coming months is of crucial importance. Dr Scally's report provided welcome reassurance about the quality management processes in the laboratories currently contracted by CervicalCheck, and confirmed that he found no reason why the existing contracts for laboratory services should not continue until the new HPV regime is introduced.

The HSE has now advised that Heads of Agreement have been signed with the laboratories contracted by CervicalCheck, to extend their contracts pending the introduction of HPV testing as the primary screening test. This allows for the continuation of the service without interruption.

The switch to HPV testing as the primary screening mechanism for the CervicalCheck programme will involve a reconfiguration of the laboratory work involved, and will be subject to a

tendering process for any work carried out outside the public sector.

### Departmental Staff Data

247. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of staff in his Department by grade. [44357/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The breakdown of the staff by grade in my Department is set out in the table.

Grade	Number (Whole Time Equivalent)
Secretary General	1
Deputy Secretary General	4
Assistant Secretary	7
Director	1
Ministerial Adviser	6
Principal Officer	46.33
Assistant Principal	127.33
Higher Executive Officer	86.89
Administrative Officer	40.6
Executive Officer	71.45
Clerical Officer	62.4
Temporary Clerical Officer	2
Service Officer	6
Ministerial Driver	8
Total	470

### Hospital Waiting Lists

248. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the case of a person (details supplied) who has not been prioritised in view of the severity of their condition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44367/18]

**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 Staff**

249. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the reason legal fees can or cannot be returned to persons (details supplied). [44371/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Minister for Health has no role in determining the refund of legal fees.

*Question No. 250 answered with Question No. 216.*

**Departmental Correspondence**

251. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the outcome of inquiries made in relation to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44394/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department has contacted the Deputy's Office in relation to this case and the matter is being resolved.

**Rare Diseases Strategy**

252. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the details of the chair and composition of the technical review committee on rare diseases; and his views on whether a conflict of interest exists between the independent NCPE and the technical review committee. [44418/18]

**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.

**Rare Diseases Strategy**

253. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the terms of reference for the technical review committee on rare diseases; and the timeline for review. [44419/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drug schemes, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

**Rare Diseases**

254. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the mechanism in place to facilitate patient engagement in order that the views of SMA sufferers and their families can be factored into a decision arrived at in view of the fact that the technical review committee on rare diseases comprises patient representatives also. [44420/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drug schemes, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Suicide Bereavement Support**

255. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the LHO areas that have a suicide bereavement liaison worker in tabular form. [44427/18]

**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**

256. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the development of adult and child mental health intellectual disability teams in 2018; and the number of additional new staff appointed to date in 2018. [44428/18]

**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 Data**

257. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional staff appointed to the CAMHS service in each CHO to date in 2018; and the net increase in staff numbers resulting from such recruitment in each CHO to date in 2018, in tabular form. [44429/18]

**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**

258. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in each CHO waiting for a psychology appointment in primary care; and the number waiting 0 to 12, 12 to 26, 26 to 52 and more than 52 weeks, respectively. [44430/18]

**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.

### **Home Care Packages Data**

259. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in receipt of homecare support packages in County Donegal; the number of home support hours delivered in each month in 2018 to date; the number of hours to be delivered in 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44443/18]

260. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for homecare support packages in County Donegal; the number waiting to receive a package for one to three, three to six, six to nine, nine to 12, 12 to 15, 15 to 18 and longer

than 18 months, respectively, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44444/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 259 and 260 together.

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

### **Patient Safety**

261. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the steps he has taken to introduce legislation and policy on mandatory open disclosure, independent of the patient safety Bill and in respect of the cervical smear scandal; if he will provide a start and end date including full disclosure on the 1,800 smears yet to be audited; the breakdown of the new assessment packages being negotiated with laboratories carrying out smear slide analysis including mandatory site audits; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44459/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** It is my intention to bring forward proposals in the coming weeks for Government approval to establish an Independent Patient Safety Council. The Council will have as its first task the completion of a detailed overhaul of existing policy on Open Disclosure reflecting the full range of Dr Scally's recommendations in this regard.

The Department of Health is continuing to engage with the HSE in line with Dr Scally's recommendations; the HSE has also assured that staff are being made aware of the procedures required in relation to the undertaking of Open Disclosure. I'm advised that the HSE is also engaging with the post-graduate training bodies and other relevant bodies in relation to ensuring that its open disclosure policy is revised in line with the recommendations of the Scally Report.

The Independent Clinical Expert Panel Review which is being led by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) is examining the results of screening tests of all women who have developed cervical cancer who participated in the screening programme since it was established. This review will provide independent clinical assurance to women about the timing of their diagnosis, and any issues relating to their treatment and outcome. In light of the particular sensitivities surrounding this issue, it was decided that written, informed consent will be sought from women or the next-of-kin of women who have passed away before they are included in the review. The process of seeking consent from women for their inclusion in the review is ongoing. Almost 1,600 letters have now issued; approximately 813 consent forms are reported to have been returned up to end of last week, with 97% of women who have responded agreeing to take part in the review.

It is expected that a review of this complexity will take a number of months to complete. Upon completion, each woman involved will receive an individual report of the outcome of their review. I will be presented with an aggregate report, which I intend to publish.

In regard to the laboratories currently contracted by CervicalCheck, I understand that the Deputy's question relates to quality assurance. Dr Scally's Final Report, which was published in September, provided welcome reassurance about the laboratories currently contracted by Cervical Check. Dr Scally clearly stated that he is satisfied with the quality management processes in these labs. It is very important to say that Dr Scally confirmed that he found no reason why the existing contracts for laboratory services should not continue until the new HPV regime is introduced. I am happy to say that Heads of Agreement have been signed with the

contracted labs to extend their contracts pending the introduction of HPV testing as the primary screening test. This allows for the continuation of the service without interruption. This is subject to formal conclusion of the contract, so it would not be appropriate to give any further detail at this stage.

### **Hospital Services**

262. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that medical treatment was delayed and a patient transfer to another hospital was required due to the lack of supply of a basic medical aid (details supplied); the supply provisions in place to restock this hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44461/18]

**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.

### **Hospitals Discharges**

263. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will be discharged to the care of their family on completion of treatment which they have requested; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44476/18]

**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 Admissions**

264. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the reason the Royal Hospital Donnybrook has a different admissions policy for patients that are based in Dublin hospitals than that for persons located in provincial hospitals; his views on whether this is fair; if he will ensure that patients from all hospitals can equally access healthcare despite location; and if a person (details supplied) will receive treatment needed. [44480/18]

**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**

265. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health his views on the case of a person (details supplied); and if timely medical treatment will be provided for them. [44523/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has

been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Departmental Budgets**

266. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €473,000 capital allocation in administration, that is, Vote 38 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44553/18]

267. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €14,527,000 capital allocation in grants in respect of building and equipping including information and communication technology, that is, Vote 38 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44554/18]

268. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €564,461,000 capital allocation in building, equipping and furnishing of health facilities, that is, Vote 38 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44555/18]

269. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €2,539,000 capital allocation in building, equipping and furnishing of health facilities part funded by the National Lottery, that is, Vote 38 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within his Department by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44556/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 266 to 269, inclusive, together.

The total capital funding for the public Health Services announced in Budget 2019 and published in the Estimates for Public Services 2019 is €667m, an increase of €174m (35%) over the capital funding provided in Budget 2018.

- €567m (€564.461m+€2.539m) is available to the Health Service Executive for building, equipping and furnishing of health facilities,

- €85m for Information Communication Technology

- €15m for my Department (€14.527m) and directly funded agencies (€0.473m) under the aegis of my Department.

A Capital Plan for 2019 will be developed by the Health Service Executive having regard to the available funding. On completion of the Capital Plan it will be submitted to my Department for consideration.

## Departmental Budgets

270. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €85 million capital allocation in information services and related services for health agencies, that is, Vote 38 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44557/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Capital ICT provision in 2019 of €85m will fund a large range of projects that support my Departments eHealth strategy for Ireland as well as the HSE's Knowledge and Information Plan as part of a rolling annual programme of work.

In broad terms, the expenditure on ICT projects in 2019 is planned to be:

- Technical Infrastructure
- Replacement of existing communications, server and client hardware.
- Deployment of additional hardware to support delivery of clinical and non-clinical applications and to digitally connect clinicians, support staff and patients.
- Systems
- Funding for major initiatives such as the Electronic Health Record, National Children's Hospital Systems, the National Financial Management System, Individual Health Identifier, the Maternal and Newborn Information System, the Acute Floor Information System etc.

The detail that the Deputy is requesting is not yet available. The ICT Capital Plan for 2019 is currently under review by the HSE and will be subject to further review and approval by my Department in the coming weeks. It will become available following approval of the 2019 National Service Plan and the Deputy will be supplied with detail of the planned projects subsequent to that process being finalised.

The provision of the capital funding allows the ICT enablement of health services. It will ensure that Ireland can benefit from the potential of ICT and eHealth to improve the health and wellbeing of all its patient/citizens, the working environment of its health professionals/care providers, the efficiency and effectiveness of its delivery services and the realisation of significant economic development potential.

## Departmental Budgets

271. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €250,000 capital allocation in other HSE services, that is, Vote 38 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44558/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Revised Estimate for Vote 38 (Health) includes a provision for the Health Service Executive of €2.7m under Subhead J6 Economic and Social Disadvantage (Dormant Accounts Funding). This provision comprises €2.45m current and €0.25m capital.

Measures approved under the Dormant Accounts Action Plans are delivered on behalf of the

Department by the HSE. Exact details in relation to expenditure on the measures during 2019 remain to be finalised. I will revert directly to the Deputy on the matter in due course.

### **Home Care Packages**

272. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if home care hours will be provided for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44563/18]

**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.

### **Agri-Environment Options Scheme Extension**

273. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the agri-environment options scheme, AEOS, will be extended; if not, if the GLAS scheme will be reopened for those farmers exiting AEOS in the next twelve months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44245/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** There are no plans to extend the the Agri-Environment Options and Natura Schemes (AEOS). The subsequent agri-environment scheme the Green, Low-Carbon, Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS) opened in three tranches commencing in 2015. It was open to AEOS participants to apply to join GLAS, such applicants were required to exit their existing AEOS contract before a GLAS contract could commence. GLAS is now fully subscribed with the target of 50,000 participants met well ahead of target. There are no plans to re-open this scheme to new applications.

Agri-environment policy is included in the CAP negotiations currently underway and any future scheme will be dependent on the outcome of these negotiations.

### **Beef Data and Genomics Programme**

274. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers who are not on target to meet their 20% star rating under the beef data and genomics programme, BDGP, by the end of October 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44273/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** There are approximately 22,700 BDGP herds on target to meet the requirement to have 20% 4 or 5 star females by 31st October 2018. Currently 509 herds are failing to meet this requirement; my Department issued letters to these herds on the 16th of October reminding them of their responsibilities under the program and advising them to source replacement females.

### **Forestry Data**

275. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the acreage of land planted for forestry for the public and private sector by county; the species of trees in each of the years 2015 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44291/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Afforestation Grant and Premium Scheme is the main afforestation scheme, it is operated by my Department and is available to private land owners. The Scheme provides for a number of different grant and premium categories and within those categories, for the planting of a number of different species. It sits within the Forestry Programme 2014 to 2020, which takes into account the aims and objectives of the EU's Biodiversity Strategy; certain commitments are provided for, including a target of 30% broadleaf planting on an annual and national basis. As part of the mid-term review of the Programme I increased the broadleaf component in proposed sites to 15%, as well as increasing the rates payable to encourage broadleaf planting. These changes are already showing results, with broadleaf planting now at an average of 25%.

My Department compiles various statistics annually, which are made available on my Department's website. Table 1 below shows the area planted under forestry by both the public and private sectors in the years 2015 to 2017.

Table 1:

Year	Private (ha)	Public (ha)	Total
2015	6,284	8.53*	6,293
2016	6,500	-	6,500
2017	5,536	-	5,536

\* Planted in Co. Roscommon

Table 2 below shows the breakdown of private planting by county.

County	2015 (ha)	2016 (ha)	2017 (ha)
Carlow	82.35	45.72	62.37
Cavan	276.77	425.07	316.67
Clare	567.90	552.00	518.38
Cork	662.95	608.08	419.69
Donegal	72.09	36.15	54.13
Dublin	8.42	2.75	10.80
Galway	431.73	331.14	400.32
Kerry	430.38	404.98	377.66
Kildare	28.62	13.49	33.02
Kilkenny	264.41	181.34	89.55
Laois	198.24	163.35	98.57
Leitrim	512.90	433.78	536.22
Limerick	176.81	328.80	99.48
Longford	286.15	272.01	200.70
Louth	22.39	39.84	21.85
Mayo	454.99	428.55	531.78
Meath	73.34	104.73	122.04
Monaghan	37.92	88.83	61.38
Offaly	156.26	135.76	165.63
Roscommon	334.35	435.04	431.11
Sligo	268.13	301.73	189.96
Tipperary	340.77	305.14	161.65
Waterford	125.29	240.13	163.40

Questions - Written Answers

County	2015 (ha)	2016 (ha)	2017 (ha)
Westmeath	204.14	281.48	206.88
Wexford	128.17	89.29	114.36
Wicklow	138.81	250.62	148.15
Total	6,284.28	6,499.80	5,535.75

County	Sitka spruce	Pines	Norway spruce	Other Conifer	Total Conifer
Carlow	56.22	1.46	1.3	4.31	63.29
Cavan	205.26	2.5	2.37	9.47	219.6
Clare	448.43	0.63	0	12.41	461.47
Cork	486.14	14.83	9.46	4.93	515.36
Donegal	52.81	0.15	0	8.97	61.93
Dublin	6.91	0	0	0	6.91
Galway	255.18	4.42	45.3	11.86	316.76
Kerry	299.84	17.04	0	9.68	326.56
Kildare	3.01	0	20.84	0	23.85
Kilkenny	105.77	0.46	78.16	7.37	191.76
Laois	148.42	4.29	21.07	2.29	176.07
Leitrim	421.84	2.78	3.51	14	442.13
Limerick	141.54	0.96	0	9.96	152.46
Longford	146.27	1.83	44.94	4.8	197.84
Louth	2.98	1.3	0	0.37	4.65
Mayo	335.95	7.53	13.47	35.64	392.59
Meath	33.32	0.18	12.96	1.68	48.14
Monaghan	29.26	0.02	0	0.18	29.46
Offaly	13.9	1.39	111.89	0.1	127.28
Roscommon	253.26	1.08	22.99	5.63	282.96
Sligo	218.51	8.32	0	13.11	239.94
Tipperary	248.44	0.15	9.84	9.76	268.19
Waterford	83.8	9.78	0	5.6	99.18
Westmeath	40.34	7.78	106.65	5.24	160.01
Wexford	85.42	1.61	10.78	1.79	99.6
Wicklow	107.93	4.95	5.06	3.84	121.78
Totals	4,230.75	95.44	520.59	182.99	5,029.77

table cont.

County	Ash	Syc	Oaks	Beeches	Other B/L	Total B/L	Grand Total
Carlow	0	0.45	8.6	1.04	8.97	19.06	82.35
Cavan	0.27	0.95	22.21	0	33.74	57.17	276.77
Clare	0.91	0.52	10.28	0	94.72	106.43	567.9
Cork	0.16	0.4	72.94	0.32	73.77	147.59	662.95
Donegal	0	0.1	2.76	0.19	7.11	10.16	72.09
Dublin	0	0	0.47	0	1.04	1.51	8.42
Galway	0	16.58	18.08	4.92	75.39	114.97	431.73
Kerry	0.38	0	33.82	0	69.62	103.82	430.38

County	Ash	Syc	Oaks	Beeches	Other B/L	Total B/L	Grand Total
Kildare	0	0	2.31	0	2.46	4.77	28.62
Kilkenny	0	0	20.88	0	51.77	72.65	264.41
Laois	0	0	4.23	1.71	16.23	22.17	198.24
Leitrim	0	0	6.63	0	64.14	70.77	512.9
Limerick	0	0	12.68	0	11.67	24.35	176.81
Longford	2.28	5.6	38.07	0	42.36	88.31	286.15
Louth	0	0	6.72	0	11.02	17.74	22.39
Mayo	0	0.66	9.79	0	51.95	62.4	454.99
Meath	0	0	9.51	1.31	14.38	25.2	73.34
Monaghan	0	0	0.49	0	7.97	8.46	37.92
Offaly	0	1.66	10	0	17.32	28.98	156.26
Roscommon	0.41	1.57	21.8	0.25	35.89	59.92	342.88
Sligo	0	0	2.44	0	25.75	28.19	268.13
Tipperary	0	1.55	32	0.59	38.44	72.58	340.77
Waterford	0	0.48	9.37	0	16.26	26.11	125.29
Westmeath	0	1.8	11.11	0.59	30.63	44.13	204.14
Wexford	0	0	6.19	0.03	22.35	28.57	128.17
Wicklow	0	0	4.25	0	12.78	17.03	138.81
Totals	4.41	32.32	377.63	10.95	837.73	1,263.04	6,292.81

### Forestry Management

276. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of water samples taken under the acid sensitivity protocol in each of the years 2008 to 2017 in acid sensitive areas such as County Leitrim and north County Roscommon which account for 700,000 acres of acid sensitive land or 10% of acid sensitive land here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44292/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Under the DAFM/EPA Acid Sensitivity Protocol, afforestation applications within certain defined areas of the country must be accompanied by water sampling at pre-approval stage, to assess the sensitivity of receiving waters to acidification.

In summary, sampling and analysis by an accredited laboratory must be carried out on at least four separate occasions within the period 1st February to the 31st May inclusive, with each sample taken at least 28 days apart. Where the minimum alkalinity of any one of the four samples taken is <8 mg CaCO<sub>3</sub> / litre, no afforestation is permitted. If the result is 8-15 mg CaCO<sub>3</sub> / litre, full, partial or no afforestation may be approved, following discussion and agreement between DAFM, EPA and Inland Fisheries Ireland. If the result is >15 mg CaCO<sub>3</sub> / litre, afforestation may be licensed. Where landowners or foresters get negative water sample results they may not proceed with applications.

It should be noted that, since early 2013, water sampling under the Acid Sensitivity Protocol is not required for afforestation applications which relate to native woodland creation, as these are not considered to have the same potential acidifying effect as other categories of afforestation.

*Questions - Written Answers*

The defined areas of the country, where water sampling is required in accordance with the DAFM/EPA Acid Sensitivity Protocol, are listed in Appendix 11 of the *Forestry Standards Manual* and are given in the table below and do not include Counties Leitrim and Roscommon.

Six inch Ordnance Survey sheets designated as being acid sensitive areas

All ranges listed are inclusive.

County	OS Sheets
Clare	Southern half of 31
	Southern half of 32
	39 to 41
	Northern half of 48
	Northern half of 49
Donegal	34 to 36
	41 to 44
	49 to 51
	57 to 60
	67 to 69
	77
Galway	9 to 13
	21 to 27
	34 to 40
	48 to 55
	62 to 68
	75 to 81
	89 to 93
Kerry	56
	62 to 64
	69 to 72
	78 to 83
	87 to 92
	96 to 100
	105 to 107
Offaly	Southern half of 16
	23 to 24
Sligo	24 to 25
Wicklow	7 to 8
	11 to 13
	17 to 19
	23 to 25
	29 to 31
	33 to 36
	39 and 40

**Exports Data**

277. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the percentage level of exports to the UK by county of beef, dairy, poultry and pig, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44312/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Trade Statistics are produced by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) on a national basis only, so unfortunately a breakdown by county is not available.

### **Agrifood Sector**

278. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the €25 million announced in budget 2018 for farmers, fishermen and agri-food producers will be made available; and the conditions that will be attached to same. [44313/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In his Budget speech my colleague the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe TD, formally announced progress in relation to the development of the “Future Growth Loan Scheme” for SMEs, including the primary agriculture and seafood sectors. As I announced on Budget day, this is the Scheme for which I had provided €25 million in funding in 2018. This is a key Government Brexit response that has been under consideration and development throughout 2018.

The Scheme, which will be administered by the SBCI and backed by a European Investment Fund counter-guarantee, will bring previously unavailable 8 to 10 year unsecured investment finance to the Irish market at competitive interest rates. I am working with colleagues, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Heather Humphreys TD, and Minister Donohoe, to bring up to €300 million of loans to the market.

My Department is providing 40% of the funding so an overall agri-food package of up to €120 million will be available. However, unlike previous similar Schemes, this can be reviewed and adjusted according to demand.

Loans will be available to farmers, the seafood sector and to agri-food businesses. This will be a long-awaited source of finance for young and new entrant farmers, especially the cohort who do not have high levels of security. It will also serve smaller-scale farmers, who often do not have the leverage to negotiate for more favourable terms with their banking institution. Along with the likes of Milk Flex, this Scheme will form part of a comprehensive investment package for farmers.

Food companies have identified long term investment finance of up to ten years as a critical need which is currently unavailable in Ireland. I am pleased that the Government have been able to deliver this product and its effects will be felt all along the food production chain.

Further details will be provided in the coming months. The Scheme is expected to be in place in early 2019 and will run for three years from its launch date.

### **Brexit Supports**

279. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he is taking to prepare and protect the agri-food industry from the impact of Brexit. [44314/18]

280. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if specific regional supports in the context of Brexit will be made available to the worst affected sectors, in particular the agri-food sector in the west of Ireland; and his plans in this regard. [44315/18]

281. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the contingency planning for Brexit his Department has undertaken; and if he will release the details of same. [44316/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 279 to 281, inclusive, together.

The Government is seeking to minimise the impact of Brexit in the first instance through a negotiated outcome which delivers trading arrangements in the future which are as close as possible to those that prevail at present.

In line with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade-coordinated ‘whole of Government’ approach to Brexit, my Department is planning for an orderly Brexit which involves, inter alia, a transition period to the end of December 2020. Key Government decisions in this regard have been made in July and September 2018 in relation to staffing and IT resources, and engagement with the relevant ports and airports is ongoing in relation to the infrastructure needed to carry out import controls and customs checks.

In Budget 2019, €7m was provided for the commencement of a phased process of Brexit-related recruitment of additional staff, as well as the procurement of ICT hardware and software to carry out the anticipated increased volumes of import controls and export certification - €4m for staffing and €3m for ICT.

The Budget also provided for capital funding of €27 million in Brexit-related supports for the food industry, comprising:

- €13 million in supports for food industry competitiveness and innovation;
- €3 million for Artisan and Micro food and beverage programmes through the Leader Programme and for LEAN manufacturing initiatives designed to improve competitiveness
- an additional €5 million for Bord Bia, bringing the total Grant in Aid to €46.6 million. This is a 60% increase in funding for marketing and promotion of our food offering since 2014;
- €6m in funding to progress an €8 million Food Innovation Hub in Teagasc Moorepark, of which €2 million was provided in 2018.

A further €44m has been provided in direct aid to farmers through increased spending on areas of natural constraint, the introduction of a Beef Environmental Efficiency Pilot Scheme and additional funding for the horticulture sector.

These measures are in addition to those contained in the 2017 and 2018 Budgets. 2017 saw the introduction of farm-gate business cost reduction measures in order to enhance competitiveness, including a €150m low-cost loan scheme, while the 2018 Budget included a dedicated €50m Brexit package containing additional funding for Bord Bia and Teagasc, as well as a substantial contribution to a joint (DAFM and DBEI) €300m “Brexit Loan Scheme”, at least 40% of which is available to food businesses.

In addition, market and product diversification work continues with the industry in order to increase the sector’s global footprint across the world. In the last two years I have led trade mis-

sions to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, China, Hong Kong, Canada, USA, Mexico, Japan and Korea. Further missions to China, Indonesia and Malaysia will take place over the next two weeks.

### **TAMS Administration**

282. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason meal bins are only funded under the targeted agricultural modernisation schemes, TAMS, grant for dairy farmers and not for suckler cow and sheep farmers; if meal bins will be covered by TAMS for all farmers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44319/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Over 16,800 approvals have issued under the TAMS Schemes to date and until such time as these approvals mature to payment claims there is an outstanding financial commitment that has to be provided for in the budget. The inclusion of any new investment items in TAMS has to be considered in the light of the available budget.

### **Forestry Management**

283. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the water testing that has been done under the existing acid-sensitivity protocol developed by his Department, the EPA and COFORD to protect watercourses from acidification arising from Sitka spruce forests; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44328/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Under the DAFM/EPA Acid Sensitivity Protocol, afforestation applications within certain defined areas of the country must be accompanied by water sampling at pre-approval stage, to assess the sensitivity of receiving waters to acidification.

In summary, sampling and analysis by an accredited laboratory must be carried out on at least four separate occasions within the period 1st February to the 31st May inclusive, with each sample taken at least 28 days apart. Where the minimum alkalinity of any one of the four samples taken is <8 mg CaCO<sub>3</sub> / litre, no afforestation is permitted. If the result is 8-15 mg CaCO<sub>3</sub> / litre, full, partial or no afforestation may be approved, following discussion and agreement between DAFM, EPA and Inland Fisheries Ireland. If the result is >15 mg CaCO<sub>3</sub> / litre, afforestation may be licensed. Where landowners or foresters get negative water sample results they may not proceed with potential applications.

It should be noted that, since early 2013, water sampling under the Acid Sensitivity Protocol is not required for afforestation applications which relate to native woodland creation, as these are not considered to have the same potential acidifying effect as other categories of afforestation.

The water testing results are available in the following link:

[<a href="/debates%20authoring/webattachments.nsf/0/4D222EBA43AE577880258332004B4013/\$File/Water\_Samples%20PQ%2044328%2018.xlsx?openelement">Water Samples</a>]

### **Departmental Staff Data**

284. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the breakdown of staff in his Department by grade. [44347/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In response to the Deputy, the breakdown of staff by grade in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is as follows:

Administrative Officer	32
Advisory Counsel Grade 3	2
Assistant Secretary	8
Assistant Principal	149
Cleaner	6
Clerical Officer	776
Executive Officer	525
First Assistant Solicitor Agriculture	1
Higher Executive Officer	283
Librarian	1
Ministers Staff	5
Principal	40
Principal Solicitor	1
Professional Accountant	1
Services Staff	37
State Solicitor	1
Statistician	1
Craft Chargehand	1
Craftsman	7
General Operative	53
Harbour Constable	2
Industrial Foreman	4
Technical Grades Level 4	1
Agricultural Inspector	74
Assistant Agricultural Inspector	143
Chief Inspector	1
Engineer Grade 1 Civil	7
Engineer Grade 2 Civil	7
Engineer Grade 3 Civil	7
Forestry Ecologist	1
Forestry Inspector Grade 1	8
Forestry Inspector Grade 2	9
Forestry Inspector Grade 3	20
Harbour Master	6
Inspector Grade 2	1
Senior Inspector	16
Chemist	3
Deputy Chief Analyst	4
Director Of Laboratories	1

Administrative Officer	32
Head Of Agricultural Laboratories	1
Higher Seed Analyst	4
Laboratory Analyst	102
Laboratory Attendant	18
Quality Manager	6
Seed Analyst	11
Senior Chemist	1
Senior Laboratory Analyst	29
Senior Seed Analyst	1
Senior Serological Assistant	1
Serological Assistant	34
Supervising Serological Assistant	6
Area Superintendent	8
District Superintendent	71
Engineer Technician Grade 2 Civil	1
Supervisory Agricultural Off	177
Technical Agricultural Off	388
Chief Veterinary Officer	1
Deputy Chief Veterinary Off	1
Research Officer	18
Senior Research Officer	13
Senior Superintend Vet Insp	9
Superintendant Sen Research Off	4
Superintending Vet Insp	37
Veterinary Inspector	206
Wholetime Temp Vet Inspector	9
Grand Total	3402

### Forestry Management

285. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to ensure that existing forests are appropriately restructured post clear fell to reflect water and other environmental sensitivities on the ground; and the number of sites in the policy as set out in the publication, Woodlands for Water, and in the felling and reforestation policy which have been implemented in each of the years 2008 to 2017. [44390/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department's "Reforestation and Felling Policy" document sets out the standard silvicultural and environmental requirements that will apply to new forests established post clearfell. A forest owner wishing to apply for a felling licence is required to specify on the felling licence application and accompanying map, the reforestation objective(s) s/he is proposing to pursue for the next rotation. These reforestation objectives reflect different options regarding the next rotation, from commercial conifers to native woodlands for water protection and biodiversity. The existing Native Woodlands Conservation Scheme can be used to support the conversion of uniform Sitka spruce stands to native woodlands along sensitive watercourses. A new scheme to support continuous cover forestry objectives was included in the mid-term review of the Forestry

Programme 2014 -2020.

As part of its assessment of the felling licence application, my Department considers the suitability of the reforestation objective(s) being proposed, thereby informing decisions regarding referrals, the Appropriate Assessment Procedure and conditions to be attached.

The “Reforestation and Felling Policy” document was published in May 2017 and applied to all felling licences issued from that date. In this regard a total of 5,300 licences were issued.

The “Woodland for Water” document was published in June 2018 and sets out a model whereby areas of new native woodland are planted by farmers and other landowners availing of the grants and 15-year premiums under the Native Woodland Establishment Scheme. The focus of this type of woodland establishment is to realise the valuable ecosystem services such forests deliver. Since June 2018, a total of 183 hectares of native woodlands have been established comprising of 44 individual sites.

### Wildlife Conservation

286. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to initiate an investigation into whether myxomatosis has already been found in hares by coursing club personnel, veterinary personnel that attend some coursing meetings, wildlife rangers attached to the National Parks and Wildlife Service or by other persons involved with wildlife conservation or hunting activities; and the veterinary or other measures that will be implemented to protect hares here from myxomatosis. [44414/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The outbreaks of myxomatosis reported in the UK are in Brown Hares, a species we do not have in Ireland. The Irish Hare, a subspecies of the Mountain Hare, is a related but different species. No cases of myxomatosis in Mountain Hares have been reported in the current UK outbreak. My Department has had no reports of myxomatosis or any other cause of increased mortality in Irish Hares. My Department’s Regional Veterinary Laboratories (RVLs) have been in contact with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and I understand that NPWS has made contact with their coursing contacts to raise awareness of the UK incidents, to increase vigilance for the disease, and to ensure that both NPWS and coursing clubs are aware that RVLs will investigate any suspect cases free of charge.

### Forestry Grants

287. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the cost of proposals (details supplied) in tabular form. [44446/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The estimated additional cost to the Exchequer based on 2017 planting figures are as follows:

GPC	2017 ha	Grant rate (N)	N+2.5%	N+5%	N+7.5%	N+10%
4	427.23	€4,310	€46,034.03	€92,068.07	€138,102.10	€184,136.13
5	30.41	€5,880	€4,470.27	€8,940.54	€13,410.81	€17,881.08
6	227.64	€6,220	€35,398.02	€70,796.04	€106,194.06	€141,592.08
7	4.08	€6,220	€634.44	€1,268.88	€1,903.32	€2,537.76
8	193.08	€4,195	€20,249.27	€40,498.53	€60,747.80	€80,997.06

9	199.85	€6,220	€31,076.67	€62,153.35	€93,230.03	€124,306.70
10	70.02	€5,880	€10,292.94	€20,585.88	€30,878.82	€41,171.76

table ctd.

N+12.5%	N+15%	N+17.5%	N+20%	N+22.5%	N+25%
€230,170.16	€276,204.20	€322,238.23	€368,272.26	€414,306.29	€460,340.33
€22,351.35	€26,821.62	€31,291.89	€35,762.16	€40,232.43	€44,702.70
€176,990.10	€212,388.12	€247,786.14	€283,184.16	€318,582.18	€353,980.20
€3,172.20	€3,806.64	€4,441.08	€5,075.52	€5,709.96	€6,344.40
€101,246.33	€121,495.59	€141,744.86	€161,994.12	€182,243.39	€202,492.65
€155,383.38	€186,460.05	€217,536.73	€248,613.40	€279,690.08	€310,766.75
€51,464.70	€61,757.64	€72,050.58	€82,343.52	€92,636.46	€102,929.40

### Forestry Grants

288. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the cost of proposals (details supplied) in tabular form. [44447/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The estimated additional cost to the Exchequer based on 2017 planting figures are as follows (Premium Rates);

GPC's	2017 ha	premium rate (N)	N+2.5%	N+5%	N+7.5%	N+10%
4	427.23	€590	€94,524.64	€189,049.28	€283,573.91	€378,098.55
5	30.41	€605	€6,899.27	€13,798.54	€20,697.81	€27,597.08
6	227.64	€645	€55,060.42	€110,120.85	€165,181.28	€220,241.70
7	4.048	€645	€986.85	€1,973.70	€2,960.55	€3,947.40
8	193.08	€605	€43,805.03	€87,610.05	€131,415.08	€175,220.10
9	199.85	€665	€49,837.59	€99,675.19	€149,512.78	€199,350.38
10	70.02	€665	€17,461.24	€34,922.48	€52,383.71	€69,844.95

table ctd.

N+12.5%	N+15%	N+17.5%	N+20%	N+22.5%	N+25%
€472,623.19	€567,147.83	€661,672.46	€756,197.10	€850,721.74	€945,246.38
€34,496.34	€41,395.61	€48,294.88	€55,194.15	€62,093.42	€68,992.69
€275,302.13	€330,362.55	€385,422.98	€440,483.40	€495,543.83	€550,604.25
€4,934.25	€5,921.10	€6,907.95	€7,894.80	€8,881.65	€9,868.50
€219,025.13	€262,830.15	€306,635.18	€350,440.20	€394,245.23	€438,050.25
€249,187.97	€299,025.56	€348,863.16	€398,700.75	€448,538.34	€498,375.94
€87,306.19	€104,767.43	€122,228.66	€139,689.90	€157,151.14	€174,612.38

### Forestry Data

289. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of active participants in each of the forestry schemes in tabular form (details supplied). [44448/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Afforestation Scheme offers a fixed grant towards establishment costs and a premium each year for a maximum period of 15 years. The overall scheme comprises various Grant and Premium Categories (GPCs) and beneficiaries may partake in more than one GPC.

The number of active recipients, that is those who received a premium payment in 2017, is 825, but each individual recipient may have received premiums under different GPCs. The table below shows the number of active participants in each of the GPCs.

	No.
GPC1 – Unenclosed land	58
GPC2 – Sitka spruce/Lodgepole pine	0
GPC3 – 15% Diverse conifers, e.g. Sitka spruce and 15% broadleaves	695
GPC4 – Diverse conifers, e.g. Scots pine, Douglas Fir	78
GPC5 – Broadleaf, e.g. sycamore	21
GPC6 – Oak	123
GPC7 – Beech	7
GPC8 – Alder and Birch	122
GPC9 – Native Woodland Establishment (oak-birch-holly-hazel)	43
GPC10 – Native Woodland Establishment (alder-oak woodland)	22
GPC11 – Agro-forestry	0
GPC12 – Forestry-for-fibre	0

### Woodland Improvement Scheme

290. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the 2018 allocation towards the woodland fund. [44449/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I was pleased to recently launch the pilot Woodland Environmental Fund (WEF). Native woodlands are an important part of Ireland's natural heritage, history and culture, and are unique in terms of their biodiversity. The objective of the Woodland Environmental Fund (WEF) is to facilitate the planting of more native woodlands within Ireland in light of their proven environmental benefits. In doing so, the fund offers an opportunity for businesses to partner with Government and private landowners in creating these diverse woodland habitats.

WEF funding comprises a once off single top up of €1,000/hectare by the partnered business, following payment of the first grant and premium by the Department under its Native Woodland Establishment Scheme.

My Department's also facilitates contact between foresters and their clients with the Natural Capital Facilitators (NCF). The NCFs will then liaise with the businesses to find projects that best match the businesses' expectations. As the top-up of €1,000/ha is paid for by the busi-

nesses involved, my Department's contribution is our payments under the Native Woodland Establishment Scheme. This scheme does not have a specific allocation within the Forestry budget but it remains fully open for applications and will be open next year also.

### Departmental Budgets

291. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the breakdown of the €3,485,000 capital allocation in food safety, animal and plant health and animal welfare (details supplied) within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44502/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The €3,485,000 capital allocations for the food safety, animal and plant health and animal welfare for 2019 will fund projects in my Department particularly in relation to ensuring the Department continues to maintain a robust and responsive IT infrastructure to support and to assist DAFM in maintaining its certified ISO 27001 Information Security Standard. This allocation will also be used to provide maintenance works at the Departments laboratories.

### Departmental Budgets

292. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the breakdown of the €160,746,000 capital allocation in farm sector supports and controls (details supplied) within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44503/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The €160,746,000 capital allocations for the Farm Sector Supports and Controls for 2019 will fund projects in my Department particularly in relation to Targeted Agricultural Measures (TAMS) which is a measure under the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020, it will also fund the Forestry Programme which is targeted at various support schemes including covering the cost of establishing new forests and the cost of annual premiums. This allocation will also provide assistance in the development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector by grant aiding capital investments in specialised buildings and equipment, as well as the provision of funding in the Organic Sector to support the development of the sector to respond to market demand for organically produced food. More detailed information on the breakdown of this allocation will be available in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV) which will be published later this year.

### Departmental Budgets

293. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the breakdown of the €34,055,000 capital allocation in policy and strategy (details supplied) within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44504/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The €34,055,000 capital allocations for the Policy and Strategy for 2019 will allow, in particular, funding of capital grants for food companies, to Teagasc and also the provision of funding for

the Horse and Greyhound Racing Fund which facilitates the sustained development and growth of the horse and greyhound industries. It will also include the Prepared Consumer Food Centre in Ashtown and the National Food Innovation Hub at Moorepark. More detailed information on the breakdown of this allocation will be available in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV) which will be published later this year.

### **Departmental Budgets**

294. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the breakdown of the €56,714,000 capital allocation in the seafood sector (details supplied) within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44505/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The €56,714,000 capital allocation for the seafood sector for 2019 will fund projects in my Department, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, the Marine Institute and the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority and will include, inter alia, projects under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Programme. In general, it is not possible at this time to identify specific projects to be funded in 2019 by these financial allocations, as annual budgetary allocations are but the first step in various approval processes that will occur up to and over the course of 2019 within my Department, and between my Department and the agencies concerned. Details of allocations to each organisation will be available in the revised book of estimates which will be published later this year.

### **Brexit Issues**

295. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the exact amount of Exchequer funding his Department has allocated in each of the years and expended since June 2016 on upgrading infrastructure at Dublin and Rosslare ports in order to prepare for the possibility of the UK becoming a third country with the EU and the increased export certification sanitary and phytosanitary controls required. [44513/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department has been engaged in extensive consultations with the Office of Public Works to identify additional infrastructural requirements in ports and airports. This engagement process is ongoing and includes facilities for sanitary and phytosanitary checks.

To date my Department has had no expenditure in relation to this process.

### **Brexit Data**

296. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the number of SPS and fisheries control officials who will be operational on 29 March 2019 (details supplied) will be provided; and if not, the reason therefor in view of the fact that the Minister for Finance has provided the number of additional customs officials who will be operational on 29 March 2019. [44514/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In line with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade-coordinated ‘whole of Government’ approach to Brexit, my Department is planning for an orderly Brexit which involves, inter alia, a transition period to the end of December 2020. Key Government decisions in this regard have been made

in July and September 2018 in relation to staffing and IT resources, as well as in relation to engagement with the relevant ports and airports as regards the infrastructure needed to carry out SPS and fisheries controls.

In Budget 2019, €7m was provided for the commencement of a phased process of Brexit-related recruitment of additional staff and the procurement of ICT hardware and software to carry out the anticipated increased volumes of import controls and export certification - €4m for staffing and €3m for ICT. The necessary arrangements to commence the staff recruitment process are currently being put in place. The precise number of staff across the various work-streams that will be in place by 29 March 2019 is not yet known, given that the assignment of staff will be an ongoing process over the period to the end of 2020, starting with an initial intake in early 2019.

### **Animal Disease Controls**

297. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the controls in place in view of the confirmation of a case (details supplied); the amount of live trade with this jurisdiction; and the actions being taken to protect farmers and livestock here. [44516/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Ireland has been recognised by the World Animal Health Organisation (OIE) as having a controlled BSE risk status since 2008. To achieve this status, a number of control measures must be demonstrated effectively for 7 years prior to 2008 and each year thereafter including:

- A ban on the feeding of meat and bone meal to ruminants
- Systematic testing of feed supplies
- Effective rendering processes
- Active and passive animal level surveillance and testing for the disease
- Ante-mortem checks conducted by veterinarians on all animals prior to slaughter to ensure that only healthy animals enter the food chain
- The removal and destruction, on a precautionary basis, of certain specified risk materials from slaughtered animals in line with EU legislation and OIE requirements. These control measures have resulted in Ireland having an extremely low incidence of BSE, the last classical BSE case was identified in 2015. As a direct result, a number of trading partners have re-opened their beef markets to Irish beef and live cattle. Under OIE rules, Ireland can apply for the lowest risk status available, “negligible BSE risk status” in January 2021.

The number of cattle from Scotland that have entered the state in 2018 currently stands at approximately 170 animals. Ruminant animals can only enter intra-community trade if they comply with the corresponding trade directives.

For bovine animals, the intra-trade certificate includes the following assurance:

The animals come from the holding/s and, where applicable, an approved assembly centre, and the area/s which, in conformity with Union or national legislation, is/are not subject to any prohibitions or restrictions for reasons of animal diseases affecting bovine animals.

## Tillage Sector

298. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the recommendations of the report on the tillage sector by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine; the timeframe for the implementation of these recommendations; the progress on each recommendation to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44517/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** During a discussion in the Dail last April on the Future of the Tillage Sector I welcomed the publication of the report on the ‘Future of the Tillage Sector in Ireland’ prepared by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The overall objective of the report is closely aligned with the actions for the tillage sector contained in Foodwise 2025, which is the blueprint for the development of the agri-food sector overall. As part of that Dail discussion I outlined a range of ongoing measures and initiatives that my Department provides in support of the sector.

The crop evaluation and certification programmes run by my Department are designed specifically for Irish conditions to improve productivity and competitiveness in the sector. Average yields of control varieties in the cereal Recommended List trials have increased by 27% over the last 21 years. These programmes provide essential information for the brewing and distilling sector as well as assessments on milling and agronomic traits.

As a further support to tillage farmers the Tillage Capital Investment Scheme under TAMS II covers specific areas of investment including Minimum Disturbance Tillage Equipment, Sprayers, Fertiliser Spreaders and increasing Grain Storage and Drying capacity.

In addition to TAMS, the GLAS tiered entry system prioritised tillage farmers who chose the “minimum tillage” or “catch crop establishment” environmental actions. Furthermore in order to assist tillage farmers, and in particular specialist malting barley growers, my department decided to grant a special exemption from the Basic Payment Scheme “three crop rule” to farmers that entered GLAS and committed to establish a catch crop on all of their tillage area.

Like other EU member states Ireland is deficient in protein production and imports a significant portion of its requirements each year. In this context I was pleased to be able to announce earlier this year the extension to the Protein Aid Scheme for 2018 with the same level of funding as 2017.

I have long believed that the elimination of fertiliser tariffs and anti-dumping duties would help farmers, including tillage farmers, reduce their input costs and have actively pursued this at EU level. The EU Commission undertook to complete an interim review of anti-dumping measures in relation to fertilisers in 2018 and my officials are now examining the initial outcome of this review.

In 2017 to support wider access to low cost finance, I extended the Agriculture Cashflow Support Loan Scheme to specifically include the tillage and horticulture sectors through the provision of national funds. In further support Budget 2018 provided for a Future Growth Loan Scheme, which will be rolled out in early 2019. The scheme will provide up to €120 million in long term, unsecured investment finance for farmers and small scale companies in the food and seafood sectors.

Finally, a key issue that will impact on the development of the agri-food sector, including tillage, in the future will be the outcome of negotiations on the CAP post 2020. I am committed to ensuring that the policy is adequately financed and measures are supportive of Irish agriculture.

## Market Access

299. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the progress on acquiring sheep and beef meat access to China. [44518/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The opening earlier this year of the Chinese beef market is the result of years of cooperation and hard work on the part of my Department, the Irish Embassy in Beijing, Bord Bia, and the Irish beef industry. It is a hugely significant achievement for our industry, as well as an excellent endorsement of our world-class safety standards and product quality.

Three beef plants were approved by the Chinese Certification and Accreditation Administration (CNCA) in April. During my Trade Mission to China in May, it was confirmed that a further three beef plants had met the required standards for approval. These plants were subsequently formally approved and listed by CNCA in June. This was a great result and reflects the on-going work in this area.

The beef trade has now commenced, with product already having arrived into China. My officials continue to make progress on various technical issues and the focus now is on trying to get additional plants approved and listed by the Chinese authorities.

As I have previously stated, the role of the Government is to open up market access and to remove barriers to trade; the industry must then make its own decisions in relation to market priorities. But I hope that Irish beef exports will follow the same success that our dairy and pigmeat sectors have enjoyed in China to date.

As part of the Trade Mission to China last May, I met with the Chinese Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Minister Han Changfu, and signalled that Ireland was interested in commencing the process for sheepmeat access. I was delighted that the Minister Han Changfu chose to visit Ireland earlier this month. Together we signed a new Action Plan for Cooperation between our Ministries for 2019 to 2021. The first meeting of the Joint Committee on Agricultural Cooperation (JCAC) between both Departments followed our bilateral meeting. The Minister also visited a sheep farm in Cork. Although we are now at the very start of the process for sheepmeat access, I hope that we will be able to make progress next year.

## Beef Industry

300. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of producer organisations in the beef sector that have registered with his Department; and the name of each such organisation. [44519/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Following the establishment of the Beef Roundtable in 2014, the Dowling Report recommended that my Department consider legislating for the recognition of Producer Organisations in the beef sector.

Following this, consultations with a range of stakeholders took place. Subsequently, Statutory Instrument (SI) No. 49 of 2016 was signed into law, establishing the legal basis for recognition in Ireland of Producer Organisations in the beef sector.

In early January 2018, following a public procurement process, I announced the awarding of service contracts to seven different facilitators to provide advisory services to prospective Producer Organisations on their establishment and recognition as legal entities. My Department has made funding available for payments to facilitators pertaining to the establishment of Pro-

ducer Organisations for the sector. The names and contact details of the approved facilitators can be found on my Department's website.

At the recent meeting of the Beef Roundtable on 3 October, I highlighted the need for stakeholders to recognise their interdependency. At the forum, I urged processors to engage positively with their farmer suppliers to build the sustainability of the sector as a whole to ensure a reasonable return for the farmers upon whom the sector ultimately relies for its continued development. The Beef Roundtable also included discussions on the potential for Producer Organisations to harness new technologies as a way of adding value along the whole supply chain through increased engagement in the bioeconomy.

To date, my Department, has not received any formal applications for the establishment of Producer Organisations. However, a number of interested groups have been in contact with my Department about their potential. I am committed to driving this initiative and my Department has recently engaged with key stakeholders in the sector, to further identify possible barriers to adoption and to promote the uptake of these groups across the sector.

### **Aquaculture Licences**

301. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of the implementation of the recommendations set out in the report of the independent Aquaculture Licensing Review Group; and the recommendations that have been completed and not completed, respectively, to date in tabular form. [44520/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Since receiving the Report of the independent Aquaculture Licensing Review Group my Department has engaged in detailed consideration of the recommendations set out in the Report with a view to their implementation, having regard to the legislative, environmental, technical and public interest issues that arise. My Department has also engaged closely with industry representatives and relevant State Agencies. The core recommendation of the Independent Review was to deal with the licensing backlog by the end of 2019. In response to the priority given by stakeholders to the elimination of the backlog, my Department has been actively working towards the achievement of 300 licence determinations this year with a further 300 projected for 2019.

I can confirm that the target of 300 licence determinations has been achieved two months ahead of schedule. This is a very substantial achievement and gives a clear indication of my commitment and the commitment of my Department to dealing with this issue in a comprehensive manner. I can further confirm that we are fully committed to achieving 300 further licence determinations in 2019 and this will effectively eliminate the shellfish licensing backlog as an issue affecting the industry.

The elimination of the shellfish licensing backlog will be a game changer for the industry and will provide the solid footing for the industry long demanded by industry representatives.

The related recommendations are also being addressed and will be implemented as part of a larger reform of the regulatory process. My Department will be glad to keep the Deputy updated on further developments.

### **Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

302. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Ma-

rine the overview of Ireland's involvement in the new European joint action on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from animal production systems; and the resources and funding being allocated towards this project. [44521/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine (DAFM) supports a broad range of research, development and innovation activities (RDI) in order to develop the efficiency, sustainability and profitability of the agri-food sector in Ireland. As part of our budget allocation, DAFM provides for the participation of eligible research performing organisations (RPOs) in relevant, strategically aligned, trans-national research initiatives.

As part of DAFM's continuing commitment to strengthening European research collaborations, my Department contributes regularly to strategic regional actions/goals, common to a number of individual member states. These actions are most typically in the form of European Research Area Networks (ERA-NET's), which are an established, structured and strategic process where Member States agree, on a voluntary basis and in a partnership approach, on common visions and Strategic Research Agendas (SRA) to address major societal challenges.

The current initiative (Novel technologies, solutions and systems to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of animal production systems) is based on the research findings of three established ERA - NETs (FACCE ERA - GAS, SusAn and ICT - AGRI 2) and informed by a significant number of Irish research partners participating in these co-funded programmes. Findings highlight that, in order to bridge the gap between the science and practical implementation of results, all relevant economic, social and environmental dimensions necessary to effect reductions in GHG emissions at a farm level must be incorporated. This, coupled with the urgency of this particular topic, has led to a call for applied, scientific solutions, implementable in a 5 to 10 year time frame.

Ireland's contribution towards this Joint Call will consist of the contribution of two state funding partners, DAFM and Teagasc. In this case Teagasc will also play a leading role in the administration of the Joint Call and form part of the call secretariat. My own Department, in conjunction with all other funding partners across Europe, will be represented on the Call Steering Committee.

In terms of funding commitments, DAFM and Teagasc have pledged to commit €575,000 and €176,000 respectively (a combined contribution of up to €751,000) in funding for successful Irish participants. Under the National Call Guidelines the total combined DAFM/Teagasc public funding to eligible Irish research performing organisations (RPOs) shall not be greater than €375,500 per project. This maximum funding is comprised of €287,500 from DAFM and €88,000 from Teagasc.

### **Bord Bia Funding**

303. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of funding allocated in 2016, 2017 and 2018 to Bord Bia's marketing intensification programme; and the provision made for it in budget 2019. [44522/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** A total grant sum is allocated annually to Bord Bia by my Department and voted on by the Oireachtas, in conjunction with the estimates process.

In the context of Budget 2019, I was pleased to announce the allocation of a further €5.3m to Bord Bia for 2019, bringing its total grant in aid to €46.6m for 2019. The final sums allocated

to Bord Bia in 2016, 2017 and 2018 were €33.2m, €41.1m and €41.3m, respectively. The 2019 allocation shows a 40% increase in funding for Bord Bia since 2016.

The detailed allocation of non-pay (operational) funds by Bord Bia contained within its voted grant-in-aid is an operational matter for Bord Bia. The PQ has been referred to Bord Bia for further reply.

### **National Broadband Plan Funding**

304. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the capital allocations for the national broadband plan between 2013 and 2027, inclusive, by allocation under the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan 2012-2016, the national broadband plan, the Building on Recovery, Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021, and the National Development Plan 2018-2027, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44298/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Government allocated an initial €275 million in the Capital Plan published in September 2015, for the initial years of the network build-out for the National Broadband Plan State intervention. The €275m represented an initial stimulus, in the knowledge that significant further funding will be required over the lifetime of the proposed 25 year contract.

The total State subsidy to be allocated to the NBP State-led Intervention is to be determined through an on-going procurement and this is reflected in the National Development Plan 2018-2027.

### **National Broadband Plan Funding**

305. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if funding allocated for the national broadband plan but not spent remains in his Department until it is spent; if not, if it is returned to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44299/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Section 91 of the Finance Act 2004 provides that a maximum of up to 10% of the capital envelopes of each Vote may be carried over to the following year, subject to the approval of the Oireachtas and an Order from the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

Voted allocations which remain unspent at the end of the financial year must be surrendered to the Exchequer, with the exception of any approved capital carryover amounts which are allocated to the subsequent year's Vote.

### **Broadband Service Provision**

306. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the timeframe for the roll-out of broadband of at least 30 Mbps to a location (details supplied) in County Donegal as part of the national broadband plan; if such areas with poor or no broadband coverage will be prioritised during the roll-out phase of the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44261/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The premises referred to by the Deputy is in the AMBER area on the High Speed Broadband Map which is available on my Department's website at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://www.broadband.gov.ie). 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 procurement process to appoint a bidder for the State intervention network is now at the final stage, with evaluation ongoing of the final tender submission received on 18 September. The Taoiseach has asked Mr Peter Smyth, the independent process auditor to the NBP procurement to review the process. Mr. Smyth will submit a report to the Taoiseach and to me as Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment. This review will take place in parallel to parallel with the evaluation being carried out by the Department's procurement team on the final tender.

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.

### Cyber Security Data

307. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of cyber attacks recorded here in 2017 and to date in 2018; the number of these attacks that were successfully prevented; the number of these attacks believed or known to have been committed by cyber criminals; and the number of these attacks committed by State actors. [44266/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My remit includes responsibility for both the policy and operational components of Cyber Security, and as such, the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) is located in my Department. The NCSC is responsible for acting as a conduit for information to constituents including operators of Critical National Infrastructure, businesses, Government Departments and Agencies, and also for providing expert advice and analysis on cyber security issues and for coordinating significant incidents. The NCSC acts as a central contact point in the event of a government or nation-wide cyber security incident affecting the State and continues to work with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer and the Departments and Agencies that own these systems to mitigate and manage these risks. The expertise contained within the NCSC covers a broad range of capabilities including computer science, software engineering, malware analysis and information technology forensics. The unit also participates in international exercises.

The NCSC has been assigned a number of new roles under the recently signed Security of Network and Information Systems Regulations, which taken together, will mean that the State will have coordinated systems for the management of cyber related risk to Critical National Infrastructure, and for the assessment and response to incidents.

Details of the operational work of the NCSC are generally not publicly released for security reasons.

### Cyber Security

308. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the funding allocated to the National Cyber Security Centre as part of his Department's budget per annum since the publication of the cybersecurity strategy in 2015. [44267/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) is located within my Department, and serves to provide a range of cyber security services to owners of Government IT infrastructure and Critical National Infrastructure (CNI). The expertise contained within the NCSC covers a broad range of capabilities including computer science, software engineering, malware analysis and information technology forensics. The NCSC is also home to the national Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT-IE) and is responsible for acting as a conduit for information to constituents (including operators of Critical National Infrastructure, Government Departments and Agencies), providing expert advice and analysis on cyber security issues and for coordinating significant incidents. Like similar bodies in other jurisdictions, the NCSC acts as a central contact point in the event of a government or nation-wide cyber security incident affecting the State. The NCSC received International Accreditation in 2017.

The allocations to the National Cyber Security Centre, exclusive of staffing, over the period 2011 to 2017 are as follows:

Year	Allocation
2011	250,000.00
2012	250,000.00
2013	250,000.00
2014	250,000.00
2015	250,000.00
2016	750,000.00
2017	1,950,000.00

### Departmental Staff Data

309. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the breakdown of staff in his Department by grade. [44350/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table. The material has been prepared on a Full Time Equivalent basis.

Grade	FTE
Administrative Officer	20.00
Assistant Principal	71.67
Assistant Secretary	5.00
Assistant Superintendent GSI	1.00
Cartographer GSI	1.00

Grade	FTE
Chief Superintendent	1.00
Chief Telecom Adviser	1.00
Civilian Driver	2.00
Clerical Officer	50.60
Climate Analyst	1.00
Cyber Security Responder	13.00
Director of Communications	1.00
Director of G.S.I	1.00
Driller	1.00
Executive Engineer	1.00
Executive Officer	62.27
Geologist	15.60
GIS Manager	1.00
GIS Officer	1.00
Head of Exploration & Mining	1.00
Head of PAD Technical	1.00
Head Services Officer	1.00
Higher Executive Officer	72.46
Inspector	2.00
Petroleum Exploration Specialist	2.00
Principal	27.80
Principal Adviser	1.00
Principal Geologist	2.80
Principal Solicitor	1.00
Secretary General	1.00
Senior Adviser	2.00
Senior Geologist	12.00
Senior Telecoms Engineer	3.00
Services Officer	5.80
Special Adviser to the Minister	2.00
Staff Engineer	3.00
Superintendent of Cartography	1.50
Telecoms Engineer	1.00
Temporary Clerical Officer	1.00
Total	395.50

### Salmon Hardship Scheme

310. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to introduce a compensation scheme (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44426/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Canney):** Fishing for salmon was by way of public licence and therefore the issue of compensation does not arise.

The Salmon Hardship Scheme was introduced following a decision in 2006 to cease, for conservation reasons, the commercial salmon mixed stock fishery in the sea. In excess of €25 million was allocated to the scheme to facilitate payments to fishermen with a further €5 million provided for community development projects. Under the scheme, fishermen active in the fishery could opt to voluntarily cease fishing in the commercial drift net and draft net sectors and undertake not to seek a licence in the future.

Payments to individuals were based on verifiable track record and recorded catches in the five years prior to its introduction. I am advised that the average payment under the scheme was almost €23,000. The scheme closed for applications on 31 December 2007 and ceased in 2008. I understand that all funds were expended and there are currently no plans to revisit such a scheme.

### **National Broadband Plan Data**

311. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of homes in counties Sligo and Leitrim included in the intervention area for the provision of a broadband service under the national broadband plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44442/18]

312. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of homes included in the intervention area for the provision of a broadband service under the national broadband plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44479/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 311 and 312 together.

According to my Department's High Speed Broadband Map, available at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://www.broadband.gov.ie), there are some 14,000 Sligo premises and some 11,000 Leitrim premises in the AMBER area. 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 procurement process to appoint a bidder for the State intervention network is now at the final stage, with evaluation ongoing of the final tender submission received on 18 September. The Taoiseach has asked Mr. Peter Smyth, the independent process auditor to the NBP procurement to review the process. Mr. Smyth will submit a recommendation report to both the Taoiseach and to me as Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment. This review will take place in parallel to the evaluation being carried out by the Department's procurement team on the final tender.

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

## Mining Industry

313. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 434 and 435 of 9 October 2018, the status of the issues arising from subsidence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44481/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Canney):** Since the Deputy's last Parliamentary Question on this issue, my officials have continued to liaise with the other statutory consent authorities and the company to ensure a consistent and co-ordinated effort to effectively minimise disruption, investigate the cause of the collapse at Magheracluone, safeguard health and safety within the affected area and provide all necessary assurances in regard to the future operation of the facility.

I understand that there are a number of affected households in the area of the investigation and that local businesses have also been affected by the road closures. I appreciate the inconvenience caused to these residents and businesses. It is my understanding that the company's family liaison officer has been in regular contact with the affected families.

The priority is in returning these families to their homes as quickly as possible, subject to the results of expert assessments by mining engineers. Support in providing alternative accommodation, transport and other needs is being provided while this process is ongoing. The review and investigation underway is utilising a range of technical expertise and is now at an advanced stage.

My officials attended a further meeting with the company and officials from Monaghan County Council on 22 October where the findings of surveying, geotechnical and hydrogeological assessments carried out over the past three weeks were considered. A programme of additional work to be carried out in forthcoming days was agreed with the company. Subject to independent verification of the results of this final work later this week, it is my understanding that Monaghan County Council hopes to be in a position to make a decision as to the re-opening of the roads to the public.

## Departmental Budgets

314. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the breakdown of the €3,127,000 capital allocation for inland fisheries (details supplied) in his Department for 2019, by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44500/18]

315. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the breakdown of the €31,525,000 capital allocation for environment and waste management (details supplied) in his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44501/18]

316. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the details of the €74,414,000 capital allocation for communications, Vote 29 of the budget 2019 expenditure report, in his Department for 2019 by specific project in tabular form; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44543/18]

317. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and

Environment the details of the €2,023,000 capital allocation for broadcasting, Vote 29 of the budget 2019 expenditure report, in his Department for 2019 by specific project in tabular form; the projects which will be commenced in 2019; the projects which will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44544/18]

318. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the details of the €131,636,000 capital allocation for energy, Vote 29 of the budget 2019 expenditure report, in his Department for 2019 by specific project in tabular form; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44545/18]

319. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the details of the €13,275,000 capital allocation for natural resources, Vote 29 of the budget 2019 expenditure report, in his Department for 2019 by specific project in tabular form; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44546/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 314 to 319, inclusive, together.

The €256 million in capital funding allocated to my Department in Budget 2019 represents a 22% or €47 million increase over 2018, and is divided across the six programme areas as follows:

Programme Area	€m
Communications	74.4
Broadcasting	2.0
Energy	131.6
Natural Resources	13.3
Inland Fisheries	3.1
Environment and Waste Management	31.6

Detailed programme allocations are being finalised and will be published in the Revised Estimates Volume in December next.

In 2019, my Department will continue to progress projects in areas of strategic national importance, encompassing climate action, energy efficiency, communications, broadcasting, environment, waste management, natural resources and inland fisheries. Key investment measures within these sectors are outlined as follows.

In the Communications area, funding has been provided for the National Broadband Plan and continued support for digital adoption among businesses and citizens.

Focus will be maintained on advancing the critical climate action agenda, in line with the whole-of-Government National Mitigation Plan. Investment in energy efficiency upgrades in the residential, commercial and public sectors will deliver significant energy savings and reductions in emissions. Development of renewable energy across the electricity, heat and transport sectors is central to Ireland's transition to a low carbon economy. The rollout of the Support Scheme for Renewable Heat will promote the replacement of fossil fuel heating systems with renewable energy technologies, while incentivising the uptake of electric vehicles will continue to be a priority for my Department.

In the Environmental area, funding will ensure the continued promotion of environmental protection and allow the EPA to deliver on its legislative mandate and research commitments in relation to ambient air quality, noise and non-ionising radiation monitoring, as well as the areas of climate mitigation and adaptation.

My Department will continue to provide grant funding for the remediation of landfill sites, as well as supports for the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy and protection of our natural environment. Continued investment in INFOMAR and TELLUS mapping projects will provide reliable geoscience support, underpinning the sustainable development of Ireland's natural resources.

### **Traffic Management**

320. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on An Bord Pleanála's decision to refuse planning permission for the proposed Dublin civic plaza at College Green that would have seen the area pedestrianised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44249/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The planning application for the College Green Plaza was brought to An Bord Pleanála by Dublin City Council and as the Deputy is aware the Council is not a body under my Department's aegis.

In 2015 the Council, in partnership with the National Transport Authority, published a Dublin City Centre Transport Study. That study set out various measures to ensure the efficient functioning of transport and also to enhance the public realm within the city centre.

The issues underpinning the Study's consideration of the challenges and opportunities facing the city centre remain and I understand that the Council and the NTA are currently considering the implications of the Board's decision in relation to their respective competencies.

### **Swimming Pool Programme Data**

321. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of public swimming pools, including swimming pools which are in contract with local authorities' PPP or similar arrangements, in each local authority; and the percentage this represents in terms of swimming pools per head of population by local authority. [44294/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme (LASPP), as operated by my Department, provides grant aid to local authorities towards the capital costs of new swimming pools or the refurbishment of existing pools.

While my Department provides capital funding to local authorities for the construction of swimming pools, it has no role in the arrangements for the operation of pools. I understand that any financial support for operational shortfalls comes from the resources of the relevant local authority. Furthermore, I am informed that the Local Government Audit Service has undertaken a Value for Money study to understand the strategies, procedures and reporting arrangements employed by local authorities to manage and monitor the operations of swimming pools and recreational facilities in their control. This study also examines the management arrangements in place. I understand the publication of the report is imminent.

In relation to the future funding of swimming pools, the National Development Plan (NDP)

confirms the establishment of a new Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF). It is intended that the Fund will be for larger projects where the proposed Government contribution exceeds the amount currently available for individual projects under the Sports Capital Programme. The fund will initially focus on the National Governing Bodies of Sport and Local Authorities. While the detailed terms and conditions of the new scheme are currently being finalised in my Department, it is envisaged that applications for new swimming pool projects will be accepted. An announcement in relation to when applications will be accepted will be made shortly.

### Departmental Staff Data

322. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of staff in his Department by grade. [44362/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The information requested by the Deputy is outlined in the following table. The numbers provided are as at 30th September 2018.

Grade	Breakdown
Secretary General	1
Assistant Secretary General	6
Principal Officer	22
Assistant Principal Officer	63
Higher Executive Officer	87
Administrative Officer	25
Executive Officer	96
Clerical Officer	126
Head Service Officer	1
Service Officer	8
Service Attendant	1
Storekeeper	1
Chief Aeronautical Officer	1
Air Accident Investigator	7
Chief Railway Accident Investigator	1
Senior Railway Accident Investigator	3
Principal Advisor (Roads)	1
Senior Advisor (Roads)	1
Engineering Inspector (Roads)	2
Accountant	1
Legal Advisor	1
Technology Specialist	1
Director Irish Coast Guard (IRCG)	1
Assistant Director IRCG	2
Manager IRCG	2
Divisional Controller IRCG	3
Electronics Officer IRCG	2
Engineering and Operations Officer IRCG	1

Grade	Breakdown
Engineering Officer IRCG	1
Operations and Training Officer IRCG	3
Coastal Unit Sector Manager IRCG	6
Health and Safety Officer IRCG	1
Station Officer IRCG	27
Radio Officer Grade III IRCG	15
Chief Surveyor (Marine Survey Office - MSO)	1
Deputy Chief Surveyor MSO	1
Surveyor MSO	26
Special Adviser to the Minister	1
Press Adviser to the Minister	1
Civilian Drivers for Ministers	3

### Military Aircraft Landings

323. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason he approved the transit through Shannon Airport of an aircraft (details supplied) in view of the fact that its presence at Shannon was in clear breach of international laws of neutrality and in breach of the High Court ruling by Judge Kearns in *Horgan v. An Taoiseach et al*, 2003. [44365/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Under the Air Navigation (Carriage of War, Weapons and dangerous Goods) Order 1973, as amended, civil aircraft are prohibited from carrying weapons or munitions over Ireland's sovereign airspace or into Irish airports unless they receive an exemption from the Minister for Transport. In considering such applications, my Department seeks the advice of relevant Government Departments, including the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade who advise on foreign policy issues. Such measures are fully consistent with Ireland's traditional policy of military neutrality, as applied by successive Irish Governments for over 50 years.

In the case of the flights for the aircraft with the registration number N207AX that landed in Shannon Airport on the 9th, 10th, 15th and 17th October munitions of war exemptions were applied for and granted by my Department. The flights on the 11th, 14th and 18th October were technical refuelling stops. No munitions of war exemptions were applied for in respect of these flights. Shannon Airport also confirmed that this Aircraft did not transit through Shannon Airport on either the 13th or 16th of October.

Under the 1944 International Air Services Transit Agreement, civil aircraft transiting or carrying out non-traffic stops within the sovereign territories of the parties to this Agreement do not normally require any additional authorisations or exemptions.

Both Ireland and the United States are party to this Agreement.

### Departmental Budgets

324. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the difference between the capital allocation for his Department under the national development plan for 2019 given as €1,643 million in Annex 1 of the plan and the lower figure of €1,613 million that is now earmarked for 2019 as set out on page 7 of the budget 2019 expenditure report;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44431/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As part of Budget 2019, it was agreed between the Department of Transport Tourism and Sport and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform that an amount of €30 million could be transferred from our capital allocation and used to alleviate pressures on our current expenditure.

The overall budget for my department is €2.3 billion.

### **Cycling Policy**

325. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there is a penalty in place in circumstances (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44433/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** To create a statutory obligation on the wearing of reflective clothing would entail making it a criminal offence under Road Traffic legislation for any person guilty of not wearing high visibility clothing. A person in breach of such a provision would fall to be issued with a fixed charge notice or summonsed to court, depending on what procedure would be put in place for the processing of such offences.

I believe that the wearing of such clothing is best pursued by way of educational and publicity campaigns run by the Road Safety Authority (RSA) rather than by pursuing a punitive approach to the issue.

Indeed, the RSA, which has responsibility for the promotion of road safety awareness, advertising and the dissemination of road safety information, has already undertaken a number of campaigns to promote awareness among pedestrians and cyclists of the need for visibility on our roads.

Several million high visibility vests, armbands, rucksack covers and other such items have been distributed by the RSA, an Garda Síochána, Road Safety Officers, Age Action and the Vintners Federation in recent years. A number of measures have also been included in the Road Safety Strategy 2013 - 2020 aimed at increasing the wearing of high visibility clothing among pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists. The Rules of the Road also include a strong recommendation supporting the wearing of light, and preferably high-visibility, clothing.

### **Road Safety**

326. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the protocols in place to deal with breakdowns on the M7 during the current roadworks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44477/18]

**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. Under the Roads Acts 1993-2015, the planning, design and operation of individual roads is a matter for the relevant road authority in relation to local and regional roads, or for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in conjunction with the local authorities concerned, in relation to national roads.

Noting the above position, I have referred the question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

## Departmental Budgets

327. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €10,590,000 capital allocation in civil aviation (details supplied) within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44506/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Capital allocation for Civil Aviation of €10,590,000 is mainly to support targeted investment in safety and security related projects under the Regional Airports Programme in respect of airports at Donegal, Kerry and Ireland West Airport Knock.

As part of the annual grant approval process, my Department will shortly invite regional airports to submit applications in respect of such projects. Once received, the Department will assess all applications to ensure full compliance with the conditions of the grant schemes under the Regional Airports Programme as well as with EU State Aid Rules. Assessment of the 2019 applications from the regional airports (Donegal, Knock and Kerry) will get underway early next year. I expect that a recommendation on Capital grant allocations will be made to me by March with a view to announcing the breakdown of allocations shortly thereafter.

Full details on the allocations for each of my Department's subheads for 2019 will be set out, as usual, in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV). In the meantime my Department is in discussion with relevant agencies regarding the details of allocations.

In relation to 2019 in particular, I have published further details on the 17% year on year increase in the budget for the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. These details are available at:

*<http://www.dttas.ie/press-releases/2018/ross-griffin-track-deliver-over-%E2%82%AC23-billion-transport-tourism-and-sport-2019>.*

## Departmental Budgets

328. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €1,493,080,000 capital allocation in land transport (details supplied) within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44507/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Capital allocation for Land Transport of €1,493,080,000 is broken down among the following subheads under Programme B :

Road Improvement Programmes, Road Safety Agencies and Expenses, Vehicle and Driver licencing Expenses, Carbon Reduction, Public Service Payments, Public and Sustainable Transport Programme, Public Transport and Expenses, Miscellaneous Expenses

Full details on the allocations for each of my Department's subheads for 2019 will be set out, as usual, in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV). In the meantime my Department is in discussion with relevant agencies regarding the details of allocations.

In relation to 2019 in particular, I have published further details on the 17% year on year increase in the budget for the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. These details are available at:

<http://www.dttas.ie/press-releases/2018/ross-griffin-track-deliver-over-%E2%82%AC23-billion-transport-tourism-and-sport-2019>

### Departmental Budgets

329. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €8,302,000 capital allocation in maritime transport and safety (details supplied) within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44508/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The bulk of capital expenditure under the Maritime Transport and Safety heading relates to programme spend by the Irish Coast Guard, including provision for a building programme, IT upgrades, vehicle and boat fleet renewal, pollution equipment and maintenance of telecommunications infrastructure. There is also provision for capital investment by the Commissioners of Irish Lights. The distribution of the overall allocation by programme will be determined after the Revised Estimate is published in December. In most cases, the specific project costs are only determined once a tendering process has been completed and as such, it would not be appropriate to release estimated project costs in advance of the tendering process.

### Departmental Budgets

330. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €61,522,000 capital allocation in sports and recreation services (details supplied) within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44509/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Deputy the Capital allocation for Sports and Recreation services of €61,522,000 is broken down among the following subheads under Programme D :

Grants for Sporting Bodies (Nat Lott) , Sport Ireland, Dormant Accounts funding - Sports Measures , Provision & Renovation of Swimming pools

Full details on the allocations for each of my Department's subheads for 2019 will be set out, as usual, in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV). In the meantime my Department is in discussion with relevant agencies regarding the details of allocations.

In relation to 2019 in particular I have published further details on the 17% year on year increase in the budget for the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. These details are available at:

<http://www.dttas.ie/press-releases/2018/ross-griffin-track-deliver-over-%E2%82%AC23-billion-transport-tourism-and-sport-2019>.

### Departmental Budgets

331. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €39,531,000 capital allocation in tourism services (details supplied) within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in

2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44510/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The breakdown of the total Exchequer capital provision for tourism services by subhead will be available in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV) for Public Services which will be published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and will be available on that Department's website following publication. It is not possible to provide any further detail in advance of the publication of the Revised Estimates Volume.

### Departmental Staff Data

332. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the breakdown of staff in her Department by grade. [44349/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** At 30 September 2018 there were 277 staff in my Department as follows:

Grade	Number
Secretary General	1
Assistant Secretary General	3
Director	1
Principal Officer	24
Assistant Principal	57
Higher Executive Officer	41
Administrative Officer	28
Executive Officer	64
Clerical Officer	51
Services Officer	3
Special Advisors	2
Ministerial Drivers	2

### Protected Disclosures

333. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on the cultural and administrative dysfunction in Tusla that was identified in the Charleton report; the way in which she plans to respond to these issues; and the timescale for same. [44436/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The 3rd interim report of the Disclosures Tribunal makes clear that the root cause of Tusla's failures in the case of Sergeant McCabe were not a dark conspiracy but incompetence. In the report, the Tribunal Chair has made stark and significant findings about the managers of the Cavan Monaghan area, and a litany of missed opportunities. I find it appalling that if the case had been dealt with in accordance with existing policies then none of this might have been necessary. The procedures in place at the time were, as the report says, simply ignored. When I became aware of the problems in the area, I instructed HIQA to carry out a statutory investigation into the management of retrospective cases of abuse by Tusla.

HIQA made a similar finding in its report of the statutory investigation; the policies were not being implemented. I have established an independent Expert Assurance Group to moni-

tor and advise on the recommendations made by HIQA, and work is ongoing in relation to this.

In the interest of balance I must note that there is also a recognition for the good work of Tusla professionals in the report. I believe that the majority of Tusla front line social workers act in good faith, and do very important work, to the best of their abilities.

The report is clear in its criticisms of the standards of management and accountability within an area of Tusla, and it is clear that improvements are required.

While it is my belief that funding is not the key to delivering on these reforms, I have secured an increase in funding to Tusla by over €30 million for 2019, so this cannot be an excuse of lack of delivery.

I have met with the Board of Tusla today and asked them to formally respond to the report. The response will set out the evidence of change that will prevent these events from ever happening again.

### Departmental Budgets

334. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the breakdown of the €20,140,000 capital allocation in the children and family support programme, that is, Vote 40 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within her Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44559/18]

335. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the breakdown of the €11,860,000 capital allocation in the sectoral programmes for children and young people, that is, Vote 40 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within her Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44560/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 334 and 335 together.

Budget 2019 has made provision for a total allocation of €32 million in capital funding for my Department. The allocation is split between two programme areas within my Department's Vote:

Programme	Capital Allocation
Children & Family Support	€20.140m
Sectoral Programmes for Children and Young People	€11.860m
Total	€32.000m

The Deputy has asked specifically about the Sectoral Programmes for Children and Young People. The aim of this programme is to support the provision of both universal and targeted services for the care, development and well-being of children and young people.

It is not possible at this time to identify the specific amounts that will be allocated to each project as this will be considered in the context of the finalisation of the REV 2019 in December next. However, at this stage I can confirm to the Deputy that the resources will support the continued investment in the following areas:

- Early Years and School Age Capital Grant Schemes - to ensure the quality and supply of childcare places;
- Youth Capital Funding Scheme - to support targeted youth projects across the country; and
- a Capital Grant Scheme to support new and existing play and recreational amenities for children and young people.

### **Departmental Staff Data**

336. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the breakdown of staff in his Department by grade. [44361/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** As of Monday 22 October 2018, I can confirm the staff breakdown of my Department, by grade, is as follows:

Position	No.
Secretary General	1
Assistant Secretary	3
Principal Officer	11
Assistant Principal Officer	30
Higher Executive Officer	34
Administrative Officer	8
Executive Officer	36
Clerical Officer	49
Services Officer	1
Technical Grade	7
Minister Advisor	2
Minister Drivers	2
Total	184

### **Departmental Budgets**

337. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the breakdown of the €125,882,000 capital allocation in rural development and regional affairs, that is, Vote 42 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44561/18]

338. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the breakdown of the €15,118,000 capital allocation in community development, that is, Vote 42 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44562/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 337 and 338 together.

The Abridged Estimates 2019, published as part of the Budget 2019 Expenditure Report, sets out a total gross capital allocation of €141 million in respect of the Department of Rural and Community Development. This compares to a 2018 capital allocation of €87.5 million.

It is my intention to ensure that the existing programmes delivered by my Department continue in 2019. These include the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, CLÁR, the Local Improvement Scheme, the LEADER Programme and Libraries Development. Given the increased allocation I also intend to allocate €55 million for the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund. Applications under this fund are currently being evaluated and I hope to make an announcement regarding successful applications in November.

The Revised Estimates Volume 2019 will set out the breakdown of individual capital schemes to subhead level; the €125.882 million allocation under rural development and regional affairs and the €15.118 million allocation under community development. The Revised Estimates will be published in early December by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

### **Exceptional Needs Payments**

339. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason there is no contractual undertaker provided by her Department in County Leitrim; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44244/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Under the supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme, my Department may make a single exceptional needs payment (ENP) to help meet essential, once-off expenditure which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet out of their weekly income.

An ENP is a means tested payment payable at the discretion of the officers administering the scheme taking into account the requirements of the legislation and all the relevant circumstances of the case in order to ensure that the payments target those most in need of assistance.

An application can be made under the ENP scheme for assistance with funeral and burial expenses where there is an inability to pay these costs, in part or in full, by the family of the deceased person without causing hardship.

As previously advised to the Deputy, the Department does not procure goods or services under the ENP scheme. Payment of an ENP is made to the customer to meet a particular need but can be nominated to the supplier of goods or services with the permission of the customer. The contractual relationship is, however, between the customer and the supplier, and not the Department.

In May 2018 my Department issued updated guidance for staff specifically in relation to assistance with funeral and burial expenses, as well as a new application form which is available on [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie).

Any persons who consider that they have an entitlement to assistance with funeral expenses under the ENP scheme should contact my Department.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Illness Benefit Payments**

340. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a payment will issue for an application by a person (details supplied) for illness benefit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44262/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** My Department recently moved to a new IT system for Illness Benefit (IB) and this has impacted on payments to some IB customers.

The IB claim for the person concerned is paid up to date. She is currently medically certified until 29th October 2018. If she remains ill after that date, she should continue to send medical certs to the Department.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Community Employment Schemes Supervisors**

341. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address a matter (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44274/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** As the Deputy will be aware, 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 issue of CE supervisor pensions 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. 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.

### **Departmental Staff Data**

342. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of job activation officers assigned to each county in each of the years 2012 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [44300/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department will be in touch with the Deputy directly to clarify precisely what information he requires. The information may not be readily available and may take some time to compile.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

343. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her Department's spend on job activation measures by county in each of the years 2012 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [44301/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department will be in touch with the Deputy directly to clarify precisely what information he requires. The information may not be readily available and may take some time to compile.

### **Labour Activation Programmes Data**

344. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount paid to Seetec and Turas Nua to deliver the JobPath service in each of the years 2012 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [44302/18]

345. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons by county who have taken up the JobPath service in each of the years 2012 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [44303/18]

346. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons by county who have returned to claim social welfare payments having previously taken up the JobPath service in each of the years 2012 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [44304/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 344 to 346, inclusive, together.

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) provides a range of activation supports catering for long-term unemployed jobseekers and those most distant from the labour market to secure and sustain full-time paid employment. These supports include the JobPath service. JobPath is an employment service, which helps long-term unemployed people to secure and sustain paid employment. The service was launched in 2015 on a 'rolling basis' with referral numbers gradually increasing over time.

JobPath is a payment by results model and all set-up and day-to-day operational costs are borne by the companies. The companies are paid on the basis of performance and with the exception of the initial registration fee; payments are made only when a client has achieved sustained employment. The registration fee may be claimed once a jobseeker has developed a Personal Progression Plan (PPP). Job Sustainment Fees (JSF) are payable for each 13 week period of sustained employment, up to a maximum of 52 weeks (i.e. 4 payments).

It is not intended to publish the individual payments to the JobPath companies as these are commercially sensitive and to do so would place the State at a disadvantage both in terms of the

contracts currently in place and in any future procurement that may be undertaken.

**Table 1: The total cost by year to Sept 2018.**

Please note the Service did not come into operation until July 2015, so no payments were made to Seetec or Turas Nua in the years 2012-2014.

Year	Amount Paid
2015	€1.2m
2016	€25.2m
2017	€57.4m
2018	€58.9m

**State Pension (Contributory)**

347. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a system (details supplied) will be implemented; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44340/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Government intends to introduce a Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to establishing the level of entitlement for all new state pension contributory claims from 2020 onwards (TCA2020). I launched a public consultation on this proposal earlier this year in May, which closed last month. The consultation sought input on a range of relevant factors which included the amount of contributions needed for a full rate contributory state pension, the amount of credited contributions a person could avail of, the provision of Homecaring periods and whether there would be a “phase-in period” for the changes.

Following examination and consideration of the submissions to the consultation, my officials will prepare proposals for the design of the new approach for consideration by the Government in due course.

In the interim, on 23 January last, this Government agreed to a proposal that will allow pensioners affected by the 2012 changes in rate bands to have their pension entitlement calculated on a Total Contributions basis, including provision for up to 20 years of a new home caring credit.

My Department will be writing to the pensioners concerned shortly, to let them know how the process of review will work. There is no need for pensioners, or anyone on their behalf, to contact my Department about this. Once the necessary enabling legislation (contained in the Budget Bill) is enacted and the required systems and processes are ready, my Department will again make direct contact with the pensioners concerned about their individual reviews.

The Deputy should note that for those who do not qualify for the State Pension (contributory) (SPC), because they have paid few or no contributions into the Social Insurance Fund, there are other state pension payments available. Notably, they may qualify for the State Pension (non-contributory) which is a means-tested payment (based on their share of household means) with a maximum payment of 95% of the SPC. If their spouse has a contributory pension, they may qualify for an increase for a qualified adult (based on their own means), amounting up to 90% of a full rate SPC pension.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Illness Benefit Payments

348. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when an illness benefit payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44345/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Department administers the Illness Benefit (IB) scheme to those customers who cannot work because they are ill provided they are covered by the appropriate class of social insurance (PRSI) and satisfy the PRSI conditions.

The person concerned does not satisfy the PRSI conditions for the award of an IB payment. A decision letter will issue to him today.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Departmental Staff Data

349. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the breakdown of staff in her Department by grade. [44354/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The following table provides the breakdown of staff in my Department by grade as at the end of September 2018. The Full Time Equivalent (FTE) and staff count are provided.

Grade	FTE	People
Secretary General	1.00	1
Deputy Secretary	1.00	1
Assistant Secretary	10.00	10
Principal Officer	85.50	89
Assistant Principal	281.38	286
Administrative Officer	24.55	25
Higher Executive Officer	1496.07	1566
Executive Officer	1435.38	1511
Clerical Officer	2510.04	2713
Services Officer	147.04	152
Temporary Clerical Officer	496.00	496
Total Staff	6487.96	6850

### Telephone Call Charges

350. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the contact telephone numbers for her Department that are premium rate numbers; the reason freephone numbers are not used exclusively for her Department in view of the fact that many who are in contact are on limited incomes; her views on whether the use of premium rate or lo-call numbers will result in higher charges for those who do not have access to a landline; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44437/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department has several measures in place aimed at reducing the potential cost for telephone

callers. This includes the provision of a “Freephone” service for callers to the Homeless Women, Families and New Communities, and Homeless Men’s Units. A dedicated team handles high volumes of calls to these services. Another measure is the use of “LoCall” numbers, operated through the “1890” platform. These numbers, facilitate customers making contact with the appropriate section in my Department at a low cost to the caller, when calling from a landline number. “1890” is just one of a group of non-geographic numbers (NGNs) which are used by a wide variety of service providers in Ireland. The original intention underpinning the use of this facility by my Department was to enable customers to make national calls for the equivalent cost of a local call.

The telecommunications landscape in Ireland has changed significantly since then and I am aware that these numbers were introduced at a time when landlines predominated. As such, I am also aware that “1890” numbers do not always result in a cost saving. In fact, in some cases, calls to NGNs such as the “1890” numbers can cost significantly more, as these numbers are non-geographic and often not included in “bundles” of call minutes to landlines.

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) is currently undertaking a review of five different classes of NGNs, including “1890” numbers at present. While not yet complete, ComReg has proposed a number of measures aimed at addressing a range of issues, including that of call costs, and has published a response to its latest round of consultations with a range of interested parties.

My Department is currently in the process of reviewing the use of NGNs as part of a wider review of its telephone policy and is considering the possible and likely implications of ComReg’s recent publications on this topic.

In the meantime, and mindful of the cost of “LoCall” numbers for some customers, my Department endeavours to ensure that where “LoCall” numbers are listed on the Department’s website, a landline number is always listed first, ahead of the available “LoCall” number. Furthermore, where “LoCall” numbers are listed on the website, they are accompanied by a notification advising customers that rates charged may vary among different service providers. Customers concerned about call charges can also request a call back, which staff of my Department will facilitate.

### **Illness Benefit Applications**

351. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when an application by a person (details supplied) for illness benefit will be processed; the reason for the delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44445/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** My Department recently moved to a new IT system and this has impacted on payments to some Illness Benefit (IB) customers. The Department acknowledges that this move has caused difficulties for some customers, leading to a large volume of calls to its helpline and delays in responding to customer queries. In order to address this, the Department is deploying additional staff to manage customer calls.

There is currently no record of the receipt of a claim by the person concerned for IB. An application form has been issued to the person and, on its return, the claim will be processed without delay.

An official from my Department will also contact the person to assist with the application.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Carer's Allowance Applications

352. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the steps she will take to ensure an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44478/18]

**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 child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

I confirm that my department received an application for carer's CA from the person concerned on 23 February 2018.

It is a condition for receipt of CA that every claimant shall furnish such certificates, documents, information and evidence as may be required for the purposes of deciding the claim and attends at such office or place as an officer may direct.

As the person concerned failed to provide documents regarding her employment, the deciding officer decided that the person concerned was not entitled to CA. The person concerned was notified on 26 July 2018 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal. The person concerned requested a review of that decision on 3 August 2018. The outcome of the review is that CA was awarded to the person concerned on 23 October 2018 and the first payment will issue to her nominated bank account on 8 November 2018. Arrears of allowance due from 1 March 2018 to 9 November 2018 will issue shortly. The person concerned was notified on 23 October 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.

### Departmental Expenditure

353. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the breakdown of the €14 million capital allocation, that is, Vote 37 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within her Department for 2019, by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44552/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department's 2019 capital allocation of €14m will be split across three subheads as follows:

Subhead	Estimate
A.2.v Office Equipment and External IT Services	€8.8m
A.2.vi Office Premises Expenses	€5m
A.2.ix eGovernment Related Projects	€0.2m

This allocation will primarily assist my Department in delivering additional IT modernisation and allow for the refurbishment of some of the Department's buildings. The capital projects are agreed with the Office of Public Works (OPW) annually on the basis of my Depart-

ments requirements and the OPW available capacity and resources.

Specific details of my Departments 2019 projects have not been finalised.

### **Exceptional Needs Payment Applications**

354. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an exceptional needs payment can be made in the case of a person (details supplied) in view of the exceptional circumstances; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44571/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** According to the records of the Department, the person concerned has not submitted an application for an exceptional needs payment. An officer of the Department will contact the person concerned on Wednesday 24/10/18 to discuss her circumstances.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Rent Supplement Scheme Eligibility**

355. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 721 of 18 September 2018, if she will address a matter in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44572/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The purpose of rent supplement is to assist with reasonable accommodation costs of eligible persons living in private rented accommodation where they are unable to provide for their accommodation costs from their own resources and do not have accommodation available to them from any other source.

In order to establish continued eligibility under legislation and means, a review was issued on the person's rent supplement claim on 1/6/18. No response was received from the person concerned within the prescribed time and her claim for rent supplement was closed on 17/7/18.

The person concerned subsequently lodged a new application for rent supplement which was received on 31/7/18. The claim was awarded and payment issued effective from July 2018. The person concerned has not made any request to the South Kildare/West Wicklow Rents Unit for payment of rent for June 2018 and has not indicated any reasonable grounds for initially failing to respond to the review of 1/6/18.

It is open to the person concerned to contact the Rents Unit as outlined below, should she wish to pursue this matter.

Phone: 01 6732155 Monday to Friday 9:30am to 12:30pm

Email: [RentsKildareSouth@welfare.ie](mailto:RentsKildareSouth@welfare.ie)

Post: South Kildare West Wicklow Rents Unit. PO Box 1107, Newbridge, Co. Kildare

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Exceptional Needs Payment Applications**

356. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an exceptional needs payment can be arranged in the case of persons (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44573/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Designated Officer has not received an application for an Exceptional Needs Payment (ENP) from the person concerned to date.

An application form has been forwarded to then on the 23/10/2018. On receipt of the application the officer will process it urgently.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Social Welfare Benefits Applications**

357. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the extent to which a basic social welfare payment or disability payment will be made available in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44576/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** My Department is unable to ascertain the entitlements of the person concerned as they cannot be identified from the information provided in the question.

This gentleman should visit his local INTREO Office for information on the various services and schemes administered by my department.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Local Authority Rates**

358. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount windfarms contributed in rates for the period 2014 to 2017 and to date in 2018, by county and nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44253/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan):** Local authorities are under a statutory obligation to levy rates on any property used for commercial purposes in accordance with the details entered in the valuation lists, prepared by the independent Commissioner of Valuation under the Valuation Acts 2001 - 2015. The levying and collection of rates are matters for each individual local authority and all rates income accrues to the local government sector.

Local authority total gross rates income is reported in the Income and Expenditure Account of their Annual Financial Statements. However, as this data is not categorised by the different types of property used for business purposes, the information requested in relation to the amount of rates contributed by windfarms is not available in my Department.

### **Health and Safety Regulations**

359. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he has had discussions with the Health and Safety Authority regarding progress on the review under way of the aspects of legislation relating to the regulation of fairground equipment and funfairs and specific legislative provisions relating to fairground equipment. [44439/18]

365. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the specific actions taken and progress made since he indicated that his Department is reviewing its role in the aspects of legislation relating to the regulation of fairground equipment and funfairs and specific legislative provisions relating to fairground equipment [44438/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 359 and 365 together.

Section 239 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 places a statutory duty on organisers of funfairs and owners of fairground equipment to take such care as is reasonable for ensuring that persons at a funfair do not suffer injury or damage by reason of dangers arising from the funfair or associated activities. This legislation also requires that the owner of fairground equipment shall not make it available to the public unless such equipment has a valid certificate of safety. The organiser of a funfair is required to give notice of the event to the relevant local authority and such notice is to be accompanied by a valid certificate of safety.

My Department commenced an internal review process on the issue of safety at funfairs/fairground equipment last year. One of the issues raised in the review was that the relevant provisions of the Planning and Development Act do not assign responsibility to a specific body to investigate accidents at funfairs. However, it was noted at that time that provisions in criminal justice and in safety, health and welfare at work legislation provide a range of responsibilities and roles for investigation of accidents.

The review of the aspects of legislation relating to regulation of fairground equipment and funfairs in section 239 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, particularly in respect of the specific legislative provisions relating to fairground equipment, is ongoing and includes an examination of international practice in the area of regulating public safety. My Department has met with the Health and Safety Authority as part of this process.

The drafting of the review report has commenced and further engagement with relevant stakeholders is envisaged as part of the process of clarifying issues and preparing the report's conclusions and recommendations.

### **Departmental Staff Data**

360. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of staff engaged in the housing delivery office; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44247/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The staffing complement of my Department's Housing Delivery Office (HDO) has been increased recently from 3 to 4, comprising 2 civil servants and 2 officers with experience of housing delivery and the local government sector. In addition, the HDO draws on supports from other relevant Business Units in my Department and other relevant public bodies.

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 the ongoing evolution of the Office's role. I

expect a fifth assignment to be made shortly and a number of further assignments are expected in the coming months.

### **Fire Safety Regulations**

361. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the progress made to date on a wider fire safety review of buildings at risk here as part of the response to the Grenfell Tower disaster; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44248/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** On 27 June 2017, following the fire in London’s Grenfell Tower, and in recognition of concerns arising for fire safety in Ireland, I tasked my Department’s National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management with convening and coordinating a high-level Task Force to lead a re-appraisal of fire safety in Ireland.

In addition to this, and in the immediate aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, I instructed local authorities to undertake a review of fire safety in medium-to-high rise buildings fitted with cladding systems. I asked the Task Force to oversee and report on this initial action, as well as, among other things, reviewing existing arrangements and systems for fire safety and related issues which impact on fire safety in Ireland.

The work of the Task Force has now been completed and it provided me with a full report in May 2018, titled “Fire Safety in Ireland: Report of the Fire Safety Task Force”, which describes its work, its conclusions on the state of fire safety in Ireland and its recommendations for moving forward. I have accepted the Task Force’s recommendations, and I brought its report to Government on 6 June 2018.

Fire authorities were asked to identify medium to high-rise buildings in their functional areas of more than six storeys, or more than 18 metres in height. My Department issued guidance in December 2017 dealing with fire safety assessment of medium-to-high rise buildings with cladding systems, including guidance on fire safety measures to be applied in buildings, pending completion of remedial works to cladding systems, where these are considered necessary. In cases where the buildings identified are fitted with external cladding systems, fire authorities were asked to consider if the use of powers under section 18(6) of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003 – to require the person having control over the building to carry out a fire safety assessment of the premises and provide the assessment to the fire authority – was warranted.

This assessment and follow-up work is on-going and most recent figures provided by fire authorities indicate:

- 838 buildings have been identified, countrywide, at this height,
- 287 of these buildings are fitted with cladding systems,
- fire authorities required fire safety assessments in 219 cases – 102 in residential buildings and 117 in non-residential buildings,
- 138 fire safety assessments have been received by fire authorities; work to complete and report the fire safety assessments in the remaining 81 buildings is underway; from their knowledge, fire services have not determined that any of the remaining buildings merit ceasing of use/ occupation of the buildings in question.

- fire authorities are proposing further action in respect of fire safety in 35 buildings where fire safety concerns – not in all cases related to external cladding – have been identified.

This fire safety and follow-up assessment work is on-going, and is being overseen by fire authorities, who are reporting on progress to the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management in my Department.

By identifying a small number of buildings, so far, where remedial works were required, the review process undertaken is seen to have had a positive effect and to have made contributions to both enhancing fire safety in medium-to-high rise buildings, and also raising fire safety awareness among owners/ landlords with statutory fire safety responsibilities.

However, the devastating fire at Grenfell Tower highlights the critical importance of fire safety in buildings, and the need for sustained vigilance in this regard. In addition to the review described above, the Task Force report makes a range of recommendations for improvements to fire safety in buildings, and to provision of fire services in Ireland and I have requested the Management Board of the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management to carry through the recommendations of the report within my direct ambit and to oversee and report on the implementation of other recommendations.

Copies of both the Report and the Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations are available on my Department's website at the following links:

Fire Safety Task Force Report:

*[http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/fire\\_safety\\_in\\_ireland\\_-\\_report\\_of\\_the\\_fire\\_safety\\_task\\_force.pdf](http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/fire_safety_in_ireland_-_report_of_the_fire_safety_task_force.pdf)*

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations:

*[http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/fire\\_safety\\_in\\_ireland\\_-\\_report\\_summary\\_of\\_conclusions\\_and\\_recommendations.pdf](http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/fire_safety_in_ireland_-_report_summary_of_conclusions_and_recommendations.pdf)*

### **Social and Affordable Housing Eligibility**

362. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the review of income eligibility limits for social housing will be published; when the limits will be increased; if his attention has been drawn to the particular difficulties in areas such as in counties Cavan and Monaghan in which income limits are low; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44272/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011 prescribe maximum net income limits for each local authority, in different bands according to the area, with income being defined and assessed according to a standard Household Means Policy.

The income bands and the authority area assigned to each band were based on an assessment of the income needed to provide for a household's basic needs, plus a comparative analysis of the local rental cost of housing accommodation across the country. It is important to note that the limits introduced at that time also reflected a blanket increase of €5,000 introduced prior to the new system coming into operation, in order to broaden the base from which social housing tenants are drawn, both promoting sustainable communities and also providing a degree of future-proofing.

As part of the broader social housing reform agenda, a review of income eligibility for social housing supports is underway. The Housing Agency is carrying out the detailed statistical work which will underpin this review on behalf of my Department.

The review will obviously have regard to current initiatives being brought forward in terms of affordability and cost rental and will be completed when the impacts of these parallel initiatives have been considered.

### Departmental Staff Data

363. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the breakdown of staff in his Department by grade. [44358/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** There were 706.03 full time equivalent (FTE) staff serving in my Department at the end of September 2018. A breakdown by grade is set out in the following table.

GRADE	FTE
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER	14.50
ADVISORY COUNSEL GRADE 3	2.00
ARCHITECTURAL ADVISOR	3.00
ARCHITECTURAL/ENG INSPECTOR	11.00
ASSISTANT AUDITOR ENVIRONMENT	8.30
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES	1.00
ASSISTANT FIRE ADVISOR	1.00
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL	84.86
ASSISTANT SECRETARY	5.00
ASSISTANT STAFF ENGINEER	1.00
AUDITOR ENVIRONMENT	17.60
CIVILIAN DRIVER	6.00
CLEANER	2.00
CLEANER PART- TIME	0.58
CLERICAL OFFICER	63.79
CLERICAL OFFICER - TEMP	7.00
DIRECTOR METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES	1.00
DIRECTOR OF AUDIT	1.00
ENG GR 2 MECH/HEATING/ELECL	1.00
ENGINEER GRADE 1 CIVIL	5.19
ENGINEER GRADE 2 CIVIL	2.00
ENGINEER GRADE 3	1.00
ENGINEER GRADE 4	0.50
EXECUTIVE OFFICER	119.79
HEAD SERVICES OFFICER	0.80
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER	103.54
HOUSING INSPECTOR	1.00
INSPECTOR PLANNING	3.00
INSPECTOR GRADE 1	1.00

GRADE	FTE
METEOROLOGICAL OFFICER	49.60
METEOROLOGIST	39.00
PARLIAMENTARY COUNSEL	1.00
PRINCIPAL	33.70
PRINCIPAL ADVISER	4.00
PRINCIPAL AUDITOR	6.00
PRINCIPAL CLERK	1.00
PRINCIPAL METEOROLOGICAL OFFICER	9.00
PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANT GRADE 1	1.00
QUANTITY SURVEYOR GRADE 1	3.00
RURAL GENERAL OPERATIVE BAND 3	2.00
SECRETARY GENERAL	1.00
SEED ANALYST	1.00
SENIOR ADVISER	9.00
SENIOR ASSISTANT FIRE ADVISOR	1.00
SENIOR METEOROLOGICAL OFFICER	45.45
SENIOR METEOROLOGIST	7.00
SENIOR STATISTICIAN	1.00
SERVICES ATTENDANT	1.23
SERVICES OFFICER	18.00
STATISTICIAN	1.00
SUPERVISING HOUSING INSPECTOR	1.00
VISUALLY IMPAIRED TELEPHONIST	0.60

### Local Authority Staff Recruitment

364. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 913 of 10 July 2018, the legislation upon which he is basing the policy of a capped percentage of places via open recruitment. [44375/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The recruitment of local authority staff is governed by primary legislation and regulations. Under Section 160 of the Local Government Act 2001, the appropriate Minister may declare qualifications of such classes and descriptions as he or she thinks fit for a specified employment under a local authority, or for such of the employments as belong to a specified class, description or grade. The Local Authorities (Officers and Employees) Act, 1926 Local Authorities (Declaration of Offices) Order 1999 specifies the offices, senior executive engineer and above, that fall to be filled by the Public Appointments Service.

The common recruitment pool system, which has been in operation for more than 30 years, provides for the filling of posts at grades IV to VII in local authorities and other relevant agencies by competition confined to local authorities, the Health Service Executive, Education and Training Boards, Institutes of Technology and certain other health and local government agencies. 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.

The Local Government Management Agency, LGMA, is currently engaging with the relevant unions and staff interests, with a view to reviewing the common recruitment pool process.

*Question No. 365 answered with Question No. 359.*

### Health and Safety Regulations

366. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the safety certificates his Department has received in respect of funfairs in each of the years 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018, by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44441/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Section 239 (4) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 requires that the owner of fairground equipment shall not make it available to the public unless such equipment has a valid certificate of safety. Section 239 (7) states that a person who intends to hold or organise a funfair, other than at a place where the operation of funfair equipment has been authorised by a permission under the Planning Acts or is not otherwise an unauthorised use, shall give two weeks' notice, or such other period of notice as may be prescribed, in writing to the local authority in whose functional area the funfair is to be held. The notice referred to shall be accompanied by a valid certificate of safety for the fairground equipment to be used at the funfair and shall give details of the names of the organiser of the funfair, the owner or owners of the fairground equipment to be used at the funfair and the location and dates on which the funfair is to be held. Certificates of Safety are returned annually to my Department in accordance with Section 8 (3)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (Certification of Fairground Equipment) Regulations 2003. Certificates for 2018 will be available in 2019. The 2016 and 2017 Certificates received by my Department for funfairs are listed, by county of inspection, in the table below:

County	2017	2016
Cavan	7	8
Clare		8
Cork	11	75
Donegal	26	30
Dublin	76	50
Galway	4	8
Kerry		1
Kildare	25	23
Kilkenny		2
Laois	4	13
Limerick	6	17
Louth	7	8
Meath	37	34
Monaghan	2	1
Offaly	38	10
Roscommon	13	32
Tipperary	1	1

County	2017	2016
Waterford	48	46
Wexford	3	1
Wicklow	44	4
Total	352	373

### Vacant Sites Data

367. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his Department is monitoring the quantity of land identified by local authorities as vacant for the purposes of the vacant site tax; the quantity, number and acreage of land identified by each local authority as vacant; the number of vacant sites in which the owner has been informed; the number of vacant sites in which the owner has yet to be informed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44452/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 introduced the vacant site levy, which is a measure aimed at incentivising the development of vacant, under-utilised sites in urban areas. Under the Act, planning authorities are required to establish a register of vacant sites in their areas, beginning on 1 January 2017. Planning authorities must issue notices to owners of vacant sites by 1 November this year in respect of vacant sites included on their respective registers on 1 January 2018, indicating that the levy will apply to those sites on 1 January 2019.

While all 31 local authorities have established vacant site registers, not all registers have been populated to date as some local authorities are undertaking the necessary preparatory work in this regard, i.e. identifying qualifying vacant sites, their registered owners and commissioning the market valuations of such sites. As required under the Act, the planning authority must enter certain information on the register in relation to a vacant site, including name and address of owner, the folio reference, as appropriate, the market value together with the date of entry on the register.

My Department does not maintain a central register of vacant sites as each local authority administers the vacant site register in respect of their own functional area. As provided for under the Act, the register in respect of each local authority is available for inspection at its offices and online on its website.

On foot of a recent review of the on-line vacant site registers across all local authority areas, there are collectively almost 270 individual sites currently on the local registers. Over 150 of these sites were entered on the local vacant site registers on 1 January 2018 and will therefore be subject to the levy in 2019, unless development works are activated in the interim.

My Department has actively engaged with local authorities in relation to the implementation of the vacant site levy in order to ensure a consistent application of the levy provisions across all city and county areas and to facilitate the sharing of best practice. My Department has provided guidance and advice and also organised three separate information seminars for local authorities, the most recent of which, in May 2018, was attended by officials from every local authority.

My Department will continue to monitor implementation of the levy to ensure that it is being effectively applied, in line with its intended purpose of incentivising the development of vacant or under-utilised sites in urban areas. To support this work, my Department issued Circular PL 06/2018 on 3 October 2018. Part 3 of this Circular requested a progress report on

implementation of the vacant site levy to be completed by the Director of Planning in each Local Authority and returned to the Department by 31 October 2018.

### **Energy Efficiency**

368. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 180 of 11 October 2018, the minimum energy rating a boiler must hold for it to be allowed to be installed in new homes here or as a replacement in existing homes.. [44458/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** The Building Regulations apply to the design and construction of a building and certain works to an existing building. The minimum performance requirements that a building/works must achieve are set out in the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations. These requirements are set out in 12 parts classified as Parts A to M. Part L – Conservation of Fuel and Energy, sets out the requirements in relation to the energy efficiency of boilers.

Technical Guidance Documents (TGDs) provide technical guidance on how to comply with the building regulations in practical terms. TGD L contains guidance, compliance with which will, prima facie, indicate compliance with Part L.

Part L, Conservation of Fuel and Energy – Dwellings requires that for new dwellings, all oil and gas fired boilers shall meet a minimum seasonal efficiency of 90%. Where oil and gas fired boilers are installed as replacements in existing dwellings they shall meet a minimum seasonal efficiency of 90% where practicable.

I will shortly be publishing an update to Part L of the Building Regulations, for dwellings, to achieve the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive NZEB performance requirements. When implemented, it will represent an improvement of 70% in energy and carbon dioxide emissions performance over 2005 standards for all new dwellings commencing construction from early 2019, subject to transition arrangements.

The Directive defines a Nearly Zero Energy Building, or “NZEB”, as a building that has a very high energy performance and that the nearly zero or very low amount of energy required should be covered to a very significant extent by energy from renewable sources, including energy from renewable sources produced on-site or nearby.

My Department has progressively updated Part L of the Building Regulations, relating to the Conservation of Fuel and Energy in Dwellings, over the last decade in order to improve the energy and carbon dioxide emissions performance of all new dwellings to achieve Nearly Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB) performance levels. These incremental improvements have effectively eased the transition and minimized the additional effort required to achieve the NZEB performance for dwellings.

### **Departmental Budgets**

369. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details of the €1,335,887,000 capital allocation in the Housing Division Vote 34 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within his Department’s vote for 2019 by specific project in tabular form; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44528/18]

370. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details of the €661,911,000 capital allocation in the Water Services Division Vote 34 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within his Department's vote for 2019 by specific project in tabular form; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44529/18]

371. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details of the €12,486,000 capital allocation in the Local Government Division Vote 34 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within his Department's vote for 2019 by specific project in tabular form; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44530/18]

372. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details of the €94,806,000 capital allocation in the Planning Division Vote 34 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within his Department's vote for 2019 by specific project in tabular form; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44531/18]

373. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details of the €7,500,000 capital allocation in the Met Éireann Division Vote 34 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within his Department's vote for 2019 by specific project in tabular form; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44532/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 369 to 373, inclusive, together.

The table gives details at programme level of the estimated capital expenditure by my Department in 2019, on the basis of the financial provision made for my Department in Part III, Estimates for Public Services, of Budget 2019: Expenditure Report, published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The table does not include additional capital funding that will be available for housing purposes from local property tax receipts in the amount of some €77 million in 2019. Information in relation to particular projects being financed from these allocations will become available as appropriate at a later stage as part of ongoing programme management and delivery.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING, PLANNING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT - VOTE 34  
GROSS CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS 2019

	€000
A - HOUSING	1,335,887
ADMINISTRATION - NON PAY	1,887
LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING	747,471
CAPITAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME	94,875
COMMUNAL FACILITIES	500
MORTGAGE TO RENT	23,000
CAPITAL ADVANCE LEASING FACILITY	94,400
TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION & SUPPORT	13,000
ESTATE REGENERATION/REMEDIAL WORKS	71,750
ENERGY EFFICIENCY- RETROFITTING	30,454
REPAIR AND LEASING SCHEME	38,000
PRIVATE HOUSING GRANTS	57,000

MORTGAGE ALLOWANCES	600
INFRASTRUCTURE FUND	130,000
PYRITE RESOLUTION BOARD	32,000
RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES BOARD	950
B - WATER SERVICES	661,911
ADMINISTRATION - NON PAY	941
WATER QUALITY PROGRAMME	8,300
RURAL WATER PROGRAMME	23,000
FORESHORE	670
IRISH WATER	622,000
LEAD REMEDIATION/DEVELOPER PROVIDED INFRASTRUCTURE	7,000
C - LOCAL GOVERNMENT	12,486
ADMINISTRATION - NON PAY	811
FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES	11,175
FRANCHISE	500
D - PLANNING	94,806
ADMINISTRATION - NON PAY	861
AN BORD PLEANÁLA	460
URBAN RENEWAL/REGENERATION	76,000
ORDNANCE SURVEY IRELAND	985
LAND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY	16,500
E - MET EIREANN	7,500
ADMINISTRATION - NON PAY	6,000
FLOOD FORECASTING AND WARNING SERVICE	1,500
TOTAL CAPITAL	2,112,590

### Departmental Budgets

374. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the breakdown of the €560,000 capital allocation in the Property Registrations Authority (details supplied) within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44533/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**  
The information requested is set out in the table.

#### PRA ICT Capital Expenditure 2019

Nature of Project	Detail	Commencement	Spend Budgeted in 2019
ICT Hardware	Security appliances PCs/laptops/monitors Printers/scanners	This represents ongoing replenishment of key ICT hardware	€219,000

Nature of Project	Detail	Commencement	Spend Budgeted in 2019
ICT Software	Upgrade/redevelopment of in-house case processing and digital mapping systems	Commenced in 2018. This is a three year project.	€308,000
ICT Software licences	Additional Microsoft/DataPro/Network licences	Purchase of licences	€33,000

### Departmental Budgets

375. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the breakdown of the €250,000 capital allocation in the Valuation Office (details supplied) within his Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced and completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44534/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Under programme B of Vote 16, administration service for the valuation tribunal, the capital allocation of €250,000 is earmarked for the redevelopment and implementation of additional ICT facilities in relation to the valuation tribunal, the independent body that determines appeals from valuations carried out by the commissioner of valuation. It is intended to deploy the allocation on improving the overall technical infrastructure within the tribunal, including networks and servers, and on developing a new computerised database and online services.

### Cúram agus Oideachas na Luath-Óige

376. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sé i gceist go mbeidh an tacaíocht chéanna ar fáil do na Naíonraí Gaelacha agus atá ar fáil do Chomhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta chun gur féidir leis na Naíonraí Gaelacha an réimse tacaíochta céanna a chur ar fáil do naíonraí taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht agus a chuireann Comhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta ar fáil taobh istigh den Ghaeltacht; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [44281/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Is trí mhaoiniú ón Roinn Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige agus Foras na Gaeilge araon a chuir Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta tacaíocht ar fáil do na naíonraí Ghaelacha go dtí lár 2014. I mí Iúil 2014, aistríodh an cúram sin chuig Gaeloideachas nuair a ceapadh é mar cheanneagraíocht chun plé le gaeloideachas, tumoideachas agus réamhscolaíocht lán-Ghaeilge.

Cuireann Foras na Gaeilge maoiniú ar fáil do Ghaeloideachas chun na cúraimí sin a chur i gcrích ach tuigtear dom nach bhfuil maoiniú á chur ar fáil ón Roinn Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige níos mó.

Tuigim ó Fhoras na Gaeilge go ndearnadh iarratas cuimsitheach leis an Roinn Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige anuraidh i ndáil le maoiniú a chur ar fáil do na naíonra Gaelacha agus go bhfuiltear ag leanúint suas ar an iarratas sin.

### Departmental Staff Data

377. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the breakdown of staff in her Department by grade. [44351/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The tables below show the breakdown of the 653, 625.39 Full Time Equivalent, staff and equivalents in my Department as of 30 September 2018.

Grade	Number of staff
Secretary General	1
Assistant Secretary *	4
Principal Officer	21
Ministerial Special Advisers	2
Assistant Principal Officer	48
Professional and Technical AP equivalents	56
Administrative Officer	4
Professional and Technical AO equivalents	81
Higher Executive Officer	72
Conservation Rangers	64
Executive Officer	97
Clerical Officer	84
Service Officer	16
Civilian Drivers	2
Industrial Grades	101
Total	653

\* includes An Coimisinéir Teanga

### Departmental Budgets

378. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the breakdown of the €41,730,000 capital allocation in culture, that is, Vote 33 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within her Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44547/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The broad capital allocations for my Department's projects and programmes under Project Ireland 2040 are set out in our 10 Year Capital Plan, "*Investing in our Culture, Language & Heritage 2018 – 2027*", published at [https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2018/04/capital\\_plan\\_april3-8.pdf](https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2018/04/capital_plan_april3-8.pdf).

The breakout of the 2019 capital allocation for Programme A: Culture, and all programme areas across my Department's Vote, is available at <https://www.chg.gov.ie/about/finance-evaluation/exchequer-funding/>.

My Department operates a wide range of funding schemes in the areas of arts, culture, heritage and the Gaeltacht and details of these schemes, including funding awarded, are also available on the Department's website by programme area.

### Departmental Budgets

379. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the breakdown of the €15,604,000 capital allocation in heritage, that is, Vote 33 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within her Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44548/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The broad capital allocations for my Department's projects and programmes under Project Ireland 2040 are set out in our 10 Year Capital Plan, "*Investing in our Culture, Language & Heritage 2018 – 2027*", published at [https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2018/04/capital\\_plan\\_april3-8.pdf](https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2018/04/capital_plan_april3-8.pdf).

The breakout of the 2019 capital allocation for Programme B: Heritage, and all programme areas across my Department's Vote, is available at <https://www.chg.gov.ie/about/finance-evaluation/exchequer-funding/>.

My Department operates a wide range of funding schemes in the areas of arts, culture, heritage and the Gaeltacht and details of these schemes, including funding awarded, are also available on the Department's website by programme area.

### Departmental Budgets

380. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the breakdown of the €13,467,000 capital allocation in the Irish language, Gaeltacht and islands, that is, Vote 33 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within her Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019 in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44549/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The broad capital allocations for my Department's projects and programmes under Project Ireland 2040 are set out in our 10 Year Capital Plan, "*Investing in our Culture, Language & Heritage 2018 – 2027*", published at [https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2018/04/capital\\_plan\\_april3-8.pdf](https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2018/04/capital_plan_april3-8.pdf).

The breakout of the 2019 capital allocation for Programme C: Irish Language, Gaeltacht and the Islands, and all programme areas across my Department's Vote, is available at <https://www.chg.gov.ie/about/finance-evaluation/exchequer-funding/>.

My Department operates a wide range of funding schemes in the areas of arts, culture, heritage and the Gaeltacht and details of these schemes, including funding awarded, are also available on the Department's website by programme area.

### Departmental Budgets

381. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the breakdown of the €4,499,000 capital allocation in north-south cooperations, that is, Vote 33 of the budget 2019 expenditure report within her Department for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44550/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The broad capital allocations for my Department's projects and programmes under Project Ireland 2040 are set out in our 10 Year Capital Plan, "*Investing in our Culture, Language & Heritage 2018 – 2027*", published at [https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2018/04/capital\\_plan\\_april3-8.pdf](https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2018/04/capital_plan_april3-8.pdf).

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The breakout of the 2019 capital allocation for Programme D: North South Co-operation, and all programme areas across my Department's Vote, is available at <https://www.chg.gov.ie/about/finance-evaluation/exchequer-funding/>.

My Department operates a wide range of funding schemes in the areas of arts, culture, heritage and the Gaeltacht and details of these schemes, including funding awarded, are also available on the Department's website by programme area.