

Written Answers.

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

Questions Nos. 1 to 5, inclusive, answered orally.

Animal Culls

6. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will consider not renewing or limiting the terms of permits issued to the Dublin Airport Authority for the culling of hares for 2019. [47221/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department's primary interest in relation to the hare is its conservation status. EU Directive 92/43/EEC (the Habitats Directive) requires Ireland to make a detailed report every six years on the conservation status of all listed species, including the hare. Ireland's most recent report in 2013 included a comprehensive assessment of the range, population status, habitat and threats for the Irish hare. That report stated that the Hare is found throughout the country from coastal habitats to upland heath and bog. The Hare is widespread and common in Ireland with a broad habitat niche. None of the identified threats were considered likely to impact on its conservation status in the foreseeable future and the Overall Conservation Status was assessed as Favourable.

My Department has commissioned a new assessment of the status of hare's population in Ireland. The work to inform this population assessment has already begun. The survey is using hundreds of camera traps deployed across all habitat types and in every county of Ireland. The final report is due in mid-2019.

Aviation safety is of paramount importance for any airport authority and all airports must manage hazards, including hazards presented by wildlife, to ensure the safety of airline passengers, their staff and the local communities.

Wildlife safety risks associated with airports include the risk of ingestion by birds into an aircraft engine while on arrival, departure or close to the airport and the risk of a ground incident on or close to a runway where hares or other animals could be accidentally struck or otherwise killed which could result in further birds being attracted to the area.

Dublin Airport Authority has a strategy to deal with these issues. In the case of birds, the primary method of control is through the growing of grass at a length which deters certain species, undertaking bird scaring activities or as a last resort, the shooting of a bird. In the case of hares, the primary method of dealing with safety risk is through capture and relocation of the hares. This is done in co-operation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department. As licences are needed under the Wildlife Acts to capture hares, the National Parks and Wildlife Service has issued a number of permits in recent years under the Wildlife Acts to the

Dublin Airport Authority (DAA) to remove hares from the Dublin Airport airfield due to potential damage to aircraft and the threat to passenger safety. It is understood that over the last 4 years in excess of 480 hares have been captured and released in this manner.

I understand that following a serious safety incident involving hares in 2017, the Dublin Airport Authority decided that measures additional to catch and release were needed and that it would be necessary to cull some hares which were located in the grassy islands around the runway where it is considered that catches cannot be undertaken in these areas due to safety risks for persons involved as well as for passing taxiing aircraft.

While the shooting of hares is permitted under the Wildlife Acts under the Open Seasons Orders during a certain prescribed period, licences are needed to shoot at night at any time. The open season for hares is between 28 September and 28 February of the following year. The hare culls carried out by DAA were carried out during this permitted open season but my Department issued permits to the DAA to allow culling at the airport at night.

Clearly the safety of the travelling public, the staff and visitors at the airport is of paramount importance and I'm sure we all agree that one airline accident is too many. While I expect the catch and release programme at Dublin Airport to continue, I will consider any applications to cull hares at night time having regard to the safety needs of all concerned.

Questions Nos. 7 to 12, inclusive, answered orally.

Ealaín na Gaeltachta

13. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Catherine Connolly** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta de bhun Ceist Pharlaiminteach Uimhir 89 an 2 Deireadh Fómhair, an bhfuil an fhoirmle réitigh fógartha; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [47424/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Ceadáíodh deontas suas le €325,000 d'Ealaín na Gaeltachta i mí Iúil seo caite chun clár gníomhaíochtaí sna healaíona traidisiúnta do dhaoine óga a chur chun cinn ar fud na Gaeltachta le linn na scoilbhliana reatha. Tá sé seo á dhéanamh i gcomhréir le beart 2.10 den Phlean Gníomhaíochta 2018-2022 don Ghaeilge a sheol mé i mí an Mheithimh, thar ceann an Rialtais.

Faoin gclár nua, déanfar leathnú agus forbairt cheimiúil ar an soláthar ranganna ceoil, damhsa, amhránaíochta agus ealaíona béil ar fud na gceantar Gaeltachta uile. I measc ghnéithe an chláir, beidh an méid seo a leanas:

- iniúchadh ar na deiseanna oiliúna sna healaíona traidisiúnta atá ar fáil do dhaoine óga sna ceantair Ghaeltachta ar fad i láthair na huaire;

- soláthar ranganna ceoil, damhsa, amhránaíochta agus ealaíona béil i nGaeltacht na Gailimhe ó mhí Eanáir 2019.

- soláthar ranganna trí Scoil Cheoil na Crannóige i nDún na nGall agus trí Ionad Cultúir an Dochtúir Ó Loingsigh i gCorcaigh

Tá Ealaín na Gaeltachta tosaithe i mbun taighde agus obair ullmhúcháin eile faoi láthair. Tá próiseas earcaíochta i gcomhair Comhardaitheoir sna hEalaíona Dúchasacha do Dhaoine Óga ar bun acu i láthair na huaire agus tá súil go mbeidh duine ceaptha roimh dheireadh na míosa seo.

Cé go bhfuiltear ag leanúint sa ghearrthréimhse leis an soláthar ranganna atá ar fáil cheana féin i gceantair Ghaeltachta Dhún na nGall agus Chorcaí do scoilbhliain 2018/19, ní bheidh chumas EnaG tús a chur le ranganna i nGaeltacht na Gaillimhe go dtí Eanáir 2019 de bharr na socrúithe maidir le hearcú teagascóirí agus cúrsaí riaracháin eile atá le cur i gcrích lena chinntiú go gcuirfear seirbhís chuí, ar ardchaighdeán, ar fáil do dhaltaí agus do thuismitheoirí araon.

Idir an dá linn, d'fhógair mé ar an Máirt seo caite go bhfuil maoiniú á cheadú do Ghréasán Múinteoirí na Gaillimhe chun a chinntiú go bhfuil ranganna sna healaíona traidisiúnta á gcur ar fáil i nGaeltacht na Gaillimhe agus Árann ó Mheán Fómhair go Nollaig 2018. Cuimsíonn an Gréasán ceithre theagascóir déag agus déantar freastal ar scoileanna agus ionaid ar fud Chonamara agus Árann. Is socrú sealadach é seo atá curtha ar bun agus tiocfaidh deireadh leis i mí na Nollag, tráth a thosóidh Ealaín na Gaeltachta ar chur i bhfeidhm a gcláir sa cheantar i mhí Eanáir 2019 ar aghaidh.

Grant Payments

14. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 776 of 12 July 2018, if a grant scheme has been opened that would consider an application for funding to restore and maintain vintage mechanical equipment and machinery such as steam engines; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47215/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department does not have a specific scheme for the restoration of vintage machinery. There could however be a possibility that equipment or machinery would be encompassed within an overall project that fulfils the criteria of the scheme. An example would be a museum in which such machinery was held. The recent Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016 - 2018 is focused on the refurbishment and enhancement of the existing stock of arts and culture facilities throughout the country. Funding of €10.214m was allocated to 134 projects under three complementary grant streams. This is the most significant investment in cultural infrastructure in a decade with funding provided to a range of facilities, including arts centres, theatres, galleries and museums, as well as artists' studios and creative spaces. A full list of all successful projects is available on my Department's website.

Project Ireland 2040 has given explicit recognition to the importance of our culture, language and heritage and to our sustainable development by the unprecedented commitment by Government to invest €1.2 billion over the next decade. Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018-2027 sets out the Government's objectives for capital investment in Ireland's culture, language and heritage. The plan sets out significant investment on a phased basis over the next 10 years including €40 million to secure existing investment in arts and culture infrastructure nationwide and ensure a regional balance. This infrastructure includes art galleries, museums, theatres and performance spaces, most of which is operated by our 31 local authorities. These play an important role in supporting and enriching rural communities. The Irish Museums Association estimates that there are approximately 230 museums throughout Ireland and these welcome over 6 million visitors annually.

The Arts and Culture Capital Scheme is making a huge difference to many individual organisations and my Department is already seeing good outcomes and receiving positive feedback. My Department is currently giving consideration to new round of grant funding for Arts and Cultural Capital to be announced in the near future.

I hope to be able to re-open the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme over the coming months.

Appointments to State Boards

15. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the measures she plans to take to ensure representation of all stakeholders and grades in the film industry on the board of Screen Ireland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47419/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Fís Éireann is established under the Irish Film Board Acts 1980 to 2011 as a board to assist and encourage the development of a film industry in the State and to empower the board to provide investments, grants, loans and guarantees of loans for the making of films in the state.

Section 12 of the Act provides that the members of the Board shall be appointed by me as Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for a period of appointment not exceeding four years. Section 13 provides for the appointment of one of the members of the Board as Chair by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. There is a maximum of seven members of the Board of Fís Éireann.

The Act does not provide for the Board of Fís Éireann to be a “representative” board whereby the composition of the board is determined by the formal connection of members to particular constituencies or stakeholder groups.

Since 2014, the selection of appointees to the Board of Fís Éireann follows the system introduced by the Government whereby all appointments are required to be advertised openly on the State Boards portal www.stateboards.ie operated by the Public Appointments Service (PAS). This means that anyone who considers that they have a contribution to make, can apply to be a member of the Board.

Applications made through Stateboards.ie are processed by way of a transparent assessment system designed and implemented by the independent Public Appointments Service to support Ministers in making appointments to State Boards. This is an open, accessible, rigorous and transparent system which has yielded applications from accomplished, experienced and qualified individuals who wish to make a commitment to public service that might not have previously been identified as available for appointment to State Boards.

I can confirm that all current members on the board of Fís Éireann were selected from applications from candidates deemed suitable by the PAS under the Stateboards system.

Grant Payments

16. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the request for additional funding above the original grant from Cork County Council to her Department to repair a theatre (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47390/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The recent Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016 - 2018 is focused on the refurbishment and enhancement of the existing stock of arts and culture facilities throughout the country. To date, funding of €10.214m has been allocated to 134 projects under three complementary grant streams. This is the most significant investment in cultural infrastructure in a decade with funding provided to a range of facilities, including arts centres, theatres, galleries and museums, as well as art-

ists' studios and creative spaces. A substantial grant was allocated to the facility to which the Deputy refers. A full list of all successful projects is available on my Department's website.

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

However, I understand that the County Council's re-instatement proposal is significantly more ambitious than the available finance and the Council has been in ongoing engagement with officials in my Department in relation to the project and this shortfall in funding. In this regard, there may also be other options open to the Council to close the funding gap. My Department will maintain contact with the Council in this regard.

Project Ireland 2040 has given explicit recognition to the importance of our culture, language and heritage. Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018-2027 sets out the Government's objectives for capital investment in Ireland's culture, language and heritage. The plan sets out significant investment on a phased basis over the next 10 years including €40m to secure existing investment in arts and culture infrastructure nationwide and ensure a regional balance. This level of investment will ensure the upkeep of regional infrastructure right across the country.

The Arts and Culture Capital Scheme is making a huge difference to many individual organisations and my Department is already seeing good outcomes and receiving positive feedback. My Department is currently giving consideration to new round of grant funding for Arts and Cultural Capital to be announced in the near future.

National Orchestras

17. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of her plans in respect of the development of the National Symphony Orchestra; if she remains committed to retaining the orchestra and bringing the orchestra to full strength; her plans regarding the role of the National Concert Hall in the future of the orchestra; if budget provisions for the orchestra for 2019 to 2021 have been made; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47414/18]

25. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the progress that has been made in relation to the transfer of the National Symphony Orchestra from RTÉ to the National Concert Hall; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47401/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 17 and 25 together.

Following the publication of the report by RTÉ that it commissioned from independent consultants Helen Boaden and Mediatique on the RTÉ Orchestras entitled RTÉ Orchestras Ensuring a Sustainable Future, the Government agreed in principle that the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra (RTÉ NSO) should come within the remit of the National Concert Hall (NCH). The Government also authorised the initiation of discussions on the implementation of the recommendations of the report. It should be noted that the National Concert Orchestra will remain within RTÉ.

The overall aim of the Government decision in relation to the proposed transfer of the RTÉ NSO is to enable the orchestra to be established as a world class orchestra which would, with the NCH, provide a creative and imaginative programme strategy that would greatly enhance the offering of the combined organisation to the public.

In addition, the Government's Creative Ireland programme commits to a range of important initiatives to support culture and creativity in Ireland, and the Department's 10 year National Development Plan, envisages major capital investment in our National Cultural Institutions, including a major re-development of the National Concert Hall. The National Concert Hall since it opened its doors in 1981 has been the home of the National Symphony Orchestra which provides the backbone to the Hall's orchestral music programme. There is now an opportunity for the NSO to play an even stronger role as part of these wider developments and this should greatly enhance the offering of both organisations to the public.

An Oversight Group has been established with formal terms of reference, with a view to identifying and addressing the relevant issues to enable the successful transfer of the NSO from the remit of RTÉ to the remit of the NCH. The group has already met on two occasions. In addition, a Working Group, as a subset of the oversight group, has been tasked at examining the detailed issues involved in the proposed transfer of the orchestra. The issues to be examined include funding and I will not prejudge what proposals officials might make regarding funding.

At this point, it is considered that 2020 would be the earliest date for the completion of the proposed transfer.

My Department welcomes the opportunity to work with all stakeholders including the members of the RTÉ NSO to ensure that it can contribute fully to Ireland's rich cultural heritage.

Cultural Policy

18. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the degree to which she expects to develop the image of culture and heritage locations here as a means of positive and lucrative promotion of Ireland internationally; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47376/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Ireland has, time and again, demonstrated its capacity to make an impact at a scale beyond our size, and it is without doubt, that our unique culture and heritage play a key role in achieving this impact. Our culture and heritage define who we are as a people, but they are also the reason many people visit and stay in Ireland. They are a priceless and irreplaceable national asset.

Global Ireland - the Government's plan to increase Ireland's global footprint to 2025 – includes key initiatives such as promoting Irish arts, heritage and culture to new generations and new audiences across the world.

Culture Ireland, a Division of my Department operates on a cross Government basis with the Expert Advisory Committee comprised of representatives of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, IDA and Tourism Ireland as well as representatives of the sector. My Department is currently in the process of organising a conference of cultural stakeholders to examine how best to establish curated and strategic cultural programmes that advance our global reputation. It is expected that the conference will be held in early 2019.

Separately, I also recently announced a 4 month consultation on a new national heritage plan for Ireland, Heritage Ireland 2030. This consultation offers us a unique opportunity to rethink

how we care for our habitats, landscapes, wildlife, historic buildings and monuments, so they can be celebrated and enjoyed long into the future.

Our vision for heritage is a simple one - that heritage is valued and protected. Heritage Ireland 2030 is built around that vision: that the way in which we identify and protect our heritage is the best it can be. Heritage Ireland 2030 is built around three emerging themes - National Leadership, Stronger Heritage Partnerships and Communities and Heritage. It is intended to draw up an Action Plan under each theme with full, open and regular review of objectives over the lifetime of the Plan to 2030.

The Plan will serve to raise awareness and appreciation of the wonderful natural and built heritage that Ireland has to offer, and ensures its sustainability for this and future generations to come.

Waterways Ireland Funding

19. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding, both current and capital, provided to Waterways Ireland in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47393/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Waterways Ireland is co-funded by my Department and the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland. The current expenditure of the body is funded 85% by my Department and 15% by the Department for Infrastructure which reflects the distribution of the navigable waterways in each jurisdiction. Capital expenditure is funded 100% in the jurisdiction in which the capital works are carried out.

The amount of funding allocated to Waterways Ireland from my Department's Vote for 2018 is €24,106,000 made up of €20,526,000 in Current and €3,580,000 in Capital - an increase of €1,148,000 on the 2017 allocation.

Waterways Ireland focuses on delivering its core activities and maintaining front line services. In 2018, Waterways Ireland has concentrated the resources available on the areas of navigation which receive the highest levels of use. A key goal for Waterways Ireland is to increase the use of the inland waterways. The number of registered users as of September 2018 stands at 15,479 with 95% of waters navigable during the boating season (mid-March to October)

Waterways Ireland is proactive in the development of Blueways and Greenways as a means to attract new visitors and in response to the growth for recreational activities such as walking, canoeing and cycling. It is also actively involved in the development of the towpaths along the canals to provide off-road, safe amenities for walkers and cyclists.

The organisation provides services as diverse as physical maintenance of the infrastructure from navigation markers, sluices, back drains embankments, weirs and locks to service blocks, pump outs, and towpaths and carparks.

Water management and control are important elements of the organisation's work together with provision of the Warden and Inspectorate service on each waterway to manage recreational use.

Waterways Ireland provides navigation guides and information to support use of the waterways and has a strong community and business outreach and partnership policy to engage with and deliver services for communities adjacent to the waterways to create social, recreational,

health and economic benefits.

The inland waterways are an intrinsic part of the island's tourism attractions and Waterways Ireland plays a key role in their marketing and promotion. Working with Tourism Ireland, Bord Fáilte and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board it has created and leads initiatives such as the Lakelands and Inland Waterways programme to develop a co-ordinated marketing focus.

Abbey Theatre

20. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the timeframe for the building of a theatre (details supplied) and related resources for the national theatre; the timeframe for the completion and opening of the project, including the development of the additional buildings acquired by the theatre along the Dublin quays; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47413/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I launched my Department's capital plan 'Investing in our Culture, Language & Heritage 2018 - 2027' in April as part of Project Ireland 2040. This plan provides for total investment of over €1.2 billion over the next decade in our culture, heritage and language infrastructure. Under this plan there is an indicative investment of €80 million provided for this redevelopment project referred to by the Deputy which has been identified as a priority project by my Department.

The current building is over 50 years old and is widely recognised as being deficient in the facilities it provides for artists, audiences and staff and in terms of its energy efficiency. The new theatre building is intended to honour the history and legacy, whilst matching the national theatres of other European Capital Cities. The proposed new theatre will also contribute to revitalising a key area in Dublin 1, at the juncture of the two major Luas lines.

A business case was submitted to my Department in June 2018 that outlines the options for possible redevelopment of the theatre. As the cost of the theatre Redevelopment Project is over €20 million, a Cost Benefit Analysis will also need to be examined and reviewed by the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform in the coming months as required under the Public Spending Code. The completion of these reviews will be a further step in progressing this project.

A number of high level meetings have taken place this year between the theatre and officials in my Department over this proposed redevelopment, including a meeting I had with the Chair of the Board of the Theatre last summer to discuss the vision for the project.

As the Deputy will also understand, that planning and construction of a facility as large and as costly as this project, must have a significant lead-in time. The project is still at a very early stage but progress is ongoing. Significant more work has to be undertaken before a clear timeline for this project emerges. However, Officials in my Department are continuing to work with the Theatre to bring this project to fruition.

Film Industry Development

21. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to ensure that the film industry forum is convened as soon as possible; if all industry stakeholders are invited; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47417/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): One of

the 11 Recommendations of the Joint Oireachtas Committee's Report on the Development and Working Conditions in the Irish Film Industry called on Fís Éireann to constitute a Forum for the audiovisual industry with an independent Chair. The Forum would allow all stakeholders within the sector to meet and work together to develop mutually beneficial solutions for the industry.

I have met with the Chair and CEO of Fís Éireann in recent weeks and Fís Éireann has subsequently confirmed its intention to hold an industry forum to respond to the recommendations of the Oireachtas Committee

Fís Éireann is the national development agency for Irish film making and the Irish film, television and animation industry. Its statutory remit is to assist and encourage the making of film in the State and the development of a film industry in Ireland. It supports these sectors by providing investment loans for the development, production and distribution of film, television and animation projects.

The convening of an audiovisual industry forum was also discussed at the Audiovisual Steering Group which brings together all Government Departments and State Agencies which have involvement in the Irish audiovisual industry

I should just say that I am satisfied that the industry in general works to a high standards. My Department will work with all partners to ensure that all sectors of the industry comply with their obligations and that everyone in the industry works in a respectful environment and supportive environment as that is the best way of ensuring the continued growth and success of the industry in the interests of all workers engaged within it.

I should however, also point out that there are challenges in convening the proposed forum in the context of the revelations in the recently broadcast RTÉ Prime Time programme, which focused on bullying and harassment in the film and television industry. Fís Éireann is committed to continuing to work on the organisation of this event and it is hoped that a further announcement will be made in the near future.

I am confident that we can address the issues of bullying and harassment in the audio visual industry with a similar approach to that adopted in the theatre sector.

Maoiniú Ealaíon

22. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Catherine Connolly** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta de bhun Ceist Pharlaiminteach Uimhir 64 an 2 Deireadh Fómhair, cad is ainm d'Oifigeach na Gaeilge ag 'Galway 2020; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [47423/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Mar a chuir mé in iúl don Teachta i mo fhreagra do Cheist Pharlaiminteach Uimhir 64 ar an 2 Deireadh Fómhair, tá próiseas ar siúl ag Gaillimh 2020 chun Oifigeach na Gaeilge a earcú. Tá sonraí an phoist á fhorbairt faoi láthair agus tá Gaillimh 2020 ag plé le grúpaí éagsúla san earnáil Ghaeilge faoin tslí is fearr chun é a líonú. Tuigim go bhfuil Gaillimh 2020 ag súil leis an bpost a líonú roimh dheireadh na bliana.

Cultural Policy

23. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of her efforts and future plans to promote the cultural heritage of sports (details supplied); and

if she will make a statement on the matter. [47283/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): As Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, I, and my Department, play a key role in protecting, supporting and promoting the traditions, practices, language, landscape, habitats, architecture and monuments that comprise Ireland's cultural heritage. We do this on a national level, through the work of my Department and bodies under the aegis. We do this on a European level through legislation, programmes and initiatives, such as participation in this year's European Year of Cultural Heritage. Finally, we do this on an international level through membership of international conventions, such as the UNESCO 2003 Convention on the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Each country that ratifies the Convention is required to take the necessary measures to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory. This includes drawing up a national inventory of the intangible cultural heritage, with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organisations. Ireland ratified the Convention in 2015 and my predecessor approved an Interim National Inventory the following year, comprised of uilleann piping, hurling and harping. This was done in anticipation of a wider consultation for the nomination of traditions and practices that could be included in Ireland's national inventory. That consultation took place in late 2017 – early 2018 and attracted a wide range of expressions of interest for inclusion in the national inventory. My Department appointed an Expert Advisory Committee to examine the expressions of interest. That process is now completed and my Department is currently in the process of finalising the first inventory for my approval. The process is also rolling and interested communities or groups may submit an expression of interest at any time.

Once the first national inventory is finalised, my Department will examine options for ensuring ongoing recognition and awareness of the traditions and practices on the national inventory.

Items on the national inventory may be nominated to the UNESCO Representative List for the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In 2017, Ireland nominated hurling, encompassing camogie, to the List. The nomination process is drawing to a close and the upcoming meeting at the end of November of the Convention Intergovernmental Committee will decide on whether hurling will be inscribed onto the Representative List.

Commemorative Events

24. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to convene a committee of historians and others to advise on the forthcoming commemorations in respect of the War of Independence, the anniversary of the first Dáil, the Democratic Programme, the Civil War and the foundation of the State; if she has reached agreements on the significant State commemorations to be held to commemorate these events; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47416/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Government's approach to commemorating the Decade of Centenaries is informed by the work of the Expert Advisory Group on Commemorations which has been in existence since the outset of the Decade of Centenaries. The development of the programme of commemorations for the second half of the Decade is being informed by the guiding principles of the Second Statement of the Expert Group which was published in October last year. The Expert Group is due to meet again on 20/11/2018. I would like to acknowledge the very significant work completed by the Advisory Group over the past year in formulating its guidance. I am now considering the

recommendations of the Group and I anticipate that the remainder of the period will follow the approach adopted in the first half of the Decade of Centenaries of being respectful, meaningful, proportionate and authentic.

I also chair the All-Party Consultation Group on Commemorations, which is made up of members of the Oireachtas and the Northern Ireland Assembly. I look forward to further engaged and constructive meetings of the group to explore and address appropriate commemoration of the events and milestones in the period covered by the next phase of the Decade of Centenaries.

My Department will also continue to consult and collaborate with relevant stakeholders, including the local authority network, in developing the State commemorative programme out to 2023.

Question No. 25 answered with Question No. 17.

Cultural Policy

26. **Deputy Hildegarde Naughton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the Galway 2020 project; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47305/18]

43. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 21 of 21 June 2018 and 2811 of 24 July 2018, when the performance delivery agreement in relation to the contribution of €15 million to Galway 2020 will be published; the details of the agreement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47422/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 26 and 43 together.

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

The Government's support of €15m represents the largest single contribution to the overall cost of Galway 2020 as the European Capital of Culture. The Government's contribution is provided as part of a suite of co-funding arrangements to deliver the programme outlined by Galway 2020.

A performance delivery agreement for the provision of the €15m grant to be paid to Galway 2020 was drawn up by officials of my Department, in consultation with Galway 2020, and signed on 6 November last. The performance delivery agreement addresses the roles and responsibilities of the Department and Galway 2020 in the provision and expenditure of the grant, as well as the key deliverables and performance indicators attached to the drawdown of the grant, and monitoring and reporting arrangements.

As the Deputy is aware, the annex to the performance delivery agreement contains a list of projects under the Galway 2020 Programme allocated funding by my Department. These projects will be announced at a showcase event for Galway 2020 this evening and I intend to publish the full performance delivery agreement, together with this annex, on the Department's

website, after the projects have been announced.

Galway 2020 is now moving into the delivery phase of the project. Patricia Philbin – the Project Manager for the bid phase of the project – took over as CEO last month, while the team also now includes cultural producers, with expertise across the art forms.

The showcase event to be hosted this evening, and to be attended by my colleague in the Department, Minister of State, Seán Kyne, will be also an opportunity for the public to hear about some of the key projects and events that will take place under the Galway 2020 Culture Programme, as well as find out about and become involved in the volunteer and partnership programmes for Galway 2020.

Cultural Policy

27. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the reason for the delay in the publication of the final Culture 2025 policy document; when it will be published; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47404/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): In July 2016 my predecessor, Minister Humphreys, published the draft framework policy document Éire Ildánach/Culture 2025. This underwent a round of consultations, with submissions received from Government Departments, local authorities, and cultural bodies and stakeholders in the cultural sector, and was very useful in setting the scene for many of these bodies to develop their own cultural strategies. The draft framework policy was submitted to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in July 2016, who published its ‘Report on Culture 2025 – Éire Ildánach, Framework Policy to 2025’ in July 2017.

My Department is now finalising the framework policy. In this regard, the Joint Oireachtas Committee made a number of very good suggestions including in relation to how the policy document should be reshaped. My Department has taken time to give careful consideration to these suggestions.

In addition, the Creative Ireland Programme, which was launched in December 2016, restated the key aims and values set out in the draft Culture 2025 document but took these a stage further in terms of setting out key deliverable actions both in year 1 and over a 5 year period. In effect, the Creative Ireland Programme has become the main implementation vehicle for many of the priorities identified in the Culture 2025. In this regard, the main emphasis of the Department during 2017 was to get the Creative Ireland Programme up and running. Since then my Department has been working to align the final Culture 2025 document with other concurrent policy documents, including the proposed new heritage plan for Ireland, Heritage Ireland 2030, the public consultation on which I launched at the start of this month.

It is important however, notwithstanding the significant achievements under the Creative Ireland Programme, that Culture 2025 will remain as a broad overarching policy document for culture setting out the strategic aims of Government for future years. My intention is therefore to complete this work for final signoff very shortly and to bring Culture 2025 to Government for approval and subsequent publication.

Creative Ireland Programme

28. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the projects in County Westmeath that were successful in their applications to the national creativity fund. [47222/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Creative Ireland National Creativity Fund was launched on 17 May 2018 with a closing deadline of the 15 June. A total number of 287 applications were received in respect of the fund, far exceeding expectations. Following an initial review by officials by my Department, 77 of these were submitted to an independent expert panel for analysis and scoring against published set criteria. A total of 30 projects were ultimately approved for funding, with grants varying from a minimum of €10,000 to a maximum of €70,000. Cumulatively, the total funding being made available to support these projects across 2018 and 2019 amounts to approximately €1.2m.

The purpose of the National Creativity Fund is to develop strategic collaborations with a variety of organisations/individuals in order to identify and develop new initiatives that support the broad objectives of the Creative Ireland Programme and help inform policy and/or cross-sectoral development in the area of culture, creativity and wellbeing.

Helium Arts (the national children's arts and health charity) based in Mullingar, has received funding to pilot the development of a Creative Health Hub as a replicable model to significantly increase engagement among children living with illness with creative activities in both hospital and community settings. This pilot will look at improving access to creative activities for children and young people; complement the work of the medical community in treating illnesses; develop artistic skills in the field of arts and health, and capture a strong evidence base highlighting the contribution creative programmes make to health and wellbeing.

Full details on all the projects supported under the National Creativity Fund are available on www.creativeireland.gov.ie.

Film Industry

29. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the measures she plans to take to reduce precarious work in the film industry and create training and career pathways; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47418/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): In June 2018, I launched the Government's Audiovisual Action Plan. I have also established an oversight steering group charged with the overall implementation of the plan's recommendations. This steering group has met three times since the action plan was published. The group includes representatives of all Departments and State agencies with involvement in the audiovisual industry. The steering group will report to me at regular intervals and is engaging proactively with stakeholders in the film industry.

The Plan drew heavily on a Study prepared by international audio-visual consultants Olsberg SPI with Nordicity entitled Economic Analysis of the Audiovisual Sector in the Republic of Ireland which was also published in June. The report measured the economic value of the Irish audiovisual industry, and proposed policy changes to support its future growth. The report showed that the Irish audiovisual sector generated €1.05 billion in gross value added in 2016 and supported employment of 16,930 full-time equivalents of which 10,560 was direct employment. The largest contribution to employment came from the film, TV, and animation sub-sector, which generated 11,960 full-time equivalent jobs (FTEs) of employment of which just over 7,000 was direct employment such as cast and crew.

Fís Éireann is the national development agency for Irish filmmaking and the Irish film, television and animation industry, investing in talent, creativity and enterprise. I am glad to report that Screen Training Ireland, which is a division of Fís Éireann, plans to hold an inaugural Screen Industry Education Forum on the 19th November. The aim of this annual event is to bring screen industry stakeholders, education/training providers and policy influencers together to focus on the skills development challenges and opportunities of the screen sectors in Ireland.

The audiovisual sector supports thousands of jobs of Ireland and there is significant potential for further growth in the years ahead. Ireland's audiovisual and animation industry is currently worth more than €1 billion to the Irish economy, and the audiovisual Action plan which I launched in June, set out under the Creative Ireland Programme, has the potential to not only increase the number of full-time industry employees to an estimated 24,000, but to grow its gross value to nearly €1.4 billion.

The Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection has brought forward the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017 to improve the security and predictability of working hours for employees on insecure contracts and those working variable hours. This legislation responds specifically to the commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government to address the problems caused by the increased casualisation of work and to strengthen the regulation of precarious work. The Bill completed Report and Final Stage in the Dáil on 12th July 2018.

Appointments to State Boards

30. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a new director will be appointed to the Irish Museum of Modern Art; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47402/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I am happy to inform the Deputy that IMMA has announced this morning that Annie Fletcher, Chief Curator at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven in the Netherlands has been appointed as the new Director of the IMMA. She will take up her position on 1st March next year.

This is an exciting time for IMMA. I welcome the appointment and look forward to working with the new Director of IMMA in the coming years.

Creative Youth Plan

31. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of artists now working in collaboration with schools; the schools at primary and secondary level that have collaborations; the number of schools participating in these schemes; her plans to expand collaborations; the details of proposed collaborations; the number of school-children in primary and secondary schools participating and benefitting in the collaborations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47412/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Creative Youth – a Plan to Enable the Creative Potential of Every Young Person was launched on 7th December 2017. This Plan sets out a number of measures to deliver on one of the key goals of the Creative Ireland Programme: to ensure that every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, art and coding by 2022.

This Plan is being led by my Department, the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Arts Council, all working in partnership.

The Creative Schools pilot will be operating across 150 Schools and approximately 50 Creative Associates, a mix of artists and teachers are working with these schools. These schools have approximately 38,000 pupils. There are a diverse range of school types involved, in different parts of the country, rural and urban, primary and post primary, DEIS schools, special schools, and Youthreach centres. 2018/2019 is the pilot for Creative Schools and it is hoped to expand the programme in the coming years.

There are 73 schools participating in Creative Clusters and they have been grouped into 23 clusters and there are 17 facilitators working with these clusters, through the Education Centres. There are approximately 17,000 students, from a diverse range of school types, in these schools. These clusters have a budget to bring in local artists to facilitate their chosen creative projects and may choose to bring in more than one artist. It is also hoped to expand on this programme in future years.

The Teacher/Artist Partnership, for primary school teachers, has taken place over the last number of years and between the summers of 2017 and 2018, 469 teachers and 146 artists took part in this CPD course. These teachers, in collaboration with the artists took their expertise back to their respective schools, and the pupils in these schools have benefited from their partnerships. It is hoped to build on this over the coming years.

Many schools collaborate locally with artists, creative practitioners and others in various fields. Children and young people across the country benefit greatly from these collaborations. The local Arts Offices, and indeed the Creative Ireland Coordinators in each local authority, are integral to ensuring that these collaborations grow and continue and are allowed to flourish.

Creative Youth Plan

32. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of children that have access to tuition in music, drama, coding and art; if she is satisfied that the target of ensuring that, by 2022, each child will have such access will be met; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47400/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Creative Youth Plan, which I launched last December 2017, seeks to ensure that every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, art and coding by 2022.

The actions in the Creative Youth Plan extend to both the formal and non-formal education sectors and are being delivered by my Department, the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Arts Council.

Nearly one year on, we can now show some real progress towards meeting this ambitious objective.

- The Creative Schools pilot project for 150 schools is now up and running reaching over 38,000 children and young people. The Pilot will cover a wide range of creative activities for children and young people which could potentially include drama, visual arts, literature, poetry, film, coding and other activities.

- Music Generation is moving into Phase 2 of their expansion and it is planned that nation-

wide expansion will take place during the lifetime of the Creative Ireland Programme, enabling increased access to music tuition for children and young people.

- The Department of Education and Skills are continuing to progress the availability of coding at both primary and post primary levels. At post primary level, a short course has been developed in coding for Junior Cycle and is available for all schools to offer. The first phase of Leaving Certificate Computer Science is underway with 40 schools offering the subject.

- Plans are being examined with key stakeholders for the expansion of the youth theatre provision across the country and other important initiatives are being developed and piloted such as the Pilot Creative Youth Partnership initiative which was launched during the summer and the outcome of which will be announced shortly.

- There are 73 schools participating in Creative Clusters and they have been grouped into 23 clusters. There are approximately 17,000 students, from a diverse range of school types, participating.

- We are continuing to invest in Continued Professional Development (CPD) for teachers and for artists working in partnership with teachers which is crucial to the long-term success and sustainability of the overall plan.

- Cruinniú na nÓg – the first national day of creativity for children and young people took place on 23rd June saw over 500 free events right across the country to involve children and young people in creative activity in their own communities.

I am also pleased that a number of innovative projects covering a range of activities for children and young people have come through the National Creativity Fund process and I am looking forward to seeing the outcome of these projects.

The Creative Youth Plan is ambitious and ever developing. I hope that by 2022, it will have touched the lives of every child and young person in Ireland.

Arts Promotion

33. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the recommendations in the arts in education charter. [47340/18]

34. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the progress that has been made in relation to the implementation of the arts in education charter; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47403/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 33 and 34 together.

The Arts in Education Charter was launched in 2013 as a joint initiative of the then Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, The Department of Education and Skills, working with the Arts Council. A number of commitments were made as part of this process and much progress has been made across all areas of the Charter since its publication.

Six formal reports were submitted to the Minister for Education and Skills and to the then Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. These reports have been uploaded to the Arts in Education Portal and are available to view.

As the Deputies are aware, Creative Youth, a plan to enable the creativity of every child and

young person was published in December 2017. This Plan aims to ensure that every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, arts and coding by 2022. Creative Youth is being implemented by my Department, the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Arts Council, all working in partnership. This Plan is building on the Arts in Education Charter and aims to resource, fast-track and implement the objectives of the Arts in Education Charter as well as rolling out a range of other initiatives.

Examples of initiatives which were kick-started by the Arts in Education Charter and where significant progress has now been made by the various partners involved include:

- ARIS – Arts Rich Schools has evolved into the Creative Schools pilot project initiated this year,
- The expansion of Music Generation has now been included in Creative Youth Programme with the aim of providing nationwide coverage within the lifetime of the Creative Ireland Programme;
- Local Arts Education Partnership (LAEPs) which have evolved into Local Creative Youth Partnerships (LCYPs) and which were initiated this year;
- the ongoing development of the Arts in Education Portal; and
- the continued support for teacher training initiatives.

In addition, a new Expert Advisory group chaired by Dr. Ciaran Benson has been established by me, Minister Bruton, in his previous role as Minister for Education and Skills and Minister Zappone. Their role is to drive the implementation of Creative Youth and the continued roll out of the Arts in Education Charter. They will also advise on the broader long-term objective for the Creative Ireland Programme: to enhance cultural and creative education for all our children and young people.

National Parks and Wildlife Service

35. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she and-or her officials have had contact by way of meetings or correspondence with representatives of the owners of an estate (details supplied) in County Wicklow; if so, the details of such meetings or correspondence by her or her officials, including dates regarding the acquisition of some or all of the estate, particularly the 4,000 acres of land; her views on whether such an acquisition in respect of the estate would be a fitting commemoration and memorial to all of the work of a person; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47411/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): As outlined in my response of 18 September, Parliamentary Question No. 823, and 2 October parliamentary Question No. 69 there is no change to my Department's position. The sale and any apportionment of the property into lots is a commercial matter for the vendor.

Through the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht manages a property portfolio in respect of national parks and reserves of approximately 87,000 hectares. These important biodiversity areas are located all around the country including a large area of County Wicklow, and the 5,000 hectares of lands in Glenasmole purchased in recent years. Given the limited resources available for capital investment within the National Parks and Nature Reserves, I recognise the need to focus on the core re-

sponsibilities relating to the management of the existing Parks and Reserves' lands.

While the lands in question would represent a significant addition to the stock of publicly owned heritage properties and lands, my Department could, as stressed previously, only consider acquiring this property if the price fell to within a certain range, or in the context of a donation or bequest. This is known to the Vendors. Clearly, the Glenasmole purchase of 5,000 hectares sets a precedent, and although the circumstance pertaining are very dissimilar, it is certainly a market factor. As the Deputy will no doubt appreciate, it would not be appropriate of me to seek to negotiate indirectly or publicly. Suffice it to say that I am aware of the public-good value of this property, balanced across a range of demands across my Department.

As I said in my earlier replies, my Department's relationship with the Guinness Estate here, and more generally, has been positive. It is one of mutual respect and good neighbours, and indeed often working together on shared issue of interest. These include herd management and husbandry, habitat oversight, film-making, signage, visitor accommodation, trail maintenance and designation management. Indeed, for the most part, the boundary between the private estate and the National Park is invisible to the visitor and tourist, with pre-imminence being given to the idyllic shared land, lake and mountainscape.

Wildlife Protection

36. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the steps she will take to address the effects of an increase in illegal hunting on rural communities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45953/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My remit in this matter relates to the species protected under the Wildlife Acts and under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. All bird species are protected and animals such as badgers, deer, otters, bats and hares are also protected.

Officials of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department monitor compliance with the Wildlife Acts and the European Community (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 across the country on an on-going basis and carry out patrols and site visits to enforce the various provisions of these Acts, as much as possible. They also investigate reports of breaches of the Acts with a view to initiating prosecutions where there is sufficient evidence to support same. Members of An Garda Síochána are also empowered under the Wildlife Acts and the European Communities legislation to investigate alleged offences and to prosecute if they see fit.

Officials of the NPWS are aware of the impact that illegal hunting, especially badger baiting and hare lurching, is having on some local communities. My Department is working closely with An Garda Síochána in relation to wildlife crime. Earlier this year, the NPWS organised a Wildlife Crime conference at which a number An Garda Síochána Officers attended. The NPWS and an Garda Síochána are currently developing closer and more formal liaison arrangements for sharing of information and intelligence and the carrying out of joint operations in relation to wildlife crime.

Creative Ireland Programme

37. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the details of the National Creativity Fund 2018 to 2019; the details of the project that a body (details supplied) has made under the programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

[47352/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Creative Ireland National Creativity Fund was launched on 17 May 2018 with a closing deadline of the 15 June. A total number of 287 applications were received in respect of the fund, far exceeding expectations. Following an initial review by officials by my Department, 77 of these were submitted to an independent expert panel for analysis and scoring against published set criteria. A total of 30 projects were ultimately approved for funding, with grants varying from a minimum of €10,000 to a maximum of €70,000. Cumulatively, the total funding being made available to support these projects across 2018 and 2019 amounts to approximately €1.2m.

The purpose of the Creative Ireland Programme Scheme is to develop strategic collaborations with a variety of organisations/individuals in order to identify and develop new initiatives that support the broad objectives of the Creative Ireland Programme and help inform policy and/or cross-sectoral development in the area of culture, creativity and wellbeing.

In relation to the project specified by the Deputy, this will explore the processes of creative and inclusive music making across a wide geographical spread of primary and post-primary schools that have created showcase performances of their musical endeavours.

Little is known about the processes that teachers and the wider school communities employ to showcase creative, diverse and inclusive approaches to music-making in schools in Ireland, and how the dynamics of interaction work. This project seeks to explore understandings of inclusion and creativity in school communities and provide a roadmap for learning about the pedagogies of engagement in creative music-making.

Full details on what projects have been funded around the country are available on the Creative Ireland Programme website www.creativeireland.gov.ie.

Arts Funding

38. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she has had discussions with the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government regarding to amending the Arts Act 2003 in order to require each local authority to have a ring-fenced arts budget as recommended by arts advocacy organisations such as an organisation (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47438/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My priority in relation to local government is, to work closely with the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government Eoghan Murphy to highlight the importance of Arts and Culture at local authority level. Earlier this year, I joined with Minister Murphy and with the Taoiseach to launch Culture and the Creativity Strategies of all 31 local authorities. These strategies were jointly funded by my Department and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

Local government legislation has specific provision enabling local authorities to promote arts and culture within their functional area. While I appreciate that some groups have called for the law to be changed to make it a requirement for arts funding to be non-discretionary I am not convinced that this would make a difference to expenditure on the ground. All local authorities already make provision for expenditure in the arts. A mandatory provision would not change the level of funding provided as councillors would still continue to balance expenditure proposals across all local authority programmes as is currently the case. It is far better in my view for local authorities to embrace cultural and artistic provision because they see the

transformative engagement which the arts and culture can bring to local communities. I think that the experience of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme and now the Creative Ireland Programme have been instrumental in raising awareness at local government level of the value of this engagement.

For my part I will work to improve the resources which flow to local authorities through the Arts Council and through the Creative Ireland Programme in partnership with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

The Taoiseach has declared his intention that he is committed to doubling funding for arts, culture and sport over a seven year period. The Government is already delivering on this objective. Last April we launched *Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage*, a 10 year capital plan which will support cultural infrastructure nationwide.

Under 2019 Budget funding for the arts and culture sector in 2019 will increase by €22.6m to almost €190m which represents an increase of 14% on 2018. This funding will comprise of €148.2m in current expenditure and €41.7m in capital investment. In the context of the Deputy's question, this includes an increase to the Arts Council funding by almost €6.8m or 10% to a total of €75m made up of €6m in current expenditure, which is more than double the increase in 2018.

I am glad to report that Creative Ireland will receive funding of €7.15m – an increase of €1.15m primarily to support the Culture and Creativity Teams established in every local authority and to allow for the continued roll-out of Creative Youth. A total of €6m is being provided for the European City of Culture – Galway2020 and an additional €250k for the Decade of Centenaries for commemorations was also announced.

I am confident that the increased spending and continued engagement will support Pillar 2 of the Creative Ireland Programme, where local authorities are the primary instruments of community engagement for of the Programme entitled *Enabling Creativity in Every Community throughout Ireland*.

Film Industry Development

39. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the measures she plans to take to ensure that public funding of the film industry will result in quality employment and training; the number of permanent jobs that exist in the industry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47420/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The audiovisual sector supports thousands of jobs in the Republic of Ireland and there is significant potential for further growth in the years ahead. Ireland's audiovisual and animation industry is currently worth more than €1 billion to the Irish economy, and the audiovisual Action plan which I launched in June, set out under the Creative Ireland Programme, has the potential to not only increase the number of full-time industry employees to an estimated 24,000, but to grow its gross value to nearly €1.4 billion.

In 2016, the Irish Government commissioned international audio-visual consultants Olsberg SPI with Nordicity to produce a report on "Economic Analysis of the Audiovisual Sector in the Republic of Ireland" which was also published in June. The report measured the economic value of the Irish audiovisual industry, and proposed policy changes to support its future growth. The report showed that the Irish audiovisual sector generated €1.05 billion in gross value added in 2016 and supported employment of 16,930 full-time equivalents of which 10,560 was direct

employment. The largest contribution to employment came from the film, TV, and animation sub-sector, which generated 11,960 full-time equivalent jobs (FTEs) of employment of which just over 7,000 was direct employment such as cast and crew.

The Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection has brought forward the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017 to improve the security and predictability of working hours for employees on insecure contracts and those working variable hours. This legislation responds specifically to the commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government to address the problems caused by the increased casualisation of work and to strengthen the regulation of precarious work. The Bill completed Report and Final Stage in the Dáil on 12th July 2018.

I am also glad to report that Screen Training Ireland, which is a division of Screen Ireland, plans to hold an inaugural Screen Industry Education Forum on the 19th November. The aim of this annual event is to bring screen industry stakeholders, education/training providers and policy influencers together to focus on the skills development challenges and opportunities of the screen sectors in Ireland.

Commemorative Events

40. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the proceedings of the international famine commemoration 2018 in Australia; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47336/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The International Famine Commemoration 2018 took place at the Famine Rock in Williamstown, Melbourne, on Sunday 28th October last.

Minister of State Patrick O'Donovan T.D., represented the Government at the Commemoration. Minister O'Donovan also participated in a very successful Roundtable discussion on the theme of the Famine and the Irish in Australia.

Forbairt na nOileán

41. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Catherine Connolly** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil polasaí faoi leith ann do na hoileáin; an ndéanfaidh sí cóip den pholasaí sin a sholáthar; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [47425/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Tá an réasún taobh thiar d'infheistíocht Rialtais maidir leis na hoileáin leagtha amach i ndoiciméid éagsúla thar na mblianta.

Léirigh Tuarascáil an Choiste Idir Rannach um Fhorbairt na nOileán - Creatlach Stráitéiseach d'Fhorbairt Oileáin na hÉireann a cuireadh i dtoll a chéile i 1996 faoi stiúir Roinn an Taoisigh gurb é an bac ba mhó ar rannpháirtíocht eacnamaíocht agus shóisialta phobail na oileán an rochtain, idir sheirbhísí iompair agus infrastruchtúr mara, de chaighdeán íseal a bhí ar fáil do na pobail sin.

Thóg Tuarascáil Malachy Walsh & Partners, coimisiúnaithe ag mo Roinn, ar an obair sin ina dtuarascáil maidir le seirbhísí iompair do na hoileáin a foilsíodh i 2003. Níl dabht ach go bhfuil mo Roinn imithe i ngleic leis na heaspaí a aithníodh sna tuarascálacha sin agus tá infheistíocht ollmhór déanta maidir le seirbhísí agus infrastruchtúr mara sna blianta ó shin. Faoi

láthair, tá 28 seirbhís iompar á bhfóirdheonú ag mo Roinn le hais níos lú ná deich gcinn in 1996. Tá anseo idir sheirbhísí fharantóireachta do phaisinéirí agus lastas agus roinnt sheirbhísí aeir chomh maith. Comhthreomhar le forbairt na seirbhísí iompair seo, tá mórchlár infheistíochta i gcalafoirt farantóireachta ag freastal ar na holeáin curtha i gcríoch ag mo Roinn le fiche bliana anuas agus is ar éigean go bhfuil fiú oileán amháin a bhfuil daonra buan air nach bhfaca chuid den infheistíocht sin. Ar ndóigh, níl an obair sin críochnaithe go fóill. Tá ceithre cinn de mhórtograí caipitil luaite sa Phlean Forbartha Náisiúnta, Tionscadal Éire 2040, rud a léiríonn gur obair leanúnach atá ar siúl maidir leis na hoileáin.

Níos túisce i mbliana, d'fhoilsigh Seirbhís Eacnamaíochta agus Meastóireachta an Rialtais Athbhreithniú Caiteachais ar na Seirbhísí Fharantóireachta Fhoirdheonaithe chuig na hOileain amach ón gCósta. De réir na tuarascála sin, le deich mbliana anuas, tá na haschuir seo a leanas, a mheastar a bheith riachtanach chun pobail na n-oileán a chothú, seachadta ag na seirbhísí fanantóireachta fóirdheonaithe sin:

- Rinneadh 410,880 seoladh ar sheirbhísí fóirdheonaithe;

- Thaistil 3.95 milliún paisinéir, arbh oileánaigh 40.8% díobh agus ar chuariteoirí 59.2% díobh, ar na seoltaí seo; agus

- Aistríodh 162,000 tona lastas go dtí na hoileáin mar aon le 274,000 feithicil.

De réir na tuarascála chéanna, bhí tionchar dearfach le brath ar na leibhéal fhostaíochta fhoirmlána idir 2006 agus 2016 agus tháinig glanmheadú de 47 faoi líon na ndaoine a bhí fostaíthe ar na hoileáin le linn na tréimhse sin. Cé nach féidir a rá go cinnte cad ba chúis leis an bhfeabhas seo sa ráta fostaíochta, tugtar suntas sa tuarascáil don tacaíocht dhíreach agus indíreach a thugann an Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta (agus Údarás na Gaeltachta dár ndóigh) do réimse deiseanna fostaíochta ar na hoileáin lena n-áirítear comharchumainn, Comhar na nOileán, Campaí Samhradh agus Scéim na bhFoghlaimeoirí Gaeilge (Coláistí Samhraidh). Ina theannta sin, tá sé indéanta ar chuid de na hoileáin comaitéireacht a dhéanamh go dtí an mórthír chun dul ag obair mar thoradh ar an infheistíocht atá déanta ag an Roinn i mbonneagar calafoirt agus i seirbhísí farantóireachta feabhsaithe.

Is fiú a nótáil chomh maith gur foilsíodh i 2010 Athbhreithniú ar na Riachtanais Fostaíochta agus Phoiteanseal d'Fhorbairt Eacnamaíochta na nOileán, tuarascail a chuir na comhairleoirí eacnamaíochta, FGS Consulting, i dtoll a chéile ar son mo Roinne. Anuas air sin, tuigtear dom go bhfuil polasaithe oileánda ag eagrais stáit eile atá ag feidhmiú in earnáil an tsláinte, na forbartha pobail agus an oideachais agus go n-imríonn an raon leathan straitéisí agus polasaithe seo tionchar nach beag ar ollspríoc an Stáit pobail inmharthanacha a chothú ar na hoileáin.

Waterways Ireland Funding

42. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the proposed level of funding that will be provided to Waterways Ireland in 2019; if additional capital funding will be allocated to enable the upgrade of facilities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47394/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Estimates for 2019 provide for an allocation of €25,117,000 for Waterways Ireland, made up of €20,737,000 in Current funding and €4,380,000 in Capital funding. This is an overall increase of €1,000,000 on the 2018 allocation. Funding from the Department of Infrastructure in Northern Ireland for 2019 is awaited.

Capital funding has been increased by €800,000 from €3,580,000 in 2018 to €4,380,000 in 2019.

The funding of Waterways Ireland for 2019 is for investment in the management, maintenance and development of the inland waterways under its control.

Any proposed works to be carried out in 2019 are an operational matter for Waterways Ireland which will take into account its strategic business objectives for the waterways network.

Question No. 43 answered with Question No. 26.

Cúram agus Oideachas na Luath-Óige

44. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil i gceist aici a chinntiú go mbeidh an tacaíocht céanna ar fáil do na naionraí taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht agus atá ar fáil taobh istigh den Ghaeltacht; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [47218/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Mar a chuir mé in iúl i m'aisfhreagra ar cheist Dála 376 ar 25 Deireadh Fómhair 2018, 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 Gaelacha 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.

Tuigim ó Fhoras na Gaeilge, ós rud é nach bhfuil maoiniú á chur ar fáil ón Roinn Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige (RLGÓ) ó lár 2014, go ndearnadh iarratas cuimsitheach leis an Roinn sin anuraidh i ndáil le maoiniú a chur ar fáil do na naíonraí Gaelacha. Tuigtear dom go bhfuiltear ag leanúint suas maidir leis an iarratas sin.

Beag beann air sin, de réir Gníomh 3.8 de Phlean Gníomhaíochta an Rialtais don Ghaeilge 2018-2022, tá geallta go gcruthófar dhá phost breise le Gaeilge sa RLGÓ le linn 2019 chun tuilleadh forbartha a dhéanamh ar an soláthar Gaeilge in earnáil na luathbhlianta taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht agus go bhforbrófar plean cuimsitheach don earnáil chomh maith. Anuas air seo, tá ionadaíocht ag an RLGÓ ar Choiste Stiúrtha an Phlean Gníomhaíochta agus déanfar plé maidir le hacmhainní breise don earnáil seo mar chuid d'obair an Choiste.

Leis an gcur chuige nua seo á chur i bhfeidhm, táim dóchasach go dtiocfaidh tuilleadh forbartha ar earnáil na luathbhlianta taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht sna blianta amach romhainn.

Film Industry Development

45. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she plans to promote the expansion of the film industry here with particular reference to the creation of a greater international awareness of Ireland as a suitable location for the industry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47375/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Fís Éireann is the national development agency for Irish film making and the Irish film, television and animation industry. Its statutory remit is to assist and encourage the making of film in the State and the development of a film industry in Ireland. Fís Éireann supports writers, directors and production companies across these sectors by providing investment loans for the development,

production and distribution of film, television and animation projects. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that €20.04m is to be allocated to Fís Éireann under Budget 2019. This is an increase of €2 million on the 2018 figure .

Fís Éireann also supports the Irish screen industries at major international markets and festivals, promotes inward investment, the use of Ireland as a location for international production and provides support for companies filming in Ireland. It also liaises with IDA Ireland and Tourism Ireland to maximise opportunities for the promotion of Ireland as a location for film productions as well as a tourism destination.

In April of this year, I was joined by the Taoiseach and the Minister for Finance in launching Investing in Our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 – 2027. This is a capital investment plan and it provides funding of €200m for the audio visual industry and media production through Fís Éireann over the next 10 years. In June 2018 I launched my Department's €200m Audio-visual Action Plan. The industry-wide, long-term plan, under the Creative Ireland Programme, will support the Government's ambition to enable Ireland to become a global hub for the production of Film, TV drama and animation.

This Plan is informed by and accompanied by the publication of the Olsberg/SPI with Nordicity Report which sets out a detailed economic analysis of the audiovisual sector and provides an invaluable framework for the growth of the industry over the coming years.

A steering group has been set up which will prioritise measures, oversee implementation and monitor risks, and will report regularly to me as Minister.

I am glad to report that Budget 2019 also included an announcement that Section 481 which is the Irish tax incentive for film, television and animation has been extended to 2024. A time-limited Regional Uplift of 5% is also being introduced for the film tax relief.

Hare Coursing Regulation

46. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her attention has been drawn to reports of continued breaching of licences by coursing clubs; and her views on whether harsher consequences in the form of licensing being revoked need to be taken to combat serious breaches of existing legislation in the capturing of hares for use in blood sports. [47406/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The control of live hare coursing, including the operation of individual coursing meetings and managing the use of hares for that activity, is carried out under the Greyhound Industry Act 1958, which is the responsibility of my colleague, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. My responsibility relates to the conservation status of the hare.

In August last year, my Department issued licences under the Wildlife Acts to the Irish Coursing Club, covering some 87 affiliated coursing clubs, to capture and tag hares for use at regulated hare coursing meetings for the 2018/19 season, which extends from the end of September 2018 to the end of February 2019. Those licences contained a total of 25 conditions which have been developed and refined over the years.

Where resources allow, local National Parks and Wildlife Service Conservation Rangers from my Department attend coursing meetings, on a spot-check basis, to monitor compliance with licences issued to the ICC and its affiliated clubs. All issues arising from reports of NPWS staff will be reviewed and considered in the context of any licence application for the 2019/20

coursing season.

Cultural Policy

47. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of Culture 2025 on recommendations that are outside the Creative Ireland Programme. [47339/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Since the publication of the Culture 2025 Draft Framework Policy in 2016, following a major consultation exercise, a huge amount has happened in Irish cultural policy. The impact of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme had a transformative effect and led to the development of the Government's Creative Ireland Programme 2017-2022.

The Creative Ireland Programme 2017-2022 was launched in December 2016 as the legacy programme of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme and as the main implementation vehicle for the priorities identified in Culture 2025. The Creative Ireland Programme was underpinned by the aims and key values of Culture 2025.

As these two documents were developed at the same time they have naturally informed one another. The Culture 2025 Draft Framework Policy, which was published in July 2016, stated that the publication of the policy would be followed up with the development of a cross-sectoral plan which would be guided by the priorities set out in that document.

In reality the Creative Ireland Programme was developed as an action plan and therefore it is the intention that implementation of many of the goals and aspirations set out in the final Culture 2025 document will be carried out under the Creative Ireland Programme 2017-2022.

It is envisaged that Culture 2025 will give overall direction to future iterations of the Creative Ireland Programme as well as guiding the Government's approach to culture policy across all sectoral areas.

With this in mind, my Department is putting together the final version of the Culture 2025 document, which will be completed in the coming weeks and brought to Government for approval and subsequent publication. This final version has been restructured to ensure coherence with the development of the Creative Ireland Programme over the past two years, and other developments in the cultural area, and to clearly distinguish between the high level policy Culture 2025 framework and the more action orientated Creative Ireland Programme.

Heritage Schemes

48. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding supports she will be providing in 2018 and 2019 for built and natural heritage programmes nationally and in County Kildare. [47427/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department provides financial support for the protection of our built heritage through a number of schemes which are generally administered by local authorities.

The Built Heritage Investment Scheme is a scheme for the repair and conservation of protected structures on the local authority Record of Protected Structures. It is designed to leverage private capital for investment in small scale conservation projects across the country and to sup-

port the employment of skilled conservation professionals and tradespeople. I have allocated funding of €2m in total for this Scheme in 2018. In 2017 and 2018 a total of €100,000 was provided in grant aid under this scheme for 28 projects in County Kildare.

The Structures at Risk Fund enables conservation works to heritage structures, in both private and public ownership, which are deemed to be at significant risk of deterioration. I have allocated €1.3m for the Structures at Risk Fund nationally in 2018. Over the course of 2017 and 2018, a total of €119,000 was allocated to 5 projects in County Kildare under this scheme. Details of the projects approved under both funding schemes are published on my Department's website and on local authority websites.

The Structures at Risk Fund will be revamped for 2019 and will become the Historic Structures Fund. The Fund will open for applications shortly, together with the Built Heritage Investment Scheme for 2019.

My Department is providing €350,000 of funding to the OPW in 2018 to assist in the conservation and presentation of historic buildings and national monuments in State ownership. My Department's National Monuments Service works in close collaboration with the OPW on survey, excavation and research work to optimise the protection, management, interpretation and presentation of national monuments in State care.

My Department's funding to the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) provides for the maintenance, development, management and operation of the NPWS. It includes running costs of the 6 National Parks and 80 statutory Nature Reserves, development and improvement works for visitor facilities and other minor capital projects. NPWS also funds conservation-related research and surveys and compensatory measures for landowners' costs and losses resulting from restrictions in managing their land in areas designated under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives. There are small provisions for supporting small scale conservation and community education and awareness projects in areas affected by the cessation of domestic turf cutting on designated raised bogs, the operational costs of the Peatlands Council and also for the scanning costs of applications referred to the Minister in her role as a statutory consultee under the Planning Acts and from other consent authorities.

Ireland, like all EU Member States, is bound by the requirements of the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive. These Directives aim to ensure the protection of habitats and species which have been selected for conservation within special areas of conservation and special protection areas.

Significant efforts have been made by the State to resolve the issue of the protection of Ireland's raised bog special areas of conservation within the framework of the Habitats Directive. The National Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation Management Plan 2017-2022 sets out how the raised bog special areas of conservation are to be managed, conserved and restored and how the needs of turf cutters are to be addressed. Measures for turf-cutters affected by the cessation of turf-cutting on raised bog special areas of conservation and natural heritage areas also include the provision of compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme which is comprised of a payment of €1,500 per annum, index-linked, for 15 years, or relocation, where feasible, to a non-designated bog, together with a once-off incentive payment of €500.

15,673 annual payments and 1,076 deliveries of turf have been made in respect of applications received under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme for raised bog special areas of conservation. 1,207 annual payments and 2 deliveries of turf have been made to applicants from raised bog natural heritage areas under the scheme. In addition, 1,870 once-off incentive payments of €500 have been made, of which 48 relate to natural heritage areas.

The affected special area of conservation raised bogs in Kildare are Mouds Bog SAC and Ballynafagh Bog SAC for those sites 933 annual payments and 313 deliveries of turf have been made together with 65 once-off incentive payments of €500. My Department is in the process of relocating applicants from Ballynafagh Bog special area of conservation to the non-designated Coolree Bog. Approximately €103,000 has been spent on progressing this project.

In 2018 I announced the approval of grant funding of just under €137,000 under the pilot Peatlands Community Engagement Scheme for twelve local community groups and organisations for a variety of projects focused on the conservation and revitalisation of raised bog Special Areas of Conservation, Natural Heritage Areas and other raised bog areas in 2018. A grant of €3,900 was awarded to an organisation in Co. Kildare for restoration works to a raised bog natural heritage area in Co. Meath.

In terms of future funding, Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 – 2027 represents a major capital investment scheme of €1.2 billion in funding over the next 10 years, as part of Project Ireland 2040. This plan will see increased investment in protecting and celebrating our built heritage across the country. More details on the commencement and completion dates for projects and programmes, as well as the timing of the expenditure in relation to them, will emerge as we go through the process of appraisal and planning as required under the Public Spending Code.

Creative Ireland Programme

49. **Deputy Hildegard Naughton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the initiatives in County Galway that will benefit from the national creativity fund; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47306/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Creative Ireland National Creativity Fund was launched on 17 May 2018 with a closing deadline of the 15 June. A total number of 287 applications were received in respect of the fund, far exceeding expectations. Following an initial review by officials by my Department, 77 of these were submitted to an independent expert panel for analysis and scoring against published set criteria. A total of 30 projects were ultimately approved for funding, with grants varying from a minimum of €10,000 to a maximum of €70,000. Cumulatively, the total funding being made available to support these projects across 2018 and 2019 amounts to approximately €1.2m.

The purpose of the National Creativity Fund is to develop strategic collaborations with a variety of organisations/individuals in order to identify and develop new initiatives that support the broad objectives of the Creative Ireland Programme and help inform policy and/or cross-sectoral development in the area of culture, creativity and wellbeing.

Two projects in Galway are being supported under the Fund. The Galway University Hospitals Arts Trust Limited will be rolling out a comprehensive programme of exhibitions, events, and public engagement for and with the hospital community across Ireland's largest geographical Hospital Group - the Saolta University Health Care Group, over the next twelve months. This will include workshops, public performances, the development of a strategic arts policy for the Saolta University Health Care Group, a series of arts interventions in public spaces, a month long pilot for a poet doctor programme and a 6-month artist residency pilot.

The Galway Childcare Committee and Groundswell Arts will pilot 'The Lullaby Project' which will partner professional musicians with parents, carers, and early years practitioners to compose bespoke personalised songs for young children in three diverse early years settings.

The project will build on Galway's strong musical traditions and raise the profile of how music in early years can support and nurture children, increase wellbeing, support inclusion and build lasting relationships with families.

Full details on the projects supported under the scheme are available on the Creative Ireland Programme website www.creativeireland.gov.ie/en.

National Cultural Institutions

50. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of plans to build a national storage facility; and if it will be provided for under Investing in Our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 to 2027. [47338/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The issue of storage is an ongoing issue for the national cultural institutions under the aegis of my Department.

At present, there are no definitive plans to build a single national storage facility but the issue will be kept under consideration.

Energy Efficiency

51. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if his Department is part of the public sector energy reporting programme; if so, the percentage of improvement in energy efficiency to date that has been achieved; the way in which this was achieved; if his Department noted a decrease in energy efficiency in view of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for energy efficiency targets; if targets will be met by the 2020 deadline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47588/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I can confirm that the Department of Defence is part of the Public Sector Energy Programme. By the end of 2017 (the latest date for which figures are available), the Department had reduced its energy consumption by 25%. Under the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP) the Department is committed to further reducing its energy consumption and to improve energy efficiency by 33% by 2020.

The energy consumption reduction achieved to date is as a consequence of participating in a number of programmes. My Department participates in the SEAI Public Sector Energy Efficiency Programme and engages in the Optimising Power @ Work campaign under the auspices of the OPW. In line with the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy 2017 an Energy Performance Officer has been appointed, at Assistant Secretary level, to provide leadership and accountability in reaching the NEEAP targets. Efforts towards improving energy efficiency have been achieved through proactive departmental energy teams who are implementing energy efficiency initiatives such as using only energy efficient lighting, more strict control of heating and ventilation systems, organising Energy Awareness Days to improve behaviour by staff at desk level, installing timers on high energy units, regular energy audits and monitoring and reporting etc. It's also worth noting that the Department HQ uses a renewable resource, wood pellets, as its main heating system rather than depending on fossil fuels. To date the efforts of our energy teams have been recognised by the OPW under the Optimising Power @ Work campaign with the receipt of numerous awards, including most recently 2018 Regional Best Energy Team and 2018 Regional winners of the Outstanding Achievement Category.

The Department is continuing to make every effort and will continue to strive to be more energy efficient to reach the ambitious 2020 target by continuing to implement existing initiatives in a proactive approach in order to improve energy efficiency. In addition its energy teams will continue to meet on a regular basis to devise and implement new energy saving initiatives.

Passport Applications

52. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the process by which a person who did not have his or her birth registered when born and cannot definitively prove a date of birth but later proved his or her identity satisfactorily to the General Register Office sufficient to be issued a public services card by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection may apply for a passport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47487/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): All passport applications are subject to the requirements of the Passports Act, 2008, as amended. Before a passport can issue the Passport Service must be satisfied as to the identity of the applicant and that the applicant is an Irish citizen. A vital document to verify the identity of an applicant is the applicant's birth certificate. It provides unique primary identifying data such as the full name, date of birth, parent(s) name(s) and mother's maiden name. The Public Services card does not hold all the data required in this instance.

All documentation in support of an application is required to be original. In the event that a person does not have a civil birth certificate, the advice of the Passport Service is to contact the General Register Office and establish if the birth can be registered and a birth certificate issued.

Energy Efficiency

53. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his Department is part of the public sector energy reporting programme; if so, the percentage of improvement in energy efficiency to date that has been achieved; the way in which this was achieved; if his Department noted a decrease in energy efficiency in view of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for energy efficiency targets; if targets will be met by the 2020 deadline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47592/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is part of the Public Sector Energy Reporting Programme.

The Department has achieved a saving of 38% from 2009 to 2017. This is in excess of the public sector target of 33% by 2020, as set out in the National Energy Efficiency Plan.

This was achieved in the Department including by the establishment of Energy Officers and teams; regular reviews of energy consumption through monthly and weekly reporting and the establishment of Energy Performance Indicators to further analyse energy performance. Poster and sticker campaigns have been launched at our buildings to promote energy efficiency; behavioural shifts encouraged in terms of switching off equipment and improving general awareness of energy use. Funding for new more efficient equipment in passport production and co-operation from senior management, ICT services and staff have also been important factors in this progress.

This Department is projected to achieve the target of 33% savings by the 2020 deadline.

Betting Regulations

54. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 25 of 25 October 2018, if alternative tax raising measures have been considered that would protect employment in the retail bookmaking sector; and if these alternatives are being considered. [47462/18]

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 rate of betting duty at 1% on the amount of bets wagered in Ireland is at an all-time low, and betting duty receipts are exceptionally low when compared to other sectors subject to excise taxes. It is also the case that there is no VAT applied on betting transactions. With the Betting (Amendment) Act 2015 now well embedded in, I believe it is timely to increase the rates of Betting Duty and Betting Intermediary Duty.

I acknowledge that advances in technology have challenged existing business models and have changed the structure of many markets, including the betting market, with more betting taking place online. I further acknowledge that smaller bookmakers may have ongoing difficulties competing in that environment or indeed with large retail bookmakers. While I have sympathy for small bookmakers I cannot apply the increase to some bookmakers and not others. Ultimately many taxes on goods or services are passed through to the end consumers and bookmakers will need to make commercial decisions on such matters.

I should point out that my Department held a consultation with the sector last year asking if the current model was appropriate and the overwhelming response was that it was. The main focus of the sector's engagement during this consultation was to oppose any increase in the betting duty, which leaves me with few options in this regard other than to impose a straight forward increase in the current regime.

My Department very recently received a proposal from the sector advocating for a change to a gross profit tax model. This is something I am willing to consider in the context of Budget 2020, notwithstanding concerns brought to my attention about the compatibility of this proposal with EU rules and the greater capacity within the model to reduce overall betting duty receipts.

Finally, we must also acknowledge the raised public consciousness of the problem of gambling in society. While problem gambling can result in the problem gambler, and their family, bearing the severest of economic and of course personal costs, the social costs of problem gambling can extend to their employers and to public institutions in the health, welfare and justice systems, such costs ultimately borne by taxpayers. This needs to be better reflected within the betting duty regime.

Tax Reliefs Eligibility

55. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if a matter (details supplied) relating to milk quotas from 1983 to 2000 will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47477/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that capital gains tax relief may arise under Section 538 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 in respect of a loss incurred by the owner of a milk quota as a result of the abolition of such quotas in 2015. A claim for relief under Section 538 should be made by an individual in a tax return. The amount of the loss can be offset against gains made by an individual on the disposal of assets.

Where a milk quota was acquired by an individual by way of gift or inheritance, the individual concerned is treated as having acquired the milk quota at its market value at the time it was acquired. The amount of the loss is based on the market value of the quota at that time.

Banking Operations

56. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the form of identification that may be legally requested by banks and credit unions when dealing with customers at public counters who wish to carry out a transaction on their accounts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47502/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In the area of financial services legislation, section 33 of the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010, as amended (“the Act”), sets out obligations in relation to the identification and verification of customers and beneficial owners. Section 33(2) sets out the following measures that shall be applied by designated persons (which include banks and credit unions):

“(a) identifying the customer, and verifying the customer’s identity on the basis of documents (whether or not in electronic form), or information, that the designated person has reasonable grounds to believe can be relied upon to confirm the identity of the customer, including -

(i) documents from a government source (whether or not a State government source), or (ii) any prescribed class of documents, or any prescribed combination of classes of documents;”.

It is important to note that the Act is not prescriptive as to what documentation and information a designated person must obtain, or the methods by which such documentation and information should be gathered, in order to comply with its customer due diligence obligations. A designated person may apply the measures that it deems appropriate in accordance with the designated person’s own risk based approach; however, the designated person must ensure that the measures applied adhere to the legislative requirements under the Act. The Act also requires designated persons to keep such documents or information used for the purpose of identification and verification up to date.

In relation to applications for credit, the Credit Reporting Act 2013 requires credit information providers (which also includes banks and credit unions) to verify the identity of credit information subjects for the purposes of accurately accessing the central credit register. The information which may be legally requested for this purpose is set out in regulations under that Act (attached: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2016/si/488/made/en/print>) and it includes documentation which will verify the person’s name and date of birth, address and PPSN.

More generally, the provisions of data protection legislation, including the GDPR, will apply and banks and other financial institutions like all other relevant data controllers will also have to comply with these provisions.

57. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the issues arising from increases in tax in 2019 due to the changes in the cap on benefit-in-kind for electric cars for PAYE workers (details supplied); if assistance is available in these cases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47531/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Section 9 of the Finance Bill 2018, as published, provides for an extension of the benefit-in-kind relief for electric vehicles until end 2021.

In consideration of value for money and tax equity reasons, a cap of €50,000 on the original market value of electric vehicles availing of the relief is introduced. While the 0% rate is available on the value up to €50,000, the standard rate BIK calculation applies on anything in excess of that amount. As BIK is calculated for each tax year during which the BEV is made available, this cap applies to all relevant vehicles made available to employees in the tax years 2019 to 2021.

Report Stage of the Finance Bill will commence in the Oireachtas next Tuesday, 20th November.

Energy Efficiency

58. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if his Department is part of the public sector energy reporting programme; if so, the percentage of improvement in energy efficiency to date that has been achieved; the way in which this was achieved; if his Department noted a decrease in energy efficiency in view of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for energy efficiency targets; if targets will be met by the 2020 deadline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47591/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department is actively participating in the Public Sector Energy Reporting Programme, reporting all of its energy consumption through the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland's (SEAI) Monitoring and Reporting online system.

Since 2009, Energy Efficiency has improved by 11.3% up to 2016 in the Department towards the 2020 target of 33%. Overall, taking account of the Energy Group headed by my Department, including the Department itself, we have achieved 21% energy savings to end-2016.

As my Department is primarily located in heritage buildings which are protected structures, there is limited scope in terms of upgrades and retrofits. This poses challenges as to how significant energy efficiencies may be achieved by way of engineering solutions, retrofits, thermal glazing options and building envelope insulation. The savings, thus far, have been achieved mainly by low cost measures such as behavioural changes, better energy management, heating controls, pump systems replacement and lighting retrofits. The evident energy performance deficits have been compensated to some degree by bodies under the aegis of my Department who have more scope to engage in infrastructural upgrades and deep retrofits. In order to achieve continuous improvements in energy performance, significant projects in my Department and across the wider Public Service Bodies may be required to reach 2020 and 2030 targets.

My Department is engaged with OPW's Architectural and Engineering Divisions on identification of projects that will assist in achieving additional energy efficiencies and it is an active participant in the Office of Public Works (OPW) "Optimising Power @ Work" campaign.

My officials will be facilitating a Working Group comprehending the Department's State Bodies, the intention of which will be to reaffirm our commitment to our obligations and the adherence to best practice in energy management across the Group. By working proactively with State Bodies under our remit and with Department of Communications Climate Action and Environment (DCCA), OPW, and SEAI we are seeking to progress both Energy Efficiency projects and Energy Management initiatives.

In conclusion, my Department is committed to embedding energy efficiency into the culture of the organisation and it continues to support and progress energy management initiatives across our office locations, including promotion by way of energy awareness campaigns.

Personal Injury Claims

59. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to propose a referendum to enable the Houses of the Oireachtas to legislate on certain personal injury claims; the timeline in which he expects to put the proposal to a referendum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47645/18]

62. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Finance if reports (details supplied) will be clarified regarding plans to hold a referendum in a bid to override the discretion of judges in the awarding of compensation claims should no reduction in damages occur within the next two years. [47660/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 59 and 62 together.

The Deputy should note that the Cost of Insurance Working Group considered the issue of capping the level of damages which could be awarded in personal injury cases as part of its second phase examining employer and public liability insurance. During its consideration, representatives from the Working Group engaged with the Office of the Attorney General to explore whether it was considered legally and constitutionally permissible for the Oireachtas to enact legislation to delimit or cap the amount of damages which a court may award in respect of personal injuries.

On foot of those engagements, the ultimate conclusion reached by the Working Group was that (i) introducing such a measure would constitute a significant development in the law, because any legislation which restricts the rights of citizens must be carefully considered and justified to ensure it would withstand constitutional challenge, (ii) that the main question for a court, if such a measure was challenged, would be whether an appropriate balance was struck having regard to the exigencies of the common good, and (iii) that the appropriate balance can only be struck once all appropriate factors have been taken into account by the Houses of the Oireachtas in considering the legislation.

Due to the complex legal nature of this subject, the Working Group concluded that it was not in a position to undertake the in-depth analysis of all of the issues that would be required to demonstrate to a court that the correct balance of constitutional rights and principles has been struck having regard to the exigencies of the common good. Consequently, the Working Group took the view that the appropriate forum to consider this matter would be the Law Reform Commission and made a recommendation addressed to the Department of Justice and Equality to that end (Recommendation 5) in the Working Group's *Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance*, published in January 2018.

Pursuant to Recommendation 5, the Department of Justice and Equality provided a compre-

hensive submission to the Law Reform Commission requesting that research and analysis be carried out on the issue of whether it is (i) justifiable and in the common good and (ii) legally and constitutionally permissible for the Oireachtas to enact legislation to delimit or cap the amount of damages which a court may award in respect of personal injuries.

The Law Reform Commission has confirmed that their draft Fifth Programme of Law Reform contains a project aimed at examining whether it is appropriate to legislate for a cap to be placed on the levels of damages which a court may award in respect of some or all categories of personal injury claims. It is expected that the Programme will be finalised by the end of this year.

In conclusion, nothing will be decided on this issue, including in relation to a referendum, until the Law Reform Commission has reported on the matter, but all options remain open.

Mortgage Lending

60. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on comments by the president of the ECB that Ireland lacks competition in the mortgage market; his plans to address this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47646/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I note the comments made by ECB President Draghi to the Oireachtas Finance, Public and Expenditure and Reform and Taoiseach Committee.

As the Deputy is aware, the financial crash and its immediate aftermath had a significant impact on the Irish mortgage market, with a steep increase in mortgage arrears, a sharp slow-down in the rate of new mortgage lending and the withdrawal of some lenders from the Irish market. While there has been a considerable improvement in the overall economy and mortgage market since then, for example overall arrears have fallen and new lending has increased, it is accepted that the financial crash continues to impact on the mortgage market and that problems still remain. One of the legacy issues which remains is the current high level of concentration in the Irish mortgage market.

One of the ways to address this, as highlighted by President Draghi, is to further promote financial integration at a European level. The EU Mortgage Credit Directive has been a positive move in this direction as it provides for the first time a common minimum set of rules across the EU in relation to the provision of residential mortgage credit to consumers. This directive was transposed into Irish law in 2016 by the European Union (Consumer Mortgage Credit Agreements) Regulations. More generally, President Draghi, indicated that the completion of banking union and the development of a more integrated capital market would better enable financial service providers to more easily transact and provide financial services across borders.

The issue of standard variable mortgage rates is a significant one for this Government, and it is committed to efforts to reduce the cost of secured mortgage lending and to promote competition in the supply of mortgage finance. The Government is of the opinion that increased competition is 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. The Government will encourage and support moves made by any new lender who wants to enter the market and offer new sources of credit to borrowers.

Also the cost of mortgage credit is an issue that the Government keeps under active review in its ongoing engagement with mortgage lenders and the Central Bank. Lenders are now offering an increasing diverse range of variable interest rate mortgage products and savings can be

made by borrowers with their existing mortgage provider, in particular as they build up equity in their property, or by more actively considering options to switch mortgage provider. Recent enhancements have been made to the Central Bank Consumer Protection Code in order to better facilitate the mortgage switching process between lenders (which will come into effect from January next) and also to require lenders to provide information to their borrowers on their other mortgage products that could provide savings to their customers at that point in time.

Banking Licence Applications

61. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the approval process for a pan-European savings platform (details supplied) to receive access to the Irish market and provide consumers with increased savings rates. [47655/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The entity in question is not currently authorised or regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. I am informed by the Central Bank that it is not in a position to comment on whether any application has been received from this entity, as under section 33AK(1A) of the Central Bank Act 1942, as amended, the Bank is prohibited from disclosing confidential information relating to the business of any person or body, or any matter arising in connection with the performance of the functions of the Bank or the exercise of its powers.

An applicant seeking authorisation as a retail intermediary (i.e., as an investment intermediary, insurance intermediary, mortgage credit intermediary or mortgage intermediary) must satisfy the Central Bank that it can meet the authorisation standards set out in the relevant legislation. In fulfilling its statutory role in this regard, the Central Bank adopts a robust, structured and risk-based process that seeks to ensure that only those applicants that demonstrate compliance with the relevant authorisation requirements are authorised.

The Central Bank seeks to process each application as expeditiously as possible while meeting its obligation to operate a rigorous and effective gatekeeper function. It aims to ensure that the application process is facilitative and accessible from the perspective of applicants and, importantly, that applicants have clarity with regard to the process, its requirements and timelines. The application process, including details of the service standards that apply to the various stages of the process, is clearly set out on the Central Bank website (available here: <https://www.centralbank.ie/regulation/industry-market-sectors/brokers-retail-intermediaries/authorisation-process>).

The most recent performance report published in respect of those service standards can be found at the following link: <https://www.centralbank.ie/regulation/industry-market-sectors/brokers-retail-intermediaries/authorisation-process> .

Question No. 62 answered with Question No. 59.

Energy Efficiency

63. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his Department is part of the public sector energy reporting programme; if so, the percentage of improvement in energy efficiency to date that has been achieved; the way in which this was achieved; if his Department noted a decrease in energy efficiency in view of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for energy efficiency targets; if targets will be met by the 2020 deadline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47596/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) is actively participating in the Public Sector Energy Reporting Programme and reports all of its energy consumption through the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland's (SEAI) Monitoring and Reporting online system.

The 2017 Annual Report on Public Sector Energy Efficiency Performance, prepared by the SEAI, sets out details of the energy efficiency performance of public bodies in Ireland. It notes that overall, the Department's Energy Group, which comprises 9 bodies, including the Department itself, has achieved 33% energy savings to end 2016. This was more efficient than the baseline set and is on track for the 2020 target. The Department's own energy saving of 69% is also on track for the 2020 target and has been achieved mainly by measures such as behavioural changes and better energy management and space utilisation.

The Department shares its Merrion Street headquarters with the Department of Finance. The Department of Finance undertakes the facilities management functions for both Departments in these premises and the reply in respect of that Department sets out the specific energy efficiency initiatives being undertaken there.

The majority of DPER staff outside of the Merrion Street complex are already located in energy efficient buildings or have recently moved to one and consequently there is no scope or requirement to make adjustments to them in terms of engineering solutions, retrofits, thermal glazing options and building envelope insulation etc. to achieve further significant energy efficiencies. However, the Department hopes to achieve some further improvements by continuing to embed energy efficiency into the culture of the organisation and by progressing energy awareness campaigns across its main locations.

The Department will also continue to contribute to the implementation of the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy, in conjunction with the bodies under its aegis, the Department of Finance, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the SEAI.

Public Service Pay Commission Reports

64. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when he expects the next report from the Public Service Pay Commission on recruitment and retention in the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47599/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Public Service Pay Commission has adopted a modular approach to its work programme for its present exercise focused on recruitment and retention issues in the public service.

As the Deputy will be aware, the first module was published by the Commission in August 2018 and deals with issues relating to Nursing and Midwifery, Non-Consultant Hospital Doctors and Hospital Consultants.

The Commission has not yet indicated a timeline for completion of the further modules of its work programme which will examine recruitment and retention issues in certain other areas of the health sector, the Defence Forces and the civil service, building on the preliminary analysis in its 2017 report and on the various submissions it has received.

Ministerial Meetings

65. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to meet

with representatives of a union (details supplied); the outcome of those discussions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47609/18]

79. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has met with representatives of a union (details supplied); the outcome of those discussions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47608/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 65 and 79 together.

I intend to meet with stakeholders in the education and training sector, including the INTO, in the near future.

My officials are also in regular contact with the INTO on a range of issues relating to the primary sector.

Quality and Qualifications Ireland Accreditation

66. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has corresponded with the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to ascertain from Quality and Qualifications Ireland if it can process and issue outstanding green certificates for persons who have successfully completed green certificates before December 2018 in order that they are eligible to qualify and apply to the national reserve and Pillar 1 payments. [47641/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) final certification period for 2018 will close on 12th December 2018. It is the responsibility of those providers that offer validated programmes leading to QQI awards to submit the quality assured results of the learners that have successfully completed such programmes by that date to ensure that the appropriate award is made. This applies to the Level 6 Specific Purpose award in Farm Administration (the Green Certificate) referred to by the Deputy.

The final statement of results will be made available to each learner from their respective provider on 16th December 2018. QQI will issue certificates to providers for the December certification period on 8th January 2019. The eligibility requirements for the national reserve and pillar 1 payments is a matter for the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Pension Provisions

67. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on a matter regarding a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47473/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): An arrangement in relation to the recovery of the outstanding overpayment from the individual referred to by the Deputy was agreed with my Department in May 2018.

In October this year correspondence issued from my Department to the individual which enabled her to contact the Revenue Commissioners in relation to the taxation position for 2014 and 2015.

Staff of my Department will continue to work with the person to ensure that the repayment

arrangements suit her circumstances.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

68. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 198 of 3 July 2018, if his attention has been drawn to the outcome of the appeal to the National Council for Special Education in view of the fact that it is his policy to ensure that each child that is assessed as needing SNA support will receive access to such support; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47485/18]

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

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

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

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

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

My Department's policy is to ensure that every child who is assessed as needing SNA support will receive access to such support.

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

As this question relates to a particular school, I have referred the question to the NCSE for their direct reply. I do not have a role in making determinations in individual cases.

School Transport Provision

69. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a seat on a school bus will be provided for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47486/18]

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.

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

nearest school.

In 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.

Children are generally eligible for school transport if they satisfy the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school.

Children who are eligible for school transport and who have completed the application process on time will be accommodated on school transport services where such services are in operation for the 2018/19 school year.

Bus Éireann has advised that the child in question is eligible for school transport to the school referred to by the Deputy. However, Bus Éireann has also advised that payment was not submitted within the application process timeline and that the service is now operating to capacity.

School Accommodation Provision

70. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progression the building of a new school facility for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47493/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has no record of receiving an application for improved accommodation from the school referred to by the Deputy.

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.

It is open to the school in question to submit an application under my Department's Additional School Accommodation (ASA) Scheme to address any immediate deficits of accommodation the school may have.

School Services Staff

71. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47495/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I am not aware of the advertisements referred to by the Deputy, but will be glad to look into this matter further on receipt of additional information.

School Accommodation Provision

72. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** 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.

[47514/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I can confirm that the school referred to by the Deputy has submitted an application to my Department for additional accommodation.

The application will be considered and a decision will be conveyed to the school authority as soon as the assessment process has been completed.

Schools Building Projects Applications

73. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to ensure that a school (details supplied) obtains a permanent site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47532/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The school building project is to provide a new 16 no. classroom school with a 2 no. classroom Special Needs Unit together with all ancillary accommodation on the St. Tiernan's Community School site located at Parkvale, Balally, Dublin 16. An application for planning permission was lodged with Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council in September 2018. The decision from Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council was to refuse planning permission. My Department's officials are currently reviewing this decision in consultation with planning advisers and technical team and assessing all options including the consideration of an appeal to An Bord Pleanála.

Schools Building Projects Status

74. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a school (details supplied) in County Kildare will commence construction; and if the site has been transferred to his Department. [47536/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The major building project referred to by the Deputy is currently at an advanced stage of architectural planning, Stage 2(b) - Detailed Design.

The outcome of the pre-qualification process for the main contract has been notified to contractors who expressed interest in tendering for this project. Feedback and issues arising from same has resulted in a legal challenge to the pre-qualification process for the main contract from one unsuccessful contractor. This matter is being handled on my Department's behalf by the Chief State Solicitor's Office. The Deputy will appreciate that as there is an ongoing legal challenge in relation to the project to which he refers it is not possible for me to comment further at present.

When the pre-qualification process for the main contract and reserved specialists contracts can be successfully concluded the project will then be progressed to tender stage.

Regarding the site, legal representatives for both parties are working together with a view to concluding the conveyancing. All parties continue the work to ensure the acquisition completes at the earliest possible date and at this point it is still not anticipated that the completion of conveyancing will impact on the timelines for delivery of the building project.

Schools Establishment

75. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department has carried out a review of the need for a new secondary school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [47537/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy will be aware, my Department is currently advancing building projects in a number of post-primary schools in the South Kildare school planning areas, including the area referred to by the Deputy, and these projects, when completed, will provide additional capacity in the region of 1,700 school places.

I recently announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019-2022). In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. While this announcement did not include a new post-primary school in the area referred to by the Deputy, a review of provision at post-primary school level across the school planning areas in South Kildare is now well advanced and nearing completion. The outcome of the review will be finalised and made available as soon as possible.

This review will include an assessment of the extent to which projected needs in the area will be met from the additional capacity being provided by the projects already approved and how any specific additional needs will be best catered for, recognising the importance of maintaining a balance between existing and any additional school provision.

Student Universal Support Ireland Administration

76. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to change the regulations governing SUSI grants in circumstances (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47551/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Deputy will be aware of the Programme for Government commitment to increase financial supports for post graduate students with a particular focus on those from low income households.

In response to this commitment, additional funding of €4 million was secured in Budget 2017 and a further €3 million in Budget 2018, to facilitate the reinstatement of full maintenance grants, from September 2017, for the most disadvantaged post graduate students.

This has benefitted approximately 1,100 of the most disadvantaged post graduate students who met the eligibility criteria for the special rate of maintenance grant, from September 2017, and it reverses the budgetary cut that was imposed on this cohort of students in 2012.

The qualifying criteria for the special rate of maintenance grant is as follows:

1. The student must qualify for the standard rate of grant;
2. Total reckonable income, after income disregards and Child Dependant Increase(s) are excluded, must not exceed €23,500; and
3. As at 31st December of the previous year, the reckonable income must include one of the eligible long-term social welfare payments prescribed in the Student Grant Scheme.

Grant eligibility is subject to annual review and applicants must continue to meet all qualifying criteria for the relevant rate of grant in order to continue to receive that particular rate of grant.

Students in third-level institutions experiencing exceptional financial need can apply for support under the Student Assistance Fund. This Fund assists students, in a sensitive and compassionate manner, who might otherwise be unable to continue their third level studies due to their financial circumstances. Information on the fund is available through the Access Officer in the third level institution attended. The fund is administered on a confidential, discretionary basis.

Tax relief at the standard rate of tax may be claimed in respect of tuition fees paid for approved courses at approved colleges of higher education. Further information on this tax relief is available from the Revenue Commissioners on www.revenue.ie

School Management

77. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way in which a school (details supplied) has been left to function without a board of management; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47576/18]

81. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a school (details supplied) is operating with a single manager instead of a board of management; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47637/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 77 and 81 together.

Under the provisions of the Education Act 1998, it is the duty of the Patron to appoint, where practicable, a Board of Management. The Education Act 1998 also provides that the Patron may appoint a person or persons to manage the school in circumstances where the appointment of a Board is not practicable or where the Patron has dissolved the Board and pending the appointment of a new Board of Management.

In the case of the school in question, the Patron has, in accordance with the provisions of section 14 (8) of the Education Act 1998 appointed a Single Manager to manage the school.

Energy Efficiency

78. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department is part of the public sector energy reporting programme; if so, the percentage of improvement in energy efficiency to date that has been achieved; the way in which this was achieved; if his Department noted a decrease in energy efficiency in view of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for energy efficiency targets; if targets will be met by the 2020 deadline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47589/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Department of Education and Skills has been part of the Public Sector Energy Reporting Programme since December 2013.

A detailed energy audit was undertaken at the Department's campuses in Dublin, Athlone and Tullamore, and recommended actions for improvement were implemented. Investment in lighting, heating, insulation, I.T., energy awareness campaigns and building up-grades has resulted in the Department achieving an energy saving of 26.1% from the 2009 baseline.

The Department has noted a decrease in energy consumption from 11.1 million kilowatt

hours per annum in 2009 to 7.9 million kilowatt hours per annum in 2017.

Planned investment for Q4 2108 and 2019 should result in energy savings bringing us significantly closer to the 2020 target.

Question No. 79 answered with Question No. 65.

Higher Education Courses Provision

80. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a fourth year mental health nursing course has been terminated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47621/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): My Department allocates recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for direct disbursement to HEA designated higher education institutions. The HEA allocates this funding as a block grant to the institutions.

As autonomous bodies, the internal disbursement of this funding, including decisions regarding academic affairs, is a matter for the individual institution. Neither the Minister nor the Department has a role in relation to such matters. Therefore, the student should contact the institution in the first instance.

Question No. 81 answered with Question No. 77.

Quality and Qualifications Ireland Accreditation

82. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if QQI can process and issue outstanding green certificates for persons who have successfully completed green certificates in 2018 before December 2018 in order that they are eligible to qualify and apply to the national reserve and Pillar 1 payments from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. [47640/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) final certification period for 2018 will close on 12th December 2018. It is the responsibility of those providers that offer validated programmes leading to QQI awards to submit the quality assured results of the learners that have successfully completed such programmes by that date to ensure that the appropriate award is made. This applies to the Level 6 Specific Purpose award in Farm Administration (the Green Certificate) referred to by the Deputy.

The final statement of results will be made available to each learner from their respective provider on 16th December 2018. QQI will issue certificates to providers for the December certification period on 8th January 2019. The eligibility requirements for the national reserve and pillar 1 payments is a matter for the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Asylum Support Services

83. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he is satisfied that enough supports are in place to Roscommon and Leitrim county councils to support asylum

seekers in an accommodation centre (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47469/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):

As part of the overall system of supports provided in all accommodation centres, the Contractor will be required to set up a 'Friends of the Centre' group as recommended by the McMahon report to facilitate linkages between the residents and the local community to encourage integration.

In addition, my Department has granted funding in the order of €43,033 to a number of groups in Roscommon and Leitrim under the Communities Integration fund in 2017 and 2018. In addition, a number of national programmes are funded through the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund that focus on integration measures including funding granted to the Football Association of Ireland, The Immigrant Council of Ireland and the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland.

With specific regard to both Leitrim and Roscommon County Councils, both local authorities run Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programmes (SICAP). SICAP is co-funded by the Irish Government, through the Department of Rural and Community Development and the European Union's European Social Fund Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020.

My Department will continue to work closely with both local authorities to identify programmes and initiatives to encourage integration measures for the residents of the accommodation centre in Roosky.

The key supports available to residents of the centre will however be provided by Government Departments and agencies rather than by local authorities. My Department is working closely with both the Health Service Executive and the Department of Education and Skills to ensure that the medical and educational needs of the residents in Roosky are addressed.

My Department is committed to working closely with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that residents at the new accommodation centre in Roosky will receive the appropriate supports to meet their needs.

Parental Leave

84. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to introduce reforms to the parental leave regime, including changes to the qualifying age of the child and to the length of the leave; if an increase in leave and the qualifying age will apply in respect of children who have already reached eight years of age and in circumstances in which the parents have already taken the maximum parental leave; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47491/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):

As the Deputy will be aware, as part of Budget 2019, the Government announced the introduction of a new paid parental leave scheme which will commence in late 2019. This new scheme will, initially, provide for 2 weeks of paid, non-transferable leave per parent, with a view to expanding the scheme in future years.

This new scheme delivers on the commitment in the Programme for Partnership Government to increase paid parental leave during the first year of a child's life, as research shows that parental care is of particular importance and benefit in the first twelve months. The new

scheme is the key recommendation of the report of an interdepartmental committee which was established to develop recommendations as to how the Programme for Partnership Government commitments could be best implemented.

The Government has indicated, in the context of Dail Eireann's consideration of the Parental Leave (Amendment) Bill 2017, a Private Member's Bill, that it agrees with the proposal to raise the qualifying age of the child in respect of whom unpaid parental leave can be obtained from 8 years of age to 12 years of age.

The Government recognises that parents may need to avail of unpaid parental leave for an older child in certain circumstances, and agrees with the Bill's proposals to allow parents to take any previously unused or additional leave in respect of children up to the qualifying age.

Asylum Support Services

85. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps being taken to facilitate those who have been granted asylum in an accommodation centre (details supplied); the supports available or that will be made available to Leitrim and Roscommon county councils to provide support; the planned actions for integration services and community building projects; the steps he is taking to ensure that the medical and educational needs of asylum seekers can be met in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47509/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): In January and again in September of this year, the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) of my Department published a call for expressions of interest in the national press for premises to meet the increasing demand for accommodation for persons in the protection process (asylum seekers).

This call sought expressions of interest from parties who may be interested in providing accommodation and related services on an urgent and emergency basis. This was issued in response to the urgent and unforeseen demand for accommodation and related services from those persons arriving in the state seeking international protection.

Following on-site assessments carried out by staff in the Department, the Shannon Key West Hotel in Roosky was, subject to refurbishment work being completed, deemed to be suitable premises for the needs of the Department. It should be noted that the accommodation centre is for those persons in the protection process and not for those granted asylum.

The Contractor will be required to set up a 'Friends of the Centre' group as recommended by the McMahon report to facilitate linkages between the residents and the local community to encourage integration. In addition, my Department has granted funding in the order of €43,033 to a number of groups in Roscommon and Leitrim under the Communities Integration fund in 2017 and 2018. In addition, a number of national programmes are funded through the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund that focus on integration measures including funding granted to the Football Association of Ireland, the Immigrant Council of Ireland and the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland.

With specific regard to both Leitrim and Roscommon County Councils, both local authorities run Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programmes (SICAP). SICAP is co-funded by the Irish Government, through the Department of Rural and Community Development and the European Union's European Social Fund Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020.

My Department will work closely with both local authorities to identify programmes and initiatives to encourage integration measures for the residents of the accommodation centre in Roosky as appropriate.

My Department will also work closely with both the Health Service Executive and the Department of Education and Skills to ensure that the medical and educational needs of the residents in Roosky are addressed.

My Department is committed to working closely with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that residents at the new accommodation centre in Roosky will receive the appropriate supports to meet their needs.

Garda Resources

86. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if all necessary resources will be made available to An Garda Síochána in Drogheda, County Louth, in view of the serious and concerning criminal activity that has taken place over the past number of days (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47528/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As I stated in my response to the Deputy's Topical Issue debate earlier this week, I am very much aware of the impact that the type of criminal activity that took place in Drogheda last weekend can have on a community. I understand the concerns being expressed by the people of Drogheda and other areas of Louth and this type of criminal behaviour will not be tolerated.

It is important to note that it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of Garda resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. However, I am advised that Garda management keeps the distribution of these resources under continuous review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources in Drogheda, and indeed in all parts of the country.

In relation to the specific incidents referred to by the Deputy, I am advised that An Garda Síochána are conducting full investigations into each case and as such it would be inappropriate for me to comment while these investigations are ongoing.

However, I have been informed by An Garda Síochána that Gardaí have put in place a policing operation to prevent, detect and mitigate against any further escalation of violence. In addition to cancelling all Garda leave in the Louth Division for the next two weeks, the operation will entail high visibility patrols, supplemented by personnel from the Regional Armed Support Unit; Community Policing Units; District Detective and Drug Units and Divisional Roads Policing Unit.

An Garda Síochána have further advised that they will continue to make every effort to disrupt the activities of any groups who may be involved in these incidents, to arrest and prosecute offenders and deny access to the road networks for those involved.

In relation to drug related crime, it is important to say that An Garda Síochána remains resolute in its determination to act against those within society who pose a significant threat to the welfare and well-being of our citizens and the communities they serve. A core focus of the work carried out by An Garda Síochána is aimed at tackling drugs and organised crime. The continued disruption of the supply of all illicit drugs remains a priority for An Garda Síochána and the other state agencies tasked with responsibilities in this regard. Liaison is also ongoing

between An Garda Síochána and other relevant stakeholders, including the Local Authorities and Tusla / HSE to name but a few.

For its part, the Government is firmly committed to supporting An Garda Síochána and ensuring that the organisation is appropriately resourced. The resources available to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with provision made in Budget 2019 of more than €1.6 billion, including an allocation of €95 million for overtime.

It is also the case that the unprecedented investment now being made in Garda ICT infrastructure of €342 million between 2016 and 2021 will enable An Garda Síochána to deliver on reform, work more efficiently and deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in delivering professional policing and security services for the community.

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87. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his Department is part of the public sector energy reporting programme; if so, the percentage of improvement in energy efficiency to date that has been achieved; the way in which this was achieved; if his Department noted a decrease in energy efficiency in view of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for energy efficiency targets; if targets will be met by the 2020 deadline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47595/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department is a participant in the Public Sector Energy Reporting Programme and reports annually to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, who publish an annual report on progress achieved for all public sector bodies.

Since the baseline year of 2009 to end 2017, my Department has recorded a 32.4% energy saving for office accommodation and is on course to meet the target of a 33% reduction by 2020.

Improvements in energy efficiency to date have been achieved through an ongoing staff awareness programme and initiatives such as automated shutdown of PCs. The Department engages with the Office of Public Works in its “Optimising Power @ Work” scheme and in building upgrades for improved energy performance e.g. lighting replacement programmes.

Residency Permits

88. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will review the position in regard to leave to remain and-or long-term residency in the case of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47611/18]

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 persons concerned.

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

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the

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

Residency Permits

89. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if all documentation requested has been received from a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47612/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned made an application for a right to residency accompanied by a right to work based on their parentage of an Irish citizen child on 15 June 2018.

I am also advised that the INIS wrote to the person concerned on 25 July and 10 November seeking further information. I understand that INIS will consider the application further upon receipt of a response from the individual concerned.

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

Naturalisation Applications

90. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will review an application for naturalisation that was refused in the case of a person (details supplied); if the offence in question permanently prevents the person from obtaining naturalisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47613/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that a current application for a certificate of naturalisation has been received from the person referred to by the Deputy. Processing of this application is ongoing and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible. 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. 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. Obviously, a continuing record of good conduct will be taken into account in that regard.

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.

Naturalisation Applications

91. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of an application for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47614/18]

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 is ongoing. On completion of the necessary processing the application will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements, not only within the State but also at European Union level, and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

It is recognised that all applicants for citizenship would wish to have a decision on their application without delay. 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.

Naturalisation Applications

92. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which all documentation required except a national passport, which cannot be obtained from the Angolan authorities, has been received in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47617/18]

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 is ongoing and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements, not only within the State but also at European Union level, and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

All persons making an application for a certificate of naturalisation are required to provide satisfactory evidence of their identity and nationality. This is usually in the form of a currently valid passport and may include other original supporting documents, such as a previously held or out of date passport, birth certificate and marriage certificate.

In rare circumstances where an applicant cannot produce their current passport, or a previous passport, birth certificate or other supporting documents the applicant will be required to provide a full explanation. Such explanation should, where possible, be supported by satisfactory evidence that they have attempted to obtain such documentation and correspondence from the relevant authorities or embassy responsible for the issuing of passports and birth certificates in their country, clearly stating the reasons the documentation cannot be provided. The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) will consider the explanation given and, if satisfied it is for reasons genuinely beyond the applicant's control, may suggest alternative means to the person to assist in establishing their identity and nationality.

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.

Asylum Applications

93. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of eligibility for stamp 4 in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47618/18]

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 their 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, 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, 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.

Naturalisation Applications

94. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to indicate if a further review in respect of an application for naturalisation will be undertaken in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47619/18]

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 naturalisation 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. There is no appeals process under the legislation. 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.

Legal Costs

95. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the date on which he approved an application to grant legal representation to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47647/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, the person referred to in the question is a named party in one of the civil actions initiated against the Minister for Justice and Equality, Ireland, the Attorney General and the Garda Commissioner, relating to matters which arose during his tenure as Garda Commissioner.

In accordance with section 48 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, on the recommendation of the Acting Garda Commissioner and in accordance with normal procedures, I approved an application for the granting of State representation to the person concerned on 13 July 2018.

It is important to note that State representation does not constitute an undertaking or grant of indemnity. Nor does the granting of representation imply that a case is being defended, rather it simply means the party is legally represented. Prior to making a decision on the issue, I sought legal advice from the Attorney General.

As will be clear to the Deputy, the decision to grant State representation was taken in July 2018, some time prior to the recent report of the Disclosures Tribunal which was published on 11 October 2018.

Following the Tribunal's report, all aspects of this and related civil actions are being considered in consultation with the Office of the Attorney General. I can also confirm to the Deputy that I have asked the Attorney General to advise on settlement of this and related civil actions.

Prison Service Staff

96. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the timeline from the date on which a person (details supplied) notified him of that person's intention to resign to the date on which a candidate will fill the role; the steps this recruitment process will undertake; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47648/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The person referred to by the Deputy notified my Department in June of his intention to retire in November of this year. Following this, my Department liaised with the Public Appointments Service (PAS) and the Top Level Appointments Committee (TLAC) regarding a competition for recruitment and this culminated in the post being advertised on 28 September 2018, with a closing date for applications of 18 October 2018. The selection process is expected to be completed in December of this year with a new appointment following as soon as possible thereafter.

Energy Efficiency

97. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her Department is part of the public sector energy reporting programme; if so, the percentage of improvement in energy efficiency to date that has been achieved; the way in which this was achieved; if her Department noted a decrease in energy efficiency in view of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for energy efficiency targets; if targets will be met by the 2020 deadline; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47584/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Department is part of the Public-Sector Energy Monitoring and Reporting Programme. The 2017 Public Sector Energy Report is expected to be published by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland in the coming weeks.

The indicative data from this report shows an energy savings of 43% for my Department since 2006, the baseline year used. This level of savings is amongst the highest of all Departments over the period. The Department delivered on the 2020 target of 33% during 2015.

The energy savings have been achieved through a number of significant reforms which include consolidating and downsizing the Department's physical footprint and moving into more energy efficient buildings.

In addition to this, the installation of more energy efficient ICT equipment and lighting along with an automated 'PC power down' protocol has contributed in achieving this reduction.

Despite exceeding the target early, the Department continues to engage in works, in conjunction with the Office of Public Works, and will employ other initiatives to further increase its energy efficiency in the years ahead.

Work Permits Eligibility

98. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which she can facilitate the construction sector by way of work visas for non-EEA countries in order to meet the shortage in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47610/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The employment permits system is managed through the operation of the Highly Skilled Eligible Occupations List (HSEOL) and the Ineligible Categories of Employment List (ICEL). These occupations lists are reviewed twice yearly to keep pace with rapid labour market changes and to be proactively identifying and addressing shortages as they arise. My Department has commenced the Quarter 4 2018 review of the lists of occupations for employment permits with a public call for submissions from stakeholders and interest groups requesting changes to the lists. The closing date for receipt of submissions was Friday 2nd November 2018. Submissions have been received in respect of a range of occupations including the construction sector, and those submissions are now being examined.

In light of the changing economy and as we continue towards near full employment, it is imperative that the employment permits system is correctly oriented to meet the State's labour market needs. To that end, I recently published a report reviewing the economic migration policies underpinning the current employment permits system to ensure our policies are fully supportive of Ireland's labour market needs, be they skills or labour shortages in certain sectors. The report confirms that our employment permits system is largely robust with some adjustment required to ensure continued responsiveness, setting out recommendations to be addressed over the short, medium and long term that will ensure that our employment permits system will play its part in supporting Ireland's labour market needs.

In order to have an occupation considered for addition to the HSEOL, or removed from the ICEL, there would need to be a clear demonstration of current recruitment difficulties and shortages across the EEA and that difficulties are not as a result of other factors such as salary, employment conditions or lack of upskilling opportunities. Organisations in the sector would need to provide the necessary data to substantiate their claims. A detailed evidence-based case requesting the additional of an occupation to the highly skilled list would then need to be put forward by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government as the lead Department for the sector, to my Department for review and consideration. This evidence-based case model was used successfully recently by the agri-food sector in demonstrating the difficulties experienced and the efforts made by that sector in sourcing labour from the EEA.

Brexit Supports

99. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 113 of 8 November 2018, the schemes that are being developed between her Department, the Directorate General for Competition and the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development on the development of schemes that do not fall under the General Block Exemption Regulation; if these schemes will be operational before 29 March 2019; and if Exchequer funding will be required. [47650/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Officials are working with DG Competition and DG Agriculture on the development of schemes under the State aid Framework and the European Guidelines for State Aid in Agriculture, For-

estry Sectors and Rural Areas.

The guidelines set out the conditions and criteria under which aid in these areas would be considered compatible with the internal market and we see potential in these guidelines to support investment of enterprises in Ireland's Food sector and other Brexit impacted sectors.

Part of this process is to explore our options to include small midcaps in the Future Growth Loan Scheme announced in Budget 2019. Support under this scheme for SMEs is being addressed under the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER).

DG Comp and DG Agri are working with us to progress matters as quickly as possible.

Should any further Exchequer funding be required, this would be a matter for discussion with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Brexit Supports

100. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of participants on the rescue and restructuring scheme since it was established in tabular form; and the amount drawn down to date. [47651/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): At the outset, I want to assure the Deputy that my Department and agencies are working proactively with Brexit exposed firms to support their contingency planning and business transformation investments to prepare for Brexit potential impacts, to protect jobs and to build resilience, so that they do not reach the stage of needing rescue support.

The rescue and restructuring scheme was put in place for Undertakings in Difficulty and operates under the EU Rescue and Restructuring Guidelines. Under the scheme, an undertaking is considered to be in difficulty when, without intervention by the State, it will almost certainly be condemned to going out of business in the short or medium term. This scheme was put in place as it was considered prudent to have contingency measures in place so that my Department can respond swiftly to changing circumstances as necessary. However, I did not, nor do I expect that there will be a need for the State to provide rescue/restructuring aid to companies as there are supports in place that enterprises can avail of before they reach the point where they are almost certainly at the stage of being in severe difficulty and at risk of going out of business. This scheme is part of a belt and braces approach to supporting enterprise.

To date, no enterprise has sought rescue and restructuring aid.

Personal Injury Claims

101. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the latest whiplash data published by Personal Injuries Assessment Board. [47652/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I welcome the publication by the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB) of data on whiplash-related injury compensation awards resulting from road traffic accidents.

The publication of the data delivers on a recommendation from the First Report of the Personal Injuries Commission published in December 2017 and involved analysis of approximately 4,500 awards made in the first six months of 2018. The Report recommends that PIAB

produce information going forward relating to the incidence of ‘whiplash’ soft tissue injuries. The suggested time frame for the implementation of this recommendation was end 2018.

The statistics show that in the first six months of 2018, 70.9% of all personal injury motor cases assessed by PIAB were whiplash related. The figure for drivers with whiplash-related injuries was 79% of all motor cases, and for passengers the figure was 69% of motor cases.

PIAB is an independent statutory body which assesses personal injury claims in Ireland. It assesses personal injuries compensation in a timely and cost-efficient manner.

Tax Code

102. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the latest European Commission proposals for a digital sales tax; and the steps being taken to protect Irish interests. [47653/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Proposed Digital Services Tax is currently being debated at the Working Party on Tax Questions which is attended by Irish officials. At last week’s ECOFIN meeting, my colleague the Minister for Finance, outlined Ireland’s principled opposition to the introduction of such a tax.

Ireland has a number of concerns with the Commission’s interim tax proposals. These concerns include the short-term nature of the approach, the proposed move away from taxing profits to taxing revenues, the lack of a clear link between the proposed tax and evidence of value creation by digital business, and the potential impact on international trading relations from the adoption of a unilateral EU initiative on digital tax.

Ireland believes that taxation of the digital economy is a global issue which is best addressed at the OECD. In that context we believe that any solution must be long term, sustainable and recognise where value is created in digital business models.

Regardless of the final outcome, it must be borne in mind that Ireland’s corporation tax regime will continue to be competitive while also offering long-term certainty to international business. Crucially, our regime is underpinned by substance. *Enterprise 2025 Renewed* reaffirms our focus on export-led growth that is underpinned by innovation, talent and investments in place-making.

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

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

Economic Competitiveness

103. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on Ireland’s continued fall in the rankings of an organisation (details supplied) for the ease of doing business across 190 economies. [47656/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Improving our competitiveness and ensuring that Ireland is an attractive location to do business re-

mains a key economic priority for this Government. We continue to monitor Ireland's competitiveness and analyse the factors that are crucial to attracting further investment in the country.

The World Bank Ease of Doing Business 2019 report compares the 'ease of doing' business in 190 economies using quantitative indicators. The report assesses the impact of 11 areas of business regulation: starting a business; dealing with construction permits; getting electricity; registering property; getting credit; protecting minority investors; paying taxes; trading across borders; enforcing contracts; resolving insolvency; and, labour market regulation.

In the latest report, Ireland achieved a high score of almost 79, which compares favourably with the top performing economy in the 2019 report, New Zealand, which achieved an absolute score of 86.5.

Ireland's score means that it is the 23rd highest ranked economy in the world, the 8th highest ranked in the EU, and the 5th highest ranked in the Euro Area. Ireland's continued high score, and high ranking, in the ease of doing business report is also reflected in Ireland's strong economic growth, our trade performance, and the falling unemployment figures.

Looking at a more granular breakdown of the ease of doing business score, Ireland ranked highly in certain indicators, including 'paying taxes' (4th), 'starting a business' (10th), and 'protecting minority investors' (15th).

However, there is no room for complacency. The ranking is also a reminder of the intense global competition Ireland faces for exports and inward investment. Areas for focus are highlighted in other indicators, including 'getting electricity' (43rd), 'trading across borders' (52nd), and 'enforcing contracts' (102nd). Though the report did note that Ireland had made enforcing contracts easier by introducing a consolidated law on voluntary mediation.

Global uncertainty and Brexit has underlined the importance of ensuring strong productivity growth in Irish-based industries, a competitive advantage vis-à-vis our trading partners, and generating an uplift in enterprise export competitiveness to secure sustainable jobs and growth.

Ensuring enterprise stays at the forefront of innovative activity is vital to deepening the resilience of our enterprise base and necessary for success in global markets, which for a small open economy like Ireland, is necessary for creating sustainable growth. Building the foundations of future growth means we must further enhance the competitiveness of our business environment that should take into account the World Bank ease of doing business ranking.

My officials and the National Competitiveness Council (NCC) will establish what actions we can take to further improve our competitiveness, particularly in the areas where we are lagging competitors. The NCC will advise Government on specific actions to take in its forthcoming 2018 Competitiveness Challenge report.

In addition, the Future Jobs initiative – which is being led by my Department and the Department of An Taoiseach, to be published in early 2019 – will have a strong focus on improving productivity in the economy and its competitiveness.

Departmental Funding

104. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 205 of 25 October 2018, the reason there has been such a drop in companies participating in the 2013 to 2018 scheme compared to the 2007 to 2012 programme; and if there will be a successor programme to cover the 2019 to 2023 period.

[47657/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): It is in the nature of seed and venture capital investing that it takes time to complete the investment process of funds participating in the Scheme. Accordingly, the 2013-2018 programme is still making investments and total investment is expected to be significantly higher once the investment period is finished. Allocations of capital to funds under the most recent Seed & Venture Capital Scheme were made over the period 2013-2018. To date 11 funds have received allocations and established funds under the SVC Scheme (2013-2018) to 2017. These funds are in the middle of their investment periods and are expected to continue to make additional new investments up to 2021. In addition, a number of other funds received an allocation under this Scheme in 2018 and these funds will also add to the total of new investments once they begin investing.

Following an extensive evaluation of Enterprise Ireland's Seed & Venture Capital Scheme, a new programme of funding of €175m for Seed and Venture Capital Fund was announced on the 9th of October. The new Programme will be in place next year and will cover the period to 2024.

The fund is expected to leverage up to €525m in additional private sector funding to make available a total of €700m. Well over 100 innovative Irish companies are expected to benefit, with thousands of jobs created and hundreds of millions of euros in additional exports generated.

Retail Sector

105. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if the new online retail scheme administered by Enterprise Ireland will be made available to Irish-owned micro-sized firms with fewer than ten employees in the retail sector in order to enhance their online presence. [47658/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As Chair of the Retail Consultation Forum, I am aware of growth in online retailing and understand the need for the retail sector to develop its online capability and enhance its competitiveness. In 2017, data from the CSO showed that 66% of Irish enterprises in the Wholesale and Retail Sector reported having a website or homepage, with only 28% able to facilitate online ordering.

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 new pilot Online Retail 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 competitive Scheme is aimed at retail businesses who are ready to strategically grow their online capability and will support qualifying retail businesses of 20 employees or more with grants ranging from €10,000 to €25,000 on a 50% match funding basis. Successful applicants under the scheme may use the grant funding to support activities including research, strategy development, implementation and training. and . The first call was opened on 24th October 2018. The call will close on 5th December 2018 at 3pm.

The new Enterprise Ireland Online Retail Scheme is not available to companies with less than 20 employees. This is a pilot scheme, the purpose of which is to test and assess the potential impact of such a project. The nature of the scheme requires suitably qualified businesses who have the capability and ambition to adopt new business models and grow internationally. Peer-learning will be integral to the scheme, and participants will share their experiences with a view to shaping the scheme for the future. The full details of the Scheme are published on the Enterprise Ireland website.

The Local Enterprise Office (LEOs) are the first-stop-shop for anyone who wishes to start or expand a business, in terms of advice, training, sign posting to other support providers and, in certain circumstances, grant support. The LEOs offer a range of supports to assist Irish owned micro-sized firms to trade online including the Trading Online Voucher Scheme.

The Trading Online Voucher Scheme (TOVS), supported by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and delivered through the LEOs offers matched financial assistance of up to €2,500 aimed at getting micro businesses (those employing 10 people or less) trading online. The voucher is supported with training and advice. Since the start of the scheme in July 2014 to the 30th June this year, over 4,600 micro enterprises have availed of TOVs.

The LEOs also offer a wide range of short training programmes to support their clients in building their online presence and to compete in the online marketplace. These programmes focus on different elements including; Marketing, Social Media, eCommerce Sales Strategy and Search Engine Optimisation.

Business Regulation

106. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the progress to date for each of the action points made in the report Measures to Enhance Ireland's Corporate, Economic and Regulatory Framework, published in November 2017; if each such action point has been completed, not completed or is ongoing, respectively; and the revised deadlines for action points not delivered by the original timeframes in tabular form. [47659/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): On 2 November 2018, the Government published "Measures to Enhance Ireland's Corporate, Economic and Regulatory Framework: Ireland combatting "white collar crime". A comprehensive set of 28 measures was developed to augment the existing regulatory and legislative framework in Ireland in the area of corporate, economic and regulatory crime. The implementation of these measures is progressing across 3 Departments: Business, Enterprise and Innovation; Justice and Equality; and Finance.

There has been considerable progress on the delivery of these actions, with most of the actions either completed, on schedule or on track to be completed.

In terms of my own Department, the following table sets out the progress on implementation since that publication was launched:

Progress on Measures to Enhance Ireland's Corporate, Economic, and Regulatory Framework

Action Point No.	Action Point	Timeline	Progress/Revised Timeframe
1	Develop legislative framework following appropriate consultation with stakeholders	Q1 2018	Complete
2	Publish the General Scheme of Bill	Q2 2018	Ongoing. The General Scheme of a Bill to give effect to this decision will be published in Q4 2018
3	Pre-legislative scrutiny	Q3 2018	Not completed. Timeline has been revised to Q1 2019.
4	Publish Bill	Q4 2018	Timeline has been revised to Q2 2019.
5	Enact Bill	Q2 2019	Timeline has been revised to Q4 2019.
10	CLRG to publish its Report on Corporate Governance	Q4 2017	Complete.
11	DBEI to consider the CLRG Report and publish General Scheme of Bill as appropriate	Q2 2018	Ongoing. It is intended that any proposals for legislative change, on foot of the Report, will be included in the General Scheme of the Bill to establish the ODCE as an agency.
14	Initiate Public Consultation seeking views from stakeholders to inform transposition of the Directive	Q1 2018	Complete.
15	Transpose Directive	Q2 2019	Ongoing. The transposition deadline of 10 June 2019 is expected to be met.
16	Publish the Companies (Statutory Audits) Bill 2017	Q4 2017	Complete.
17	Enact Companies (Statutory Audits) Bill 2017	Q2 2018	Complete.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

107. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Health the status of plans being made by the Health Products Regulatory Authority and-or the Health Service Executive to license and make available for reimbursement the drug Ocrevus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47456/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement decisions, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. The Act specifies the criteria for decisions on the reimbursement of medicines.

HSE decisions on which medicines are reimbursed by the taxpayer are made on objective, scientific and economic grounds, on the advice of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE). The NCPE conducts health technology assessments (HTAs) for the HSE and makes recommendations on reimbursement to assist HSE decisions. The NCPE uses a decision framework to systematically assess whether a drug is cost-effective as a health intervention.

The HSE strives to reach a decision in as timely a manner as possible. However, because of the significant monies involved, it must ensure that the best price is achieved, as these commitments are often multi-million euro investments on an on-going basis. This can lead to a protracted deliberation process.

The European Medicines Agency provided Ocrelizumab (Ocrevus) with market authorisation in January 2018.

The NCPE completed a health technology assessment on 29 August 2018 for Ocrelizumab (Ocrevus) for the treatment of adult patients with relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis (RMS). They recommended that Ocrelizumab (Ocrevus) not be considered for reimbursement unless cost-effectiveness can be improved relative to existing treatments.

On 4 October 2018 the NCPE completed a health technology assessment for Ocrelizumab (Ocrevus) indicated for the treatment of adult patients with early primary progressive multiple sclerosis (PPMS). They did not recommend that Ocrelizumab (Ocrevus) be reimbursed for this indication.

The HSE is the statutory decision-making body for medicine reimbursement. It will make the final decision on whether Ocrelizumab (Ocrevus) will be reimbursed, taking into consideration the statutory criteria in the 2013 Health Act.

Hospital Appointments Status

108. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47459/18]

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.

Home Help Service Provision

109. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47460/18]

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.

HSE Staff Data

110. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE employs quantity surveyors directly; if they are employed on an ad hoc contract project basis; and if so, the reason therefor [47465/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for this matter, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to you.

Commencement of Legislation

111. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the date on which the Children and Family Relationships (Amendment) Act 2018 will commence; if he has encountered issues preventing its immediate commencement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47467/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Children and Family Relationships (Amendment) Bill 2018 was enacted on 24 July 2018. This Act was introduced to correct typographical and technical errors in the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, which will facilitate the subsequent commencement of Parts 2 & 3 of the Act. Parts 2 & 3 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 contain provisions relating to the regulation of donor-assisted human reproduction (DAHR) procedures carried out in the State, including dealing with the rights of children born as a result of those procedures. There are important administrative and operational arrangements to be put in place to facilitate the implementation of Parts 2 & 3, including the establishment of the National Donor-Conceived Person Register and the appointment of authorised persons under the Act. It is my intention that Parts 2 & 3 of the Act will be commenced as soon as possible.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

112. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if he is satisfied with the timeframe in place for access to new medicines while tentative steps must be taken before a medicine is approved; and his views on whether the extent of the timeframe is problematic for persons suffering with certain conditions. [47471/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement decisions, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. The Act specifies the criteria for decisions on the reimbursement of medicines. As Minister for Health, I do not have any statutory power or function in relation to the reimbursement of medicines.

In line with the 2013 Act, if a company would like a medicine to be reimbursed by the HSE, it must first submit an application to have the new medicine added to the reimbursement list.

As outlined in the 2016 Framework Agreement with the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA), and in line with the 2013 Act, the HSE will decide, within 180 days of receiving the application (or a longer period if further information is sought from the company), whether to add the medicine to the reimbursement list, agree to reimburse it as a hospital medicine, or refuse to reimburse it.

HSE decisions on which medicines are reimbursed by the taxpayer are made on objective, scientific and economic grounds, on the advice of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE).

The NCPE conducts health technology assessments (HTAs) for the HSE and makes recommendations on reimbursement to assist HSE decisions. The NCPE uses a decision framework to systematically assess whether a drug is cost-effective as a health intervention.

The HSE strives to reach a decision in as timely a manner as possible. However, because of the significant monies involved, it must ensure that the best price is achieved, as these commitments are often multi-million euro investments on an on-going basis. This can lead to a protracted deliberation process.

I am keen to engage with industry and to explore ways in which new medicines might be more easily introduced in Ireland. However, any innovative approaches that may be tabled must be compatible with the statutory provisions which are in place and must also recognise the context of finite Exchequer resources.

I am aware that at the recent bi-annual meeting between my Department and the Irish Healthcare Pharmaceutical Association that this proposed dialogue was discussed. It is envisioned that this will take the form of a structured platform of engagement, building a stronger partnership between the State and industry to create better patient access to new treatments.

National Treatment Purchase Fund Payments

113. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of funding for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47474/18]

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.

Dental Services Provision

114. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment for orthodontic treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47475/18]

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.

Traveller Community

115. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health if additional financial resources will be allocated to address issues raised by an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47478/18]

120. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that Traveller men have a life expectancy 15 years lower than the general population; the steps he will take to address this discrepancy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47498/18]

121. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the reason the national Traveller health advisory committee has not been convened since 2012; if this committee will be reconvened without delay in order to address Traveller-specific health issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47499/18]

122. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the details of the funding provided for the Traveller health budget in each of the past ten years; and if the investment in this

budget for 2019 will be increased. [47500/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 115 and 120 to 122, inclusive, together.

Health and wellbeing are not evenly distributed across society. There are socially excluded groups who experience extreme health inequalities. Such groups include Travellers homeless people, refugees and asylum seekers and people with addiction issues. Inequalities in health are reflected in the mortality and morbidity rates of the population. Rates of chronic diseases are another indicator of health inequalities. A social gradient is also apparent in mental health. Reducing health inequalities can deliver real benefits for society and for future generations. It requires interventions to address the social determinants of health and to provide integrated and comprehensive healthcare services.

The health needs of Travellers' are documented in the landmark All Ireland Traveller Health Study, published in 2010 and funded by the Department of Health.

The Department of Health, through the HSE, provides funding in the region of €10m per annum for programmes to improve the health situation for Traveller communities. These include:

- primary healthcare projects, counselling services, family support programmes and men's health projects; dedicated public health nurses and related staff;
- mental health promotion and suicide prevention services in a culturally sensitive manner, to reduce the stigma associated with mental health.

A further €500,000 funding is provided through the Dormant Accounts Fund for initiatives aimed at improving Traveller mental health.

The Department recently convened a workshop on Traveller health needs. This involved representation from various policy units in the Department of Health, Community Healthcare Organisations within the HSE and Traveller organisations.

As Minister with responsibility for health promotion and social inclusion, I am very aware of the health inequalities experienced by Travellers. Significant measures have been undertaken across the health service to address these inequalities and there is ongoing and extensive engagement with Traveller organisations. I am committed to providing funding to address the acute health needs of Travellers, within the budgetary resources available.

Hospital Appointments Status

116. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if surgery will be expedited for a person (details supplied). [47488/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for sched-

uled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Mental Health Services Expenditure

117. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost, capital and current, of increasing the number of acute mental health beds to 50 per 100,000 of population [47492/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Services for People with Disabilities

118. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will receive an assessment date for autism. [47496/18]

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.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Data

119. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health the number of children that attend the clinical psychologist service in Cherry Orchard Hospital for assessment and treatment; the length of the waiting lists; and the average length of time for a child on the waiting list [47497/18]

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.

Questions Nos. 120 to 122, inclusive, answered with Question No. 115.

Respite Care Services Provision

123. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if respite care will be provided for a person (details supplied) in County Kerry will be provided; and if he will make a statement

on the matter. [47503/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Administration

124. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a change in administrative procedure regarding the way in which the RCSI group communicates with patients (details supplied); if the practice of writing to persons on waiting lists to confirm they still require treatment is standard practice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47506/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Good practice around the management of hospital waiting lists recommends periodic validation of waiting lists.

Validation is the process whereby hospital administration contacts patients on waiting lists at pre-planned intervals during the year to ensure that patients are ready, willing, suitable and available to attend a hospital appointment or wish to be removed.

Importantly, the validation process allows for situations where, if requested by the GP/referring clinician, patients can be reinstated back to their original place on to the Waiting List.

Earlier this year, I approved the establishment of a Central Waiting List Validation Unit function, within the NTPF. This new function will deliver a standardised approach to validation across all hospitals in line with best patient-centred practices. Other benefits of the new function will include the identification of patients on waiting lists who are ready and available to proceed with hospital care, the reduction in the Did Not Attend rate (DNA), and an improvement in information for managing waiting lists. The NTPF estimates that 30,000 patients who no longer require treatment will come off the outpatient waiting list in 2019 as a result of this activity.

In relation to the particulars matters of the query raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Home Care Packages Provision

125. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of a home care package application by a person (details supplied); if it has been sanctioned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47511/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Govern-

ment is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Allowances

126. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health his plans to introduce financial support for persons who use incontinence pads; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47516/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Home Help Service Data

127. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the average length of time spent on a waiting list by patients who already qualify for help via the home help scheme and have applied for additional support in each of the past three years to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47519/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly) (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.

Sign Language and Deaf Services

128. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** 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. [47522/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Health Services Staff Remuneration

129. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if he will direct the HSE to extend the short timeframe for the return of forms by section 39 organisations in view of the fact that all information has already been provided for pay restoration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47526/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Hospitals Building Programme

130. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health the progress on an infrastructural project (details supplied) in County Kildare. [47542/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of capital projects in the health services, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to you.

Health Services

131. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of a facility (details supplied) in County Kildare. [47543/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): 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.

General Practitioner Services Provision

132. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health if he will examine the policy on out-of-hours general practitioner services in circumstances in which a person's general practitioner is not in the locality of the person's home and the individual needs medical treatment such as in a case (details supplied); if changes can be made to this policy to avoid similar cases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47550/18]

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.

Nursing Staff Remuneration

133. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of bringing the nursing and midwifery professions in line with the pay grades of other therapeutic grades. [47553/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Hospital Consultant Remuneration

134. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of the restoration of the 30% pay cut to new entrant consultants imposed in 2012. [47554/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): It is estimated that it would cost approximately €45m to bring the pay of new entrant consultants into line with their colleagues.

The Public Service Pay Commission in its Report published on 4 September found that the differential in pay between pre-existing and new entrant consultants is greater than for other categories of public servants. The Commission proposed that the Parties to the Public Service

Stability Agreement jointly consider what measures could be taken, over time, to address this difficulty.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, my Department and the HSE have noted the Commission's views and consideration will need to be given to potential solutions which are in line with public sector pay policy and available budgets.

Hospital Appointments Status

135. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health when a procedure will be scheduled for a person (details supplied). [47559/18]

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 Recruitment

136. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the obstacles that have been encountered in appointing a new chief executive for the HSE; the number of applications received to date for the position; his plans to revise the terms and conditions of the appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47562/18]

140. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the way in which he plans to proceed with the recruitment of the head of the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47578/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 136 and 140 together.

The process to select a new CEO for the HSE has not yet concluded successfully. It remains my objective to identify and appoint a CEO with all of the required skills as soon as possible and a revised process to do so is currently being finalised. The CEO will operate under the direction of an independent Board, as provided for in the Health Service Executive (Governance) Bill which is currently before the Oireachtas. Mr Ciaran Devane has been appointed Chair and expressions of interest have been sought for the other Board members. The passing of this legislation and finalisation of the membership of the Board based upon competency will allow it to come into operation in the new year.

In the interim it is envisaged that arrangements will continue for the filling of the DG / CEO

position on an acting basis.

As the CEO recruitment process is continuing, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further at this time.

Health Services

137. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the hospital and-or health facility buildings that have been built by a company (details supplied); and the steps he is taking to ensure quality control in relation to same. [47571/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive has overall responsibility for the management of health care property, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to you in relation to this matter.

Health Services

138. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he plans to expand specialised hospital supports and increase specialist staff for persons with Ehlers-Danlos syndrome; if not, if resources will be made available for this condition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47574/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Food

139. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to address the issue of the quality of hospital food in respect of its high fat and sugar content and low nutritional value; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47577/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): The quality of hospital food is a priority issue and the HSE has been requested to develop a National Hospital Food and Nutrition Policy. Development of this Policy is now at an advanced stage and it is expected to be available for publication by the end of the year.

The development of the Policy included extensive consultation and it will provide guidance on minimum nutrition standards, together with other relevant policies, such as protected meal times, the use of oral nutritional supplements, nutrition screening and referral pathways.

Question No. 140 answered with Question No. 136.

Energy Efficiency

141. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if his Department is part of the public sector energy reporting programme; if so, the percentage of improvement in energy efficiency to date that has been achieved; the way in which this was achieved; if his Department noted a decrease in energy efficiency in view of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for energy efficiency targets; if targets will be met by the 2020 deadline; and if he will make a

statement on the matter. [47593/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In 2009 the Government set a national target for Ireland to improve energy efficiency by 20% by 2020. At the same time, a more challenging efficiency target of 33% was set for the public sector to demonstrate leadership on energy efficiency.

The 20% improvement in energy efficiency by the public sector towards its target of 33% by 2020, has been achieved based largely on low-cost behavioural change measures.

The Department of Health has been working with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Energy, the SEAI and the OPW via the Optimising Power at Work Programme on energy efficiency measures.

In the most recent data available “Health” is shown as having achieved 17% savings to date and “not on track to achieve the target”. However, it should be noted that this relates to the Health Sector as a whole, and not just the Department. The HSE has been working to address energy usage, particularly in Acute Hospitals - which are among the biggest energy users in the Sector. To put this in context, one large-scale project could deliver significant savings that would achieve the target on behalf of the entire sector.

In relation to the Department, it has been participating in the OPW “Optimising Power at Work” scheme since 2007. This is the baseline year. Overall energy consumption in Hawkins House for the period 2017 v 2007 has shown an increase of 7.1%. This is primarily explained by a substantial increase in gas consumption over the year. A 33.3% increase on the base year was evident. This reflects the condition of Hawkins House and the adverse weather conditions over the period.

Electricity consumption continued to perform well, at the end of 2017 a saving of 26% was achieved.

Description	Electricity	Gas	Total
Benchmark Year	1,140,467	1,452,118	2,592,585
Previous 12 Months	839,484	1,936,005	2,775,549
% Difference	-26.4%	33.3%	7.1%

Department continued with a range of initiatives to improve energy performance including:

- Improvements from “turn off” initiative - with a particular focus on all PCs being shut down at 10pm nightly, if they have not already been shut down by the user.
- Monitoring of time clocks on mechanical and electrical systems.
- Monthly energy reporting.
- BMS (Building Maintenance System) Maintenance.

In July 2018, the Department moved to an A rated Building Energy Rating (BER) accommodation in Miesian Plaza and it is expected that this will have a positive impact on the target going forward. This should be most evident by the end of 2019 when the Department can compare full-year data in relevant categories.

Industrial Relations

142. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health if he is engaging with a union (details supplied) regarding its rejection of the recruitment and retention proposal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47601/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Officials from my Department and the HSE met with the three nursing unions - the INMO, SIPTU and the PNA - on Friday 9 November on this matter. There was a further meeting with the INMO on 14 November. Following on from that meeting, it is clear that there are different views concerning the interpretation of certain elements in the Public Service Stability Agreement. Consequently, management is referring the matter to the LRA National Oversight Body which is the appropriate mechanism for addressing questions of interpretation in relation to any aspect of the Agreement.

Health Services Staff Remuneration

143. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the mechanism he is planning to put in place to deal with anomalies in pay structures for nurses and midwives relative to other professions working in the health service as recommended by the Public Service Pay Commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47603/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Public Service Pay Commission noted that nurses and midwives are seriously aggrieved at what they regard as anomalies in the current pay structures relative to other professions working in the public health service. The Commission went on to say that the Parties to the Public Service Stability Agreement should consider putting arrangements in place, at an appropriate time, and without compromising the stability of the public service pay bill, to allow for the adequacy of current pay arrangements more generally to be fully examined. This is not something which can be addressed in isolation with reference to nurses and midwives or within the health sector. Cost-increasing claims for improvements in pay are precluded under the terms of the Public Service Stability Agreement, 2018 - 2020.

Public Service Pay Commission Reports

144. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address the poor data given to the Public Service Pay Commission, which hindered its work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47605/18]

145. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health his plans to put in place a medium and long-term national workforce plan based on service need as recommended by the Public Service Pay Commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47607/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 144 and 145 together.

The Public Service Pay Commission made particular comments around the need for centralised systems to record, monitor and analyse all employee data. Work ongoing within the HSE on the National Integrated Staff Records and Payroll Programme will assist in this regard over time. Work is also underway on the implementation of the National Strategic Health and Social Care Workforce Planning Framework which will support the further development of workforce planning capacity within the health service.

Medical Card Applications

146. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if a full medical card will be granted as a matter of urgency in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47616/18]

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

Higher Education Courses Provision

147. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the reason a fourth year mental health nursing course has been terminated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47620/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Responsibility for this matter resides with the Department of Education and Skills and I note that the Deputy has already submitted the question to my colleague, the Minister for Education and Skills.

Ambulance Service Provision

148. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health if there have been discussions with an organisation (details supplied) on the need to improve ambulance services in areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47638/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Meat Processing Plant Inspections

149. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he is satisfied with his Department's inspection system in meat factories; if the grading of cattle in the quality assurance scheme is independently validated; if the calibration of grading equipment is regularly inspected to ensure farmers are receiving the correct grades; if his Department has sufficient inspectors overseeing same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47476/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Officials of my Department carry out inspections at 32 beef slaughtering plants to ensure that Carcase Classification is carried out in accordance with EU Regulations. To date in 2018, over 42,000 carcasses were inspected during approximately 500 inspections. The number of inspections and carcasses inspected significantly exceeds the legal requirement for the minimum number of inspections set down in EU legislation.

During these un-announced inspections the following duties are also performed by the authorised officer:

- Evaluation of standard of dressing (trim) during the production process in real time when possible and on cold carcasses

- Examination of records concerning use of check weights

- Comparison of hot and cold weights
- Scrutiny of labelling particulars

The classification of all carcasses is monitored and independently validated by officers of my Department, regardless of whether the farms concerned are participating in the Bord Bia Quality Assurance Scheme or not.

Any calibration is conducted by the mechanical classification system provider but performance of machine grading is monitored at each inspection to ensure the machines operate within tolerance at all times.

A robust system is therefore in place for monitoring and oversight of carcase classification.

GLAS Payments

150. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Kerry will receive a GLAS payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47482/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Processing of 2018 GLAS advance payments commenced this week. I can confirm that the person named has been approved for payment of the 2018 advance and is up to date with all GLAS payments.

Marine Safety

151. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 764 of 6 November 2018, if clear sea lice have been found by the Marine Institute on farmed salmon at salmon farms here; the farms in which such clear sea lice have been detected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47556/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As the Deputy is aware, the control protocols for the management of sea lice are operated by the Marine Institute on behalf of the State. The sea lice management and control protocols and in particular the Pest Management Strategy introduced in 2008 lay down conditions for the compulsory control of sea lice infestation levels on marine salmon farms.

These protocols are more advanced than those operated in other jurisdictions for the following reasons:

- The inspection regime is totally independent of the industry.
- Data obtained as a result of inspection is published and made widely available.
- Treatment trigger levels are set at a low level.

The sea lice monitoring and control programme in Ireland has been acknowledged by the Environment Directorate (DG Environment) of the EU Commission as representing international best practice.

The salmon louse, *Lepeoptheirus salmonis*, is endemic in the marine environment and is a small crustacean ecto-parasite of salmon. It is found on the skin and fins of the fish and is clearly visible to the naked eye with adult females being approximately the size of a thumbnail.

The Marine Institute prepare a monthly report of sea lice levels obtained during the course of its regular inspections. The report for the month of October 2018 has confirmed that the occurrence of sea lice was below the treatment trigger levels set out in my Department's sea lice monitoring protocol.

Basic Payment Scheme Eligibility

152. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if there is provision in the new regulations of the Common Agricultural Policy 2014 to 2020 that would preclude him from including farm forestry planted before 2008 as eligible land for single and basic farming payments; and if he will seek to include this as a priority in ongoing discussions at EU level on the next CAP post-2020. [47558/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The provisions allowing for the Basic Payment Scheme on forests established under the current afforestation scheme 2014 -2020 are set out under Article 32(2)b(ii) Regulation (EU) 1307/2013. The rules allow for basic payments to be made on forest land providing the following criteria are satisfied:

1. The land to be afforested was declared on a 2008 SPS application form;
2. The applicant who declared that land on a 2008 SPS application form was paid under the 2008 Single Payment Scheme;
3. The afforested land was eligible for payment in 2008
4. The afforested land meets all the requirements of the Afforestation Grant and Premium Scheme 2007 -2013.

Discussions on the CAP post 2020 proposals are underway, following their publication on 1 June 2018. As part of these discussions, I am working to ensure that the current rules regarding eligibility of existing forests and the basic payment scheme are maintained. Furthermore I have requested that new forests established under the next CAP are also eligible for this payment.

Therefore it is not my intention to seek provisions allowing for forests planted outside of the criteria set out above to be treated as eligible hectares for the Basic Payment Scheme

Canine Passports

153. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if free passports will be rolled out to all rescue dogs rehomed abroad. [47575/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Under EU law, dogs moved to another EU Member State from Ireland must be accompanied by an EU pet passport.

As part of the assistance my Department provides to animal welfare organisations, free pet passports are provided in respect of dogs rehomed abroad by those organisations, subject to terms and conditions. In 2018, 4044 free passports were granted to 18 animal welfare charities for the purposes of rehoming abroad. In 2016 and 2017, 5261 and 5989 free passports respectively were granted.

Energy Efficiency

154. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department is part of the public sector energy reporting programme; if so, the percentage of improvement in energy efficiency to date that has been achieved; the way in which this was achieved; if his Department noted a decrease in energy efficiency in view of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for energy efficiency targets; if targets will be met by the 2020 deadline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47583/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department is actively participating in the Public Sector Energy Reporting Programme reporting all of its energy consumption through the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland's (SEAI) Monitoring and Reporting online system.

Since 2009, energy efficiency has improved by almost 21% in the Department, towards the 2020 target of 33%. In this time, DAFM has reduced its energy consumption by 19% or over 9M Kwh. This has been achieved mainly by low cost measures such as behavioural changes, better energy management, and lighting retrofits. In order to achieve continuous energy efficiency, additional works throughout DAFM and across the public service are required to reach 2020 and 2030 targets.

My Department is engaged with the OPW on various projects throughout DAFM that will aim to achieve more energy efficiencies and is an active participant in the Office of Public Works (OPW) Optimising Power @ Work campaign.

My officials are working proactively with State Bodies under the remit of my Department and with Department of Communications Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE), the OPW, and SEAI to progress both energy efficiency projects and energy management initiatives. My Department has submitted a detailed project pipeline to DCCAE and continues to work with State Bodies to assist them develop their own pipelines of capital projects.

My Department is committed to embedding energy efficiency into the culture of the organisation and continues to progress energy management initiatives across its main locations, including energy awareness days and local building audits. There are ongoing awareness campaigns in all Department locations.

Common Agricultural Policy Negotiations

155. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of discussions on increasing the CAP budget and legislative proposals post 2020; and the developments at European Parliament and Council level on same. [47642/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): At the outset, I would point out that in discussing the funding for the CAP post 2020, we should bear in mind that these discussions are taking place as part of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) post 2020 proposals, which is a matter for Heads of State and Government.

The retention of a sufficient budget for the CAP is an essential requirement for Ireland. This is further emphasised by future Brexit issues. I have been actively engaging with my European counterparts on this issue. Along with counterparts from France, Spain, Finland, Portugal and Greece, we have called for the restoration of the CAP budget for the 2021 – 2027 period to current levels. Up to 20 Member States have joined this alliance and we will continue to work to-

gether in an effort to build consensus on this point. I recognise that to achieve the best outcome, we need to seek common ground with like minded Member States. Ireland will continue to seek to build alliances as the negotiations for the next CAP and its budgetary allocation progress and I will continue to fight for a strong CAP budget.

As regards the CAP legislative proposals themselves, the European Commission's objective is to have the proposals adopted by the co-legislators in spring 2019, prior to the European Parliament Elections in May that year.

The Austrian Presidency scheduled an intensive programme of Working Party meetings to discuss the CAP proposals during its Presidency. These meetings have been ongoing since July, with up to 20 Working Group meetings having taken place so far. Further meetings are scheduled throughout the remainder of this month and into December. The Presidency is currently working on revisions to reach overall agreement.

In addition, the CAP Post 2020 has been discussed at the Special Committee of Agriculture meetings on a regular basis. CAP post 2020 has also been a standing agenda item at every Agri-Fish Council meeting. I had the opportunity to discuss the CAP proposals at our last meeting on 15 October, which looked at the performance framework and the new greening architecture. The CAP proposals will also be discussed at the next Agri-Fish Council meeting on Monday next, 19 November, with the focus being placed on the increased responsibilities of Paying Agencies and Certification Bodies under the new delivery model, and, the appropriateness of existing market support measures.

From the European Parliament's perspective, COMAGRI is expected to discuss the three draft reports on the future CAP at Committee level, when they meet on 21 November in Brussels, with the deadline for amendments set for 3 December. It is suggested that the amendments for legal & linguistic revision would be sent by 7 December and then on for translation by 11 December, to be ready in early January 2019. COMAGRI is aiming to vote on the amendments on 18/19 February, while the second session in March 2019 (25-28) has been set as the "deadline" for a plenary vote.

Departmental Programmes

156. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the latest developments regarding the agricultural sustainability support and advisory programme. [47643/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Agricultural Sustainability Support & Advisory Programme (ASSAP) is an innovative Government/industry initiative running from 2018 to 2021 and involves a well structured collaborative initiative involving all stakeholders, including the wider community, to facilitate improvements in water quality. The ASSAP involves a resource of 30 Agricultural Sustainability Advisors, 20 of whom are funded by Government and 10 by the Dairy Industry. These Advisors will promote on-farm best practice to farmers in 190 'Areas for Action', which have been identified by the EPA where the status of the water is at risk of regressing. Farmers can avail of this service within the 'Areas for Action' on a voluntary basis.

Advisors have now received comprehensive training to ensure a common approach. The process of engagement with both the wider communities and with farmers in these areas is now underway. Community meetings are taking place in the 'Areas-for-Action' to update the wider communities on developments in the local areas; 15 such community meetings will take

place before the year end. Furthermore farmer focused meetings will take place subsequent to the community meetings providing the opportunity for engagement with farmers in these areas. It is important to note the very strong support from all those involved in farming for the programme; this support is crucial in communicating and informing farmers about the ASSAP programme and facilitating farmer engagement.

Brexit Supports

157. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 194 of 8 November 2018, the details of EU agricultural state aid rules and regulations in question; and the ceilings that apply for each regulation. [47649/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department has responsibility for the implementation of the State Aid rules and regulations governing the agricultural sector. There are three separate regulations, details of which are outlined below:

- Commission Regulation (EU) No 1408/2013 on the application of de minimis aid in the agriculture sector – aid granted under this Regulation does not need to be notified to the European Commission. Aid can only be granted to undertakings active in the primary production of agricultural products. The individual ceiling is set at €15,000 over a three year rolling period, while the national ceiling is set at €66,280,000 over a rolling three year period.

- Commission Regulation (EU) No 702/2014 – the Agriculture Block Exemption Regulation. This Regulation applies to micro, small and medium sized enterprises active in primary agricultural production and the processing and marketing of agricultural products. Aid granted under this Regulation must be notified to the European Commission, through a simplified notification procedure. The aid intensity can vary from 100% of the eligible costs being paid to 40%, depending on the particular measure under which a scheme operates. There are no specific ceilings per se under this Regulation, however, individual aid which exceeds €7.5 million for certain measures or €500,000 for other measures would not be eligible to receive aid. Aid in excess of these amounts would need to be notified under the European Union Guidelines for State Aid in the agricultural and forestry sectors and in rural areas.

- The European Union Guidelines for State Aid in the agricultural and forestry sectors and in rural areas applies in principle to SME's and large enterprises active in primary agricultural production, the processing of agricultural products resulting in another agricultural product and the marketing of agricultural products. Aid granted under these Guidelines requires full notification to the European Commission. Notification thresholds under the Guidelines start from €7.5 million.

As outlined in my reply to PQ No 194 of 8 November 2018, the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation has responsibility for the general de minimis regulation 1407/2013.

Metropolitan Area Networks Programme

158. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will publish the March 2017 report received from a company (details supplied) regarding the extension of concession agreements for the metropolitan area networks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47441/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard

Bruton): An external report on extending or re-tendering the Management Services Entity for the Metropolitan Area Networks was completed by Norcontel in June 2016. This report proposed that the preferred option, based on the analysis, was to extend the current concession agreements. A redacted version of this report was released following a recent Freedom of Information request. The redacted report including the reason for any redaction is available on the Department's website at the following link: <https://www.dcae.gov.ie/documents/FOI2018141.pdf>

Public Procurement Contracts Data

159. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the procurement processes that have been referred by his Department to the Office of Government Procurement in each of the years 2011 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47442/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department has engaged with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) for procurement support and advice on an as needed basis since that Office commenced operations in 2014.

My Department has recourse to OGP's Schedule of Supplier Frameworks and Contracts when procuring goods and services. 60 contracts have been awarded by my Department under these centralised arrangements since 2014 as set out in the table below.

Framework/Contract	Procurement Process	No. Contracts Awarded
Accounting, audit and financial & economic services	Mini-Competition	3
Advertising	Mini-Competition	11
All of Government business & management consultancy and advisory services and other related services	Mini-Competition	5
Customised envelopes	Mini-Competition	1
Electrical goods (White goods & small appliances)	Mini-Competition	1
Freedom of information training	Mini-Competition	1
Light catering equipment	Mini-Competition	1
Managed business process support services	Mini-Competition	1
Manufacture, supply, fit and delivery of corporate uniforms to the Public Service	Mini-Competition	1
Multi-purpose office paper for printing & photocopying	Mini-Competition	5
National health & safety training, consultancy & advisory services	Mini-Competition	4
Personal protective equipment (PPE) and work wear	Mini-Competition	2
Pest control services	Mini-Competition	1
Photography	Mini-Competition	1

Framework/Contract	Procurement Process	No. Contracts Awarded
Printing	Mini-Competition	6
Stationary & office supplies	Mini-Competition	2
Supply & delivery of catering consumables and disposable products	Mini-Competition	1
Supply and Installation of desks, pedestals and storage units	Mini-Competition	1
Supply of electricity	Mini-Competition	2
Supply of natural gas to central Government	Mini-Competition	2
Supply of panel vans and SUV's	Mini-Competition	2
Taxi services to Public Bodies in greater Dublin region	Mini-Competition	2
Travel management services	Mini-Competition	2
Waste management	Mini-Competition	1
Water coolers, water bottles, point of use, service & water cups	Mini-Competition	1
Total		60

Furthermore, the Education Procurement Service, who operate with the OGP under the National Procurement Model, has managed an additional 7 procurement processes directly on behalf of Geological Survey Ireland, a line Division within my Department.

Public Procurement Contracts Data

160. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of concession agreements in place between his Department and private companies since 2003; the number that have been extended for a period of three years or more; the number for which independent legal and procurement advice was commissioned; the number of these in which advice was received to not proceed with the procurement process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47443/18]

161. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of concession agreements that have been extended to provide certainty to telecommunications service providers in the market since 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47444/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 160 and 161 together.

Since 2003, twelve Concession Agreements with private companies have been in place in my Department. Independent legal and procurement advice was sought in five of these cases and in no instance did the advice received recommend not to proceed with the procurement process.

Four of these twelve Concession Agreements related to telecommunications services. Two related to the management of the Emergency Call Answering Service (ECAS) and two related to the management of the Phase I and the Phase II Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs). The term of the 2009 ECAS contract was extended by two separate 12-month periods, the latter

ending on 14 July 2017. These decisions were informed by legal advice. In March 2017, in compliance with EU and national procurement regulations and informed by legal advice and the advice of external consultants, the two MAN's Concession Agreements were extended to co-terminate in 2030 to provide certainty to telecommunications service providers in the telecoms market.

A total of six of these Concession Agreements have been extended for periods of three years or more, all of which contain extension / renewal provisions. Three of these Agreements have since expired.

Public Procurement Contracts

162. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he is satisfied that the extension of the concession agreement for the metropolitan area networks followed Office of Government Procurement guidelines; if not, the reason it did not follow these guidelines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47445/18]

169. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the assistance of the Office of Government Procurement was requested with regard to the extension of the concession agreement for the MANs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47452/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 162 and 169 together.

The Department commenced two public procurements for a Concessionaire to manage operate and maintain the Metropolitan Area Networks Phases 1 and 2 in 2003 and 2007 respectively in compliance with national and EU procurement regulations. Contract notices for both procurements were published in the Official Journal of the European Union.

On completion of the procurement processes in 2004 and 2009, each Concession Agreement provided for an initial term of 15 years with an option to extend each Agreement for up to 10 years. Following a detailed review of the options to extend the Agreements or re-tender and, informed by legal advice and advice from external expert consultants, it was decided to extend both Agreements to 2030. As both Agreements contain explicit provisions to extend the term of the Agreements by up to 10 years, no procurement was undertaken.

National Broadband Plan

163. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the expected take-up rate for the national broadband plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47446/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure high speed broadband access (minimum 30 megabits per second) to all premises in Ireland. This is being achieved via a combination of commercial investment and a State led intervention.

The expected take up-rate for the State intervention area in the NBP is a matter for the ongoing procurement process.

More generally, information on broadband connections, including high speed broadband, is

available from ComReg through the Quarterly Key Data Report for Q2 2018, available at www.comreg.ie.

Eir reports data to my Department in relation its ongoing rural fibre deployment in accordance with the Commitment Agreement signed in April 2017. According to Quarter 3 2018 figures provided by eir to my Department the company has passed almost 210,000 premises as part of its ongoing deployment and that the take up is in line with the trajectory anticipated by eir when it commenced this commercial investment. The rate of take up along eir's 300k deployment has increased throughout 2018. This increase is expected to continue as eir proceeds to pass and connect further premises every month and as awareness of the availability of high speed broadband improves and retailers offer a choice and variety of communications packages over the network.

National Broadband Plan

164. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position regarding contingency planning in the event that the national broadband plan tendering process cannot continue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47447/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The final tender for the contract to roll out the National Broadband Plan State intervention was received by my Department on 18 September and evaluation of that tender submission is ongoing. I do not propose to speculate on the outcome of an ongoing tender evaluation.

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 is taking place in parallel with the evaluation being carried out on the Final Tender by the Department's evaluation team.

Metropolitan Area Networks Programme

165. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he is provided with quarterly reports with regard to the metropolitan area networks; if so, the nature of the reports; if he will release those reports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47448/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): enet, as part of its contractual obligations under the MSE I and MSE II Concession Agreements submits quarterly reports to the Department in relation to the Phase I and Phase II Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs). These reports include financial, operational and administrative information that is commercially sensitive and confidential and therefore the reports are not made publically available.

Print Media Supports

166. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position with regard to the introduction of supports for the newspaper industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47449/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): In recognition of the importance of a free and independent press, the print media sector is not subject to any sector specific regulation by the State. Rather, the Press Council of Ireland and the Office of the Press Ombudsman were established by industry to safeguard and promote professional and ethical standards in Irish newspapers and magazines. These bodies have been formally recognised under s. 44 of the Defamation Act 2009, which falls under the responsibility of my colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality.

My role as Minister in respect of the print media relates to the administration of the media mergers regime, which was created as a result of amendments made to the Competition Act 2002 by the Competition & Consumer Protection Act 2014. All media mergers must be notified to me as Minister and I must make a determination whether or not the proposed media merger may proceed based on an assessment of its impact on the plurality of media in the State.

Therefore while I have no specific role in relation to the funding of print media, I acknowledge the challenges faced by newspapers and the importance of quality journalism within an open and democratic society.

Brexit Issues

167. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position with regard to section 71 of the Broadcasting Act 2009 and advertising provided by television channels in the context of the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47450/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware, Government approval was obtained last year to draft a number of legislative amendments to the Broadcasting Act 2009. This included amendments to section 71.

Given the possibility that some UK based broadcasters will look to establish a base in Ireland following Brexit, it is considered that the current provision should be amended in anticipation of this possibility. At present, section 71 broadcasters are not subject to paying the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) levy. Section 71 is, however, the only way in which new entrants, including traditional linear broadcasters, can establish themselves to provide broadcasting services in Ireland. This amendment, therefore, proposes to amend the levy provisions to allow for the possibility of bringing section 71 broadcasters within the scope of the BAI levy.

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications, Climate Action & Environment considered the amendments under Pre-Legislative Scrutiny and published their report on March 8th. The Bill is currently being drafted by Parliamentary Counsel and is included as a priority on the Government's Legislative Programme.

Should a broadcaster establish itself in the State by obtaining a section 71 licence, that broadcaster would be subject to the advertising rules and codes provided for in the Broadcasting Act 2009.

National Broadband Plan Expenditure

168. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the estimated cost of the national broadband plan now stands at €3 billion; and

if he will make a statement on the matter. [47451/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): As outlined in response to previous Questions in this matter, the cost required to bring high speed broadband services to the 540,000 premises in the NBP State intervention area will be determined through the NBP State intervention procurement process.

Question No. 169 answered with Question No. 162.

Legal Costs

170. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount in legal costs awarded against his Department following a High Court case versus the Information Commissioner and a person (details supplied) regarding the 2009 municipal area network concession agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47508/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I refer the Deputy to the reply to Question no. 855 of 6 November 2018. As an appeal is ongoing in Court of Appeal, I have no further information at this time.

Broadband Service Provision

171. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the date for the roll-out of high-speed broadband for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47523/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The premises referred to by the Deputy is in the LIGHT BLUE area of the High Speed Broadband Map, which is available on my Department's website at www.broadband.gov.ie. The LIGHT BLUE areas are where eir is in the process of deploying high speed broadband to 300,000 premises on a commercial basis.

Under a Commitment Agreement signed with my Department in April 2017, eir is in the process of passing 300,000 predominantly rural homes with high speed broadband. According to data for Q3 2018 submitted by eir to my Department the company has passed almost 210,000 premises nationwide as part of its ongoing deployment. This data is to be published on my Department's website shortly.

Information on eir's planned rural deployment is available at <http://fibrerollout.ie/eircode-lookup/>.

I understand that an official from my Department has been in contact with owner of the premises referred to by the Deputy in relation to this matter.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

172. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to the fact that leakage of methane during fracking, processing and transport to here means that the Shannon LNG project, for which permission

was extended by An Bord Pleanála in July 2018, will be more harmful to the climate than a new coal-fired power station; and the way in which this decision by An Bord Pleanála fits with Ireland's urgent obligations to move away from harmful fossil fuels and towards renewable energy. [47561/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The 2015 Energy White Paper *Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future* sets out a road-map for Ireland to reduce its Greenhouse gas emissions by 80-95% by 2050. The strategy is clear that non-renewable energy sources will make a significant – though progressively smaller – contribution to our energy mix over the course of the energy transition. The National Mitigation Plan, published in July 2017, restates the Government's commitment to move from a fossil fuel-based electricity system to a low-carbon power system. Investment in further renewable generation will be incentivised.

Ireland's energy policy is fully aligned with the EU's climate and energy objectives on the transition to decarbonisation, which includes continuous and on-going review of policies to reduce harmful emissions, improve energy efficiency, incentivise efficient and sustainable infrastructure investment, integrate markets, and promote research and innovation while ensuring our energy security of supply is maintained and enhanced.

During this transition, gas has the potential to deliver significant and sustained benefits, particularly in terms of enhanced security of supply. Natural Gas has the potential to play an important role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the power generation, industrial and commercial, residential and transport sectors by replacing more CO₂-intensive fossil fuels. In Ireland gas powered generation also provides an important back-up for intermittent renewable wind generation.

The Deputy will appreciate that the LNG project to which the Deputy refers is a private commercial project and any future investment decisions on the development of this project are a matter for the project promoter.

An Bord Pleanála is independent in the exercise of its functions and a copy of its decision in relation to the Shannon LNG project is on the An Bord Pleanála website.

Energy Efficiency

173. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his Department is part of the public sector energy reporting programme; if so, the percentage of improvement in energy efficiency to date that has been achieved; the way in which this was achieved; if his Department noted a decrease in energy efficiency in view of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for energy efficiency targets; if targets will be met by the 2020 deadline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47586/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The public sector has a target to improve its energy efficiency by 33% by 2020. All Public sector Bodies are legally required to report their energy performance annually to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). The Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) System, established by SEAI on behalf of my department, enables public bodies and schools to track their energy efficiency performance and facilitates them in their energy management.

The most recently published data (available from SEAI *Annual Report 2017 on Public Sector Energy Efficiency Performance*) covers the period to end 2016. It shows that my department had by then achieved a cumulative 19.9% energy improvement. In 2017, the depart-

ment launched the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy (PSEES) which was approved by Government to support the additional effort needed to meet the 33% target. The Group my Department heads comprises 16 bodies, including the Department itself, is one of the strongest performing groups, having achieved 31% energy efficiency to end 2016.

This improved energy performance in my department was achieved by:

- participation in the OPW Optimising Power @ Work (OP@W) initiative;
- introduction of a Building Management System to enable better energy monitoring and management;
- upgrading the heating system in the Department's HQ building to allow for zonal targeting and switch off during holiday periods;
- rollout of energy efficient networked printers and photocopiers;
- upgrading to more efficient LED lights, where appropriate;
- insulation works in part of our HQ building;
- energy awareness days and efficiency notices displayed throughout the buildings.

Further energy efficiency opportunities will be identified as part of a recent energy audit under the OP@W initiative. This should provide a basis to deliver further energy efficiency improvements.

I fully expect that when the figures for 2017 are published later this month they will show a further significant efficiency improvement for the department. Based on progress to date I remain confident that my Department and its Group will be successful in achieving the 2020 target. We will also continue to work with other Departments through the Governance structures set up under the PSEES, with the assistance of SEAI and the OPW, to provide guidance and support to the Departmental Energy Performance Officers and their groups to manage their performance so that the overall national target can be achieved.

Cross-Border Projects

174. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the construction of the A5 upgrade to a dual carriageway from Derry city and County Donegal to County Monaghan will be equally co-funded. [47483/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The current funding arrangements in relation to the A5 are governed by the Stormont House Agreement and Implementation Plan - A Fresh Start. This Agreement reaffirmed the Government's commitment to provide funding of £50 million for the A5 project and committed an additional £25 million towards the cost of Phase 1 of the project (Newbuildings to north of Strabane).

The funding allocated to my Department as part of the 2017 Capital Plan Review includes financial provision for meeting the Government's commitment regarding the A5 in three £25 million (sterling) tranches over the period 2019 to 2021. The project is the subject of legal proceedings at present.

Rail Services Provision

175. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he expects to be in a position to approve the necessary expenditure to increase the number of rail carriages serving north County Kildare commuter routes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47520/18]

178. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the urgent need to provide additional carriages on the Waterford to Dublin line in view of continued overcrowding from a station (details supplied) in County Kildare. [47539/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 175 and 178 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for ensuring the development and delivery of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area including, in consultation with Iarnród Éireann, the provision of rail fleet.

In light of the NTA's responsibility on this matter, I have referred the Deputies' questions to the NTA for a more detailed reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Rail Services

176. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will re-examine the fare structure on the commuter train lines with specific reference to Newbridge, County Kildare which has not been included in a recent fare restructuring; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47521/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for regulating fares charged by public transport operators. I have therefore forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Railway Stations Upgrade

177. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the proposed upgrade of a train station (details supplied) in County Kildare. [47538/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding of public transport. The operation of the rail network and stations on the network including upgrade of train stations, is a matter for Iarnród Éireann in the first instance.

In view of Iarnród Éireann's responsibility in this matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Question No. 178 answered with Question No. 175.

Rail Services

179. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to reduce student fares from train stations (details supplied) in County Kildare in view of the unavailability of student accommodation in Dublin and the growing number of students that must use the train service. [47540/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for regulating fares charged by public transport operators. I have therefore forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Road Network

180. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding a road project (details supplied) in County Kildare. [47541/18]

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 detailed and direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Energy Efficiency

181. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department is part of the public sector energy reporting programme; if so, the percentage of improvement in energy efficiency to date that has been achieved; the way in which this was achieved; if his Department noted a decrease in energy efficiency in view of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for energy efficiency targets; if targets will be met by the 2020 deadline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47598/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): A Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy was published by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment in January 2017. The Public Sector Energy Reporting Programme forms part of this Strategy and this Department reports to SEAI under this Programme. Energy Efficiency for this Department shows an increase of 12.3% to the end of 2017.

My Department has taken a number of measures to improve energy efficiency in the Department and a number of other measures are underway. Measures undertaken and those proposed include:

- replacing all of the lights in the Leeson Lane building complex to energy saving LED lights
- provision of a new cleaning contract in 2018 to include implementation of waste management initiatives with the segregation of all waste and the introduction of recyclable, food and glass waste bins and stations

- holding of “Energy Awareness Days” for all staff
- holding “Step up Days” which encourage staff to use the stairs instead of lifts
- removal of non recyclable cups by end of February 2019
- moving staff from Kildare Street and Clare Street offices to Leeson Lane, thus reducing the energy costs involved in maintaining three buildings
- the implementation of IT energy saving measures which include an automatic shutdown of PCS, a reduction of printers by introducing print stations and print rooms and the introduction of a print management solution by replacing all printers within the Department to energy saving devices.

My Department will continue to carry out further energy saving initiatives with a view to meeting the energy efficient target by 2020.

Direct Provision System

182. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she is satisfied that enough supports are in place for children in a new direct provision centre (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47468/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I wish to inform the Deputy that Direct Provision comes under the policy remit of my colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality. The matter to which the Deputy refers is more appropriately directed to that Department.

Children living in Direct Provision are in the care and custody of their parents. With the introduction of mandatory reporting under Children First, Direct Provision centre managers are required to report any concerns about the protection or welfare of children residing in their centre, to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency.

Mother and Baby Homes Collaborative Forum

183. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of members remaining on the survivor forum; the number of resignations she has received; if there is a process to replace those that have left; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47549/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The independent Selection Panel which I appointed to nominate representatives to the Forum for my consideration, selected 19 applicants from the expressions of interest received.

There are currently 18 members plus the Chairman in situ. I have received 2 resignations since the Forum commenced its work and one of these vacancies has been filled.

The process of any further appointments will be considered on a case by case basis, having due regard to the representative nature of the Forum, its programme of work and the expressions of interest received.

A number of factors are considered when appointing a member to the Collaborative Forum. The membership of the Forum must reflect its remit to support and engage with those who

were resident for a time in these institutions and those with comparable experiences in the former County Homes. A key consideration, therefore, is to retain a balance and diversity of stakeholder perspectives and experiences within the membership of the Forum. This includes maintaining an inclusive representation from across the various Mother and Baby Homes and related institutions being examined by the Commission of Investigation.

Energy Efficiency

184. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her Department is part of the public sector energy reporting programme; if so, the percentage of improvement in energy efficiency to date that has been achieved; the way in which this was achieved; if her Department noted a decrease in energy efficiency in view of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for energy efficiency targets; if targets will be met by the 2020 deadline; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47585/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department is fully engaged in the Public Sector Energy Reporting Programme. I am happy to report that my Department has improved its energy efficiency performance at the end of 2017 by 47%. This is above the target set at 33% by the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy 2020.

During 2017, my Department reduced its energy consumption by putting procedures in place such as enabling automatic computer shut down in the evenings, reducing lighting in areas of the building with reduced footfall, the removal of personal heaters and desk fans, the central heating system set on a timer for ‘exception periods’ for dates when the building was closed on weekends and Bank Holidays. My Department also provided energy awareness information sessions to staff.

I expect my Department’s energy efficiency performance to further improve as a result of the move in early 2018 to Miesian Plaza. Miesian Plaza is designed for high energy efficiency and is expected to achieve LEED Platinum accreditation. LEED, (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is the most widely used green building rating system in the world.

National Indemnity Scheme for Landowners

185. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the national indemnity scheme (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47530/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department has been working to develop a scheme to indemnify private land owners with regard to the use of their lands for recreational purposes. In this context, my officials have been in contact with the State Claims Agency and the Attorney General’s Office with a view to progressing the matter.

My Department has been advised that the proposed indemnity scheme should be underpinned by legislation, and my officials are now in the process of identifying the precise legislative requirements and/or processes required give effect to the scheme.

I have asked my officials to prioritise this work and to develop clear proposals to have the scheme progressed and rolled out as soon as possible on a phased basis.

Energy Efficiency

186. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if his Department is part of the public sector energy reporting programme; if so, the percentage of improvement in energy efficiency to date that has been achieved; the way in which this was achieved; if his Department noted a decrease in energy efficiency in view of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for energy efficiency targets; if targets will be met by the 2020 deadline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47597/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department is fully committed to and engaged with the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy published by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment in January 2017. The group composed of my Department and the bodies under our aegis is committed to the achievement of the ambitious 33% energy savings target and we will work together to achieve the target in the most efficient manner possible.

As my Department was only established in July 2017, the Department and the bodies under our aegis will submit the first annual report for our group next year. Notwithstanding this, implementation of the strategy is well underway within our group. Energy Performance Officers are in place in my Department and in the bodies under our aegis and my Department recently facilitated an information session for the officers concerned along with representatives from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland. The aim of the session was to ensure there is a concerted strategy to achieve the group's energy savings target, to share best practice examples and to better draw upon the expertise available from SEAI and others. I should also point out that my Department is also actively participating in the OPW's "Optimising Power@Work" initiative and our shared offices in Ballina was a Regional Award Winner in this regard in 2018.

My Department will continue to work with our colleagues in the bodies under our aegis to achieve the energy savings target outlined for our group and we will collectively seek innovative approaches to deliver savings across our respective organisations.

State Pension (Contributory)

187. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if social insurance contributions made by self-employed persons before 1987 will be recognised for pension purposes when those self-employed persons reach pension age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47454/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Whether social insurance contributions made by self-employed persons before 1987 are reckonable for pension purposes will depend upon the nature of those contributions.

Class S PRSI was introduced for the self-employed in 1988. Prior to 1988 the self-employed could maintain their social insurance record by paying Voluntary Contributions, once they had already been an employed contributor and met the qualifying conditions of the Voluntary Contributions scheme. Generally, Voluntary Contributions maintained entitlement to a limited range of pension payments, including the State pension (contributory).

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory)

188. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person (details supplied) is entitled to an increased pension if the person's record of self-employment and associated social insurance contributions before 1987 is taken into account; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47455/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned was awarded a reduced state pension (contributory) from their 66th birthday, based on an assessed yearly average of 35 contributions, covering their working life from November 1970 to end-December 2016. The person was notified of this decision in writing on 5 April 2017.

Social insurance for self-employed persons was introduced in April 1988. Periods of self-employment prior to that date cannot be taken into account for pension entitlement purposes as those periods were not insurable under Social Welfare legislation.

The person's social insurance record has been reviewed and additional credited contributions have been awarded for the years 1985/86 and 1986/87. This increases the person's yearly average from 35 to 37. However, as the person's yearly average remains within the 30-39 yearly average rate band, their rate of state pension (contributory) payment is unchanged. The person was notified of the outcome of this review on 12 November 2018.

It is open to the person concerned to apply for state pension (non-contributory). This is a means-tested pension payment. If the person has an assessed weekly income of less than €257.50, they may qualify for a state pension (non-contributory). If an entitlement to state pension (non-contributory) is established, the person will be paid the most financially beneficial pension.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Applications

189. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if all payments due to a person (details supplied) arising from an illness benefit claim will issue; when the matter will be resolved; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47457/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Unfortunately we appear to have no record of receiving an application form from the person concerned. One of my officials is contacting the person concerned today and will assist her in making an application.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Payments

190. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when an application by a person (details supplied) in County Donegal for illness benefit will be processed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47458/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The

person concerned is currently in receipt of Maternity Benefit since the 24th August 2018 which overlaps with her Illness Benefit claim.

This overlap is being dealt with currently and any arrears due to her will be paid in the coming days.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Asylum Support Services

191. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the steps she will take to facilitate those who have been granted asylum in an accommodation centre (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47470/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): From 30th June 2018, applicants for international protection in Ireland have entitlements under the EU (recast) Reception Conditions Directive.

Material reception conditions (i.e. housing, food and associated benefits) are provided to protection applicants at accommodation centres managed by the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) of the Department of Justice and Equality. The daily expenses allowance (DEA), formerly known as direct provision allowance, is administered by my Department and is payable to protection applicants who reside in RIA accommodation centres.

As announced in Budget 2019, the weekly rates of DEA will increase to €38.80 for an adult and €29.80 for a child from 25 March 2019.

Protection applicants can also access exceptional needs payments and the back to school clothing and footwear allowance as, unlike other social welfare payments, these are not subject to the habitual residence condition.

The Department will work with RIA to ensure that protection seekers due to be housed in the accommodation centre referred to by the Deputy will have access to the range of supports to which they are entitled.

I trust his clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Applications

192. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an illness benefit application by a person (details supplied); when arrears will issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47472/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Illness Benefit claim for the person concerned is now certified and paid up to the 8th November 2018.

If the person in question remains ill and unfit for work, a further medical certificate should be submitted as soon as possible so that payment can issue.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Working Family Payment Applications

193. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47480/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Working Family Payment (formerly Family Income Supplement) is a weekly tax-free payment which provides additional income support to employees on low earnings with children.

An application for Working Family Payment (WFP) was received from the person concerned on 25th September 2018.

WFP is not payable while an applicant is in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA).

The Department has written to the person concerned on 13th November 2018 advising them to contact the local Intreo Office in respect of their JSA claim.

Once this has been done, their WFP application will be processed without delay and they will be notified of the decision.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Data

194. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the financial savings made in each of the years 2015 to 2017 as a direct result of the introduction of reduced rates of social welfare payments to persons under 25 years of age. [47481/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The age related reduced rate of €100 per week for Jobseeker's Allowance recipients was introduced in Budget 2010 in respect of 18 and 19 year olds, and extended in subsequent Budgets to those under the age of 25. Based on the average number of Jobseeker's Allowance recipients in the relevant year, and an estimate of the proportion in receipt of this age-related reduced rate, the estimated cost of increasing :

- in 2015, the €100 weekly rate to the maximum personal rate of €188 would have been €131.3 million;

- in 2016, the €100 weekly rate to the maximum personal rate of €188 would have been €133.6 million; and

- in 2017, the €102.70 weekly rate to the maximum personal rate €193 would have been €101.9 million.

These costs do not include increasing the weekly rates for those aged 25 on age-related reduced rates.

It should be noted that age related reduced rates do not apply in certain circumstances, such as where the person has a qualified child, where the person was previously in state care, or where the young person participates in a recognised education/training course.

Illness Benefit Applications

195. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for illness benefit by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47489/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Illness Benefit claim is now paid up to date and certified to 31st January 2019, regular payments will issue on a weekly basis to that date.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

196. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47494/18]

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 CA from the person concerned on the 11 July 2018.

The application is currently being processed and information has been sought from the person concerned in respect of savings and income from their spouse's self-employment. Once this information is received their application will be decided and they concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Wage Subsidy Scheme

197. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a wage subsidy scheme application by a person (details supplied) will issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47501/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The wage subsidy scheme (WSS) is an employment support to private sector employers. The scheme provides financial incentives to private sector employers to hire people with a disability for between 21 and 39 hours per week under a contract of employment.

The objective of the wage subsidy scheme (WSS) is to increase the likelihood of people with disabilities participating in the open labour market by making available a subsidy to private sector employers. The scheme operates by allowing employers to claim a subsidy, subject to certain conditions, against the cost of a 'shortfall' in productivity which may arise where a jobseeker (who has a disability) is employed.

My Department is considering the details of the application and will reply directly to the Deputy as a matter of urgency.

Illness Benefit Payments

198. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when illness payment arrears will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47515/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Illness Benefit arrears due to the person concerned have now been calculated and processed and they will issue to him early next week.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Waiting Times

199. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the delays in the processing of new and existing illness benefit claims; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47517/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): My Department transferred administration of the Illness Benefit scheme to its core Business Objects IT platform in August 2018. Although the system change has worked effectively for over 80% of IB customers, significant difficulties arose following implementation for a number of customers.

My Department is taking three main steps to resolve the issues impacting on payments. First, we have deployed additional staff to process the tasks and respond to the customer enquiries. Second, we have developed some new IT processes that address the payment gap issues and to ensure a faster flow-through to payments. Third, we are reviewing the design rules in the system to afford greater flexibility in processing of claims and certificates.

Payment volumes were restored to normal levels last week and my officials are monitoring them on a daily basis to ensure that they remain at this level. Any further issues that may arise will be dealt with as they are identified. In addition to these system issues, the Department acknowledges that it did not communicate effectively with customers.

In order to ensure that we learn from the lessons of this experience, I have arranged for an independent review into how the changes to IB were planned, implemented and – importantly – communicated to customers. I expect this work to be completed by the end of the year.

Finally, I would like to sincerely apologise again for the difficulties and frustration experienced by customers who did not receive the correct IB payment or who experienced delays in their payments over the last few weeks.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

200. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47524/18]

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. Where the child is under the age of 16, CA cannot be awarded unless a domiciliary care allowance (DCA) is in payment in respect of the child.

An application for CA was received from the person concerned in November 2017 in respect of two children. As DCA was not in payment in respect of one of the children, CA was awarded in respect of only one child.

The person concerned has requested a review of this decision. As DCA has since been awarded in respect of the child in question, CA was awarded to the person concerned on 12 November 2018 and the first payment will issue to their nominated bank account on 22 November 2018.

As the person concerned owes a debt to the Department in respect of CA previously paid while they were working in excess of 15 hours per week, arrears of allowance due from 15 June 2017 to 21 November 2018, less outstanding debt, will also issue to their bank account. The person concerned was notified of this on 12 November 2018.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Payments

201. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will receive illness benefit. [47535/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Illness Benefit claim for the person concerned is paid up to date. He is certified to 31st January 2019 and so his normal payment should issue weekly to that date.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Payments

202. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the fact that a person (details supplied) is in receipt of a disability allowance; if her attention has been further drawn to the fact that the person received a partial increase of €37 in October 2017 when his partner joined a community employment scheme; if her attention has been further drawn to the fact that the allowance was reduced by €130 from 22 October 2018 when the person's partner completed participation in the community employment scheme and became eligible for jobseeker's allowance; the reason the payment of disability allowance was reduced by €130; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47548/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The rate of Disability Allowance (DA) in payment to this gentleman increased in 2017 as he was awarded an increase for qualified adult (IQA) in respect of his partner.

From 17 October 2018, his partner become eligible for a payment in their own right which means IQA is no longer payable on his DA claim. This gentleman is now in receipt of full rate DA payment from 17 October 2018. All arrears due issued to this gentleman on 12 November 2018

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy

State Pension (Contributory)

203. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the position of workers who will retire in 2020 at 65 years of age but will not be entitled to a contributory pension until 67 years of age; if they will have an entitlement to jobseeker's payment between their retirement and pension entitlement age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47552/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011 provided that State pension age will be increased gradually to 68 years. This began in January 2014 with the abolition of the State pension (transition) which was available to people aged 65 who satisfied the qualifying conditions. This measure standardised the State pension age for all at 66 years. This will increase to 67 in 2021 and to 68 in 2028.

In most cases, it is hoped that workers will continue to work up to State pension age. Where this is not possible, there are specific measures which apply to someone claiming Jobseeker's Benefit from a date after their 65th birthday. Where qualified, these recipients may continue to be eligible for that payment until reaching pension age, subject to the relevant criteria.

It is well known that people are living for much longer. Life expectancy at birth has increased significantly over the years – and is now at 78.4 years for men and 82.8 years for women. This is very positive. As a result of this demographic change, the number of State pension recipients is increasing year on year. This has significant implications for the future costs of State pension provision which are currently increasing by close to €1 billion every 5 years. The purpose of changes to the State pension age is to make the pension system more sustainable in the context of increasing life expectancy. This sustainability is vital, if the current workers, who fund State pension payments through their PRSI, are to receive a pension themselves when they reach retirement age.

The Deputy should note that there is no legally mandated retirement age in the State, and the age at which employees retire is a matter for the contract of employment between them and their employers. While such a contract may have been entered into with a retirement date of 65, in the context of the previous State pension arrangements, there is no legal impediment to the employer and employee agreeing to increase the duration of employment for one or more years, if both parties wish to do so.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Administration

204. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the caps that have recently been put in place regarding the number of community employment workers that may be employed on a project. [47557/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Work schemes such as Community Employment (CE) are positive initiatives that enable the long-term unemployed to make a contribution to their communities whilst up-skilling themselves for prospective future employment. This scheme helps to break the cycle of unemploy-

ment and improve a person's chances of returning to the labour market.

CE schemes are typically sponsored by groups (known as sponsors) wishing to benefit the local community. My Department agrees participant numbers annually with each CE sponsor organisation who are responsible for the recruitment of participants and for identifying suitable work placements.

The CE scheme has a budget to support approximately 21,900 participant places in 2018 and 21,500 places in 2019. At the end of October, there was a total of 21,243 participants on the scheme.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

205. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47560/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): An application for Domiciliary Care Allowance was received from the person concerned on the 25th May 2018. The application was not allowed as the child was not considered to satisfy the qualifying conditions for the allowance. A letter issued on the 21st August 2018 setting out the decision of the deciding officer to refuse the allowance.

A review of this decision was requested on the 24th August 2018 and an appeal was also submitted on the 30th August 2018. Further medical evidence that was received in support of the review has been referred to the Department's Medical Assessor for their medical opinion. When this is received the claim will be re-examined by a deciding officer and a revised decision will be made if warranted. Alternatively, the case will be referred for consideration by the Social Welfare Appeals Office. The person concerned will be notified of the outcome of the deciding officer's review as soon as possible.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Employment Rights

206. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of cases of alleged bogus self-employment that were substantiated when reported to and examined by the SCOPE section of her Department and subsequently overturned on appeal by the Social Welfare Appeals Office in each of the past five years by industry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47572/18]

208. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of cases of alleged bogus self-employment that were substantiated when reported to and examined by the SCOPE section in each of the past five years by industry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47580/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 206 and 208 together.

The Department's Scope section makes in excess of 1,000 employment status determina-

tions each year covering a range of issues including directors of companies, family employments, partnerships and public sector employments. Cases are not categorised by industry.

The number of cases involving a direct conflict of employment or self-employment status is relatively small.

In 2017 Scope section made 138 decisions resulting in a class A employment decision. Of these, 35 could be described as disputed employment/self-employment cases.

In the current year they have made 113 decisions resulting in a class A employment decision of which 27 could be described as disputed employment/self-employment cases. The table below gives the figures for the last five years.

Table 1.

Year	Total decisions	Total No. class A (employee)	No. of employee/self-employed cases
2013	1552	205	13
2014	1275	209	50
2015	1061	188	41
2016	1027	138	28
2017	1097	138	35
2018 to date	1049	113	27

In instances of dispute as to the correct employment status, Scope records the determination made but does not designate cases as “bogus self-employed” as it is not correct to describe all cases in which a person is deemed to be an employee rather than self-employed as “bogus self-employment”.

Following a Scope decision, the employer will be liable for class A PRSI for the full period of employment. This can be a significant penalty for a business. Most employers cooperate fully with the Department’s inspectors in insuring compliance following a Scope decision. Where they fail to comply then additional measures, including prosecution, can be brought to bear.

Regarding the number of cases overturned on appeal, the table below shows the total number of Scope decisions each year and the number that are appealed.

Table 2.

Percentage of Scope decisions that are appealed 2013-2018

Year	Total decisions	Total No. appealed	% of decisions appealed
2013	1552	73	4.70
2014	1275	75	5.88
2015	1061	101	9.52
2016	1027	52	5.06
2017	1097	83	7.57
2018 to date	1049	55	5.24

Table 3 below outlines the result of appeals in respect of Scope cases. This includes all Scope appeals. It is not possible to provide figures specific to cases involving bogus self-employment.

Table 3.

SCOPE appeal outcomes 2013-2018 (to end of October)

Questions - Written Answers

Year	Al- lowed	%	Part al- lowed	%	Revised	%	Disal- lowed	%	With- drawn	%	Total
2013	14	20.9	0	0.0	4	6.0	43	64.2	6	9.0	67
2014	13	11.2	4	3.4	20	17.2	62	53.4	17	14.7	116
2015	20	18.7	0	0.0	5	4.7	71	66.4	11	10.3	107
2016	30	21.6	4	2.9	20	14.4	72	51.8	13	9.4	139
2017	34	24.5	4	2.9	11	7.9	37	26.6	53	38.1	139
2018	22	28.9	2	2.6	3	3.9	39	51.3	10	13.2	76
Totals	119	20.6	14	2.4	59	10.2	281	48.7	104	18.0	577

As can be seen, approximately one fifth of appeals of Scope cases are upheld and approximately half are rejected. Those that are “revised” are revised by the original Deciding Officer in Scope section on foot of additional information.

In conclusion, 5-10% of Scope decisions are appealed each year, and of these, approximately 20% are overturned on appeal.

[Note: the numbers of appeals in the two tables are not the same for each year. Table 2 is the number of cases sent for appeal that year; Table 3 is the number of appeal decisions made that year.]

Employment Rights

207. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of prosecutions she has sought against employers that have been found to have been employing workers on bogus self-employment contracts in each of the past five years; the number of cases that were successfully prosecuted each year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47573/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department’s Scope Section makes in excess of 1,000 employment status determinations each year covering a range of issues including directors of companies, family employments, partnerships and public sector employments.

The number of cases involving a direct conflict of employment or self-employment status is relatively small.

In 2017, Scope Section made 138 decisions resulting in a class A employment decision. Of these, 35 could be described as disputed employment/self-employment cases.

In the current year, they have made 113 decisions resulting in a class A employment decision, of which 27 could be described as disputed employment/self-employment cases.

In instances of dispute as to the correct employment status, Scope Section records the determination made but does not designate cases as “bogus self-employed” as it is not correct to describe all cases in which a person is deemed to be an employee - rather than self-employed - as “bogus self-employment”.

Following a Scope decision, the employer will be liable for class A PRSI for the full period of employment. This can be a significant penalty for a business. Most employers co-operate fully with the Department’s inspectors in insuring compliance following a Scope decision. Where they fail to comply then additional measures, including prosecution, can be brought to bear.

The Department considers for prosecution all persons who defraud the social welfare system and employers who fail to carry out statutory obligations under the Social Welfare Acts.

Cases referred to the Department's Central Prosecution Service (CPS) for consideration of prosecution are examined using the principles established by the Director of Public Prosecutions. If the CPS is satisfied that a prosecution should be pursued, a brief is prepared and submitted for authorisation to prosecute and it will be referred to the Chief State Solicitor's Office for distribution to a State Solicitor. A prosecution may not be considered necessary if the issue has been resolved successfully.

From 2014 to date, prosecution proceedings have been taken in 21 cases where an employer failed to comply with statutory obligations. The offences related to employers who have failed to remit PRSI, to provide records, to produce records, or failed to maintain records.

Eighteen cases of this nature were finalised in the same period. A further 12 cases are under the examination in my Department for consideration of prosecution. A breakdown is provided in table I below.

An employer/employee may also be prosecuted if they are found to obstruct a Social Welfare Inspector in the course of their duties. Seven cases of this nature were prosecuted between 2014 to date and 7 were finalised in the same period. A breakdown is provided in table II below

Statistics regarding employer/employee prosecutions are collated on the basis of the alleged offence and not on the specifics of the cases. Therefore, there are no records held on the number of prosecutions that may relate to bogus self-employment.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Table I

	2014	2015	2016	2017	End Oct 2018
IN9 – Failure to remit PRSI	5	3	1	0	0
IN28 - Failure to provide records	1	2	1	0	0
IN 32 Failure to produce records	4	2	0	0	0
Failure to maintain records	1	1	0	0	0
Total	11	8	2	0	0
Cases Finalised	4	6	4	2	2

Table II

	2014	2015	2016	2017	End October 2018
Employer Obstruction	1	2	0	1	0
Employee Obstruction	0	0	2	0	1
Total	1	2	2	1	1
Obstruction cases finalised	0	2	2	1	2

Question No. 208 answered with Question No. 206.

209. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount of funding provided to the Money Advice and Budgeting Service in each of the past ten years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47581/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), under the aegis of the Citizens Information Board, since 2009, assists people who are over-indebted and need help and advice in coping with debt problems, in particular those on low incomes and people living on social welfare payments.

The role of MABS has expanded in recent years. In 2015 the Dedicated Mortgage Arrears (DMA MABS) service was established in MABS specifically to help people in mortgage arrears. Since mid-2016 MABS is the gateway to the Abhaile suite of services which aims to help mortgage holders in long term arrears to find the best solutions and keep them wherever possible, in their own homes.

Annual funding is provided by the Citizens Information Board to the MABS services, which are now organised on a regional basis.

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service also includes MABS National Development (ND) and National Traveller MABS.

MABS (ND) provides central support services to the MABS companies, including technical support for casework, money management, education and training and is also responsible for the national MABS Helpline.

National Traveller MABS (NTMABS) highlights issues of over-indebtedness and exclusion from financial institutions among Irish Travellers and makes appropriate responses through its research and policy work. It establishes ways for the Traveller community to access legal and affordable credit and money management advice.

Funding provided by CIB to the Money Advice and Budgeting Service, including National Traveller MABS and MABS National Development is shown in the table below.

	MABS*€	MABS ND**€	DMA***€	ABHAILE€	TOTAL€
2008	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	-
2009	496,610	n/a	n/a	n/a	496,610
2010	16,093,413	1,974,412	n/a	n/a	18,067,825
2011	15,234,467	1,964,652	n/a	n/a	17,199,119
2012	15,929,321	2,008,000	n/a	n/a	17,937,321
2013	15,751,160	1,997,607	n/a	n/a	17,748,767
2014	15,389,058	1,981,043	n/a	n/a	17,370,101
2015	15,157,081	2,141,300	511,402	n/a	17,809,783
2016	15,425,959	2,244,492	1,754,392	915,707	20,340,549
2017	15,735,472	1,853,744	2,416,190	3,737,631	23,743,037
2018 allocation	15,785,916	2,334,549	2,054,732	3,694,142	23,869,339

* Money Advice and Budgeting Service (including National Traveller MABS)

** MABS National Development

*** Dedicated Mortgage Arrears

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Citizens Information Services Funding

210. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount of funding provided to the Citizens Information Service in each of the past ten years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47582/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Citizens Information Services (CIS), under the aegis of the Citizens Information Board (CIB), provides information to the public on a range of social and public services. CIS's also provide an advocacy service to those who need assistance to access their entitlements. CIB also funds the Citizens Information Phone Service, which provides a comprehensive and confidential national telephone service.

Annual funding is provided by the Citizens Information Board to the Citizens Information Services. The table below sets out the funding provided to the Citizens Information Services and CIPS over the past ten years.

Year	CIS* €	CIPS** €	Total Amount €
2008	11,861,878	1,189,563	13,051,441
2009	12,287,678	1,316,970	13,604,648
2010	12,593,289	1,389,627	13,982,916
2011	12,425,648	1,291,754	13,717,402
2012	12,352,648	1,320,000	13,672,648
2013	12,478,192	1,123,244	13,601,436
2014	12,482,753	1,288,215	13,770,968
2015	12,359,767	1,249,569	13,609,336
2016	12,862,645	1,105,750	13,968,395
2017	13,170,660	1,244,748	14,415,408
2018 allocation	13,250,932	1,312,338	14,563,270

*Citizens Information Services

**Citizens Information Phone Services

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Energy Efficiency

211. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her Department is part of the public sector energy reporting programme; if so, the percentage of improvement in energy efficiency to date that has been achieved; the way in which this was achieved; if her Department noted a decrease in energy efficiency in view of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for energy efficiency targets; if targets will be met by the 2020 deadline; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47590/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department and its agencies under my aegis are part of the Public Sector Energy Reporting Programme run by SEAI and is also active in the OPW's Optimising Power at work energy

saving scheme.

As at the end of 2017 an energy saving of 32.6% was recorded against the 2009 baseline figures and is on course to achieve the 33% NEAP energy efficiency targets by 2020.

Back to Education Allowance Appeals

212. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a means can be found to approve a back to education allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47615/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): For the Back to Education Allowance Scheme, in order for eligibility and provisional award of payment to be determined by a Determining Officer, it is necessary for applications for this scheme to be made in advance and no later than 30 days prior to the commencement of the intended course of study. This requirement is to enable scheduling of assessment processes and interviews with applicants.

Following a review the Back to Education Allowance application made by the person concerned, it has been determined that that application was received within the 30 day limit. A Determining Officer has also now decided that the customer meets the eligibility criteria for the Back to Education Allowance Scheme.

The application by the person concerned has been forwarded to the Case Officer in line with the guidelines under this scheme and the Case Officer has given approval.

A revised decision will issue to the customer.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

SOLAS Training and Education Programmes Provision

213. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if further reconsideration will be given in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47622/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned previously engaged with the Local Employment Service Mediator through a Walk-in appointment in 2017 and was referred to a course which she completed on 20th July 2018.

The Department spoke to the Local Employment Service Mediator on 13th November 2018. The Mediator had engaged with the person concerned in recent days. They have been advised to contact the Mediator for a referral or they can create a self-referral when the new course is advertised in 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Overpayments

214. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social

Protection the basis on which a recovery of payment is being proposed in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47623/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned was registered as a full time student between 04/09/2017 and 31/10/2017 and as a consequence was deemed not to satisfy the qualifying conditions for receipt of Jobseekers Allowance for this period resulting in an overpayment of €1613 being assessed against him. A weekly recovery of €25 per week was put in place from 24/04/2018.

This case is now under review and an officer of my department will contact the customer as a matter of urgency.

I trust that this clarified the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Payments

215. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the procedure to be followed in the case of a person (details supplied); if she qualifies for an extra payment or disability allowance in order to ensure she receives a basic level of payment in view of the circumstances; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47625/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Illness Benefit claim for the person concerned has been processed and she is in receipt of her full entitlement under the Illness Benefit scheme.

Any person who has an urgent financial need can apply to the Department's Community Welfare Service and may be entitled to an additional or supplementary payment. This can be done by contacting the local Intreo Centre.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Jobseeker's Allowance Payments

216. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the correct level of jobseeker's allowance payable in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47626/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned applied for Jobseekers Allowance on 09th July 2018 but as some documents were not submitted the application was closed.

A new application for Jobseekers Allowance was registered on 02nd October 2018 and awarded from the 27th September 2018.

On review of information supplied by the person concerned, the Deciding Officer has revised the decision and arrears will issue from the 09th July 2018 to 26th September 2018.

The person concerned has been advised.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Rent Supplement Scheme Eligibility

217. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 355 of 25 October 2018, if she will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47644/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned was in receipt of rent supplement for which a review issued on 1/6/2018 and which subsequently closed due to failure to respond to this review by the customer. Final payment on this claim was for May 2018.

The person concerned submitted a new application for rent supplement which was received by South Kildare West Wicklow Rents Unit on 31/7/2018. The application was awarded and notification issued to the person concerned on 21/8/2018 and payment issued effective from July 2018.

To date there is no record of any contact by phone, email or in writing from the person concerned making a request for payment for June or identifying any reasons for failure to respond to the review within the requested timeframe. South Kildare West Wicklow Rents Unit telephone line operates Monday to Friday from 9.30am-12.30pm. If the person concerned wishes to discuss any aspects of her claim she should telephone during our operating hours. Alternatively, if the person concerned wishes to make a request for arrears, she should outline her reasons for seeking same in writing and this can be submitted for consideration to South Kildare West Wicklow Rent Unit, PO Box 1107, Newbridge, Co. Kildare or RentsKildareSouth@welfare.ie.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Youth Employment Initiative

218. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason the new youth employment support scheme does not provide for employer payment top-up; and the breakdown of national and EU funding in this regard. [47654/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS) was introduced on Monday 1st October 2018 and has been open to applications since that date.

YESS is a new work experience placement programme which is specifically targeted at jobseekers aged 18-24 years who are long-term unemployed or who face barriers to employment. YESS will aim to provide jobseekers with the opportunity to learn basic work and social skills in a supportive environment while on a three-month placement, which may be extended to six months if certain conditions are met. During the placement, participants will be paid a weekly YESS allowance by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. The total weekly YESS personal rate of payment will be €229.20 per week. Participants whose underlying entitlement is in excess of that amount will continue to receive their current entitlement plus a top-up allowance of €22.50 per week

Participants on the YESS may engage in education and training provided by the placement host, or part-time education and training courses, irrespective of length and provided that it does not have an adverse impact on the placement.

Participants on the YESS will be eligible to avail of the Training Support Grant (TSG) of up to €500 on two occasions during a 12 month period where deemed necessary. This will also apply to jobseekers who are engaged with JobPath and who go on to pursue a YESS placement.

The scheme will provide a supportive structure for participants, including case officer support for both placement hosts and jobseekers. A Learning and Development Plan will be agreed between the placement host and the participant at the outset of the placement. The Plan will include a range of personal development skills as well as any specific 'work' skills that will be acquired during the placement and which are based on the advertised vacancy. The placement host will complete a reference for the participant at the end of the placement.

A DEASP case officer will be the key liaison person for both the placement host and the participant. The case officer will be available for support throughout the placement and will regularly review the progress of same. This will include a formal review meeting after 2 months, which will also facilitate the case officer in deciding whether to approve a request for an extension of the placement duration to 6 months, if an extension has been requested. The case officer will also provide post-programme supports to the participant for up to six months after the placement ends.

The option of an employer contribution was examined by my department; however, an employer contribution would result in the contract between the placement host and the participant becoming one of employment rather than a placement, which is not the purpose of the scheme.

YESS is co-funded by the Irish Government, the European Social Fund and the Youth Employment Initiative as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020. Exchequer funding for YEI-supported activities is matched by separate YEI and ESF contributions. Therefore the total allocation of €16m for YESS is made up of approximately €5.333m in Exchequer funding, with matching allocations from ESF and YEI funding. As with all ESF-supported activities in Ireland, YESS is fully funded upfront by the Exchequer and applications for reimbursement of relevant expenditure are submitted to the European Commission in arrears.

Local Authority Staff Recruitment

219. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if it is policy that local authorities should employ quantity surveyors directly in each instance possible rather than employing external contractors on an ad hoc contract basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47464/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under section 159 of the Local Government Act 2001, each Chief Executive is responsible for the staffing and organisational arrangements necessary for carrying out the functions of the local authorities, for which he or she is responsible. In this regard, it is a matter for each individual Chief Executive to recruit and assign staff to specific business function areas.

My Department has not issued any policy direction to local authorities in relation to the employment of quantity surveyors.

Local Authority Housing Mortgages

220. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of local authority loans paid out in quarter 3 of 2018 by local authority; and the number of such loans paid out to date in 2018, by local authority in tabular form. [47510/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

My Department publishes, on a quarterly basis, data on the number and value of local authority house purchase loan drawdowns. This information, broken down by local authority area, is available on the Department's website www.housing.gov.ie at the following link:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/house-prices-loans-and-profile-borrowers/local-authority-loan-activity>

This information is currently updated to end Q2 2018; Q3 data will be published shortly.

Social and Affordable Housing

221. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 709 of 23 October 2018, if his attention has been drawn to an incident regarding a site that his Department is funding development of in which the local authority instructed its contractor to demolish a structure and boundary walls on a neighbouring site (details supplied); if further funding will be released to remedy the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47513/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The management and implementation of the development in question is a matter for Wicklow County Council and its contractors. My Department is not directly involved with the specific implementation of this project.

Planning Issues

222. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if an urgent review of policy will be implemented in regard to grants of permission for the construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure such as the plan to build a large industrial terminal on the Shannon Estuary from the United States of America in view of the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, which warned that the world has only 12 years in which to act to prevent climate breakdown. [47527/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My colleague the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, leads on energy policy and my Department consults on an on-going basis with his Department on how best to achieve the transition to a low carbon economy and society.

The National Planning Framework (NPF), published together with the National Development Plan (NDP) as part of Project Ireland 2040 earlier this year, sets out an ambitious high-level national vision for Ireland for 2040, and provides the framework and principles to manage future population and economic growth over the next 20 years. The NPF builds on the commitments made by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, in the 2015 Energy White Paper, Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future, and the Government in the 2017 National Mitigation Plan, to move from a fossil fuel-based electricity system to a low carbon power system.

With specific reference to the topic of energy infrastructure, the NPF provides a strategic framework to link planning, development and investment to climate mitigation and adaptation, through facilitating greater energy efficiency, the development of renewable energy systems and infrastructure and a more diverse energy mix.

While I have no plans at present to carry out a review of the kind referred to, I will continue

to consult with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment on how the planning system can assist in the implementation and integration of climate change objectives, including the transition from fossil fuels to a low-carbon power system.

Under section 30 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as Minister, I am specifically precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to any particular case with which a planning authority or the Board is or may be concerned, except in very specific circumstances, which did not arise in this case.

In addition, it would be inappropriate for me to make any further comment on the development referred to as it is the subject of High Court proceedings.

Water Services

223. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to a water issue (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47533/18]

224. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the connection of houses in an area (details supplied) to the lower harbour drainage scheme. [47534/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 223 and 224 together.

Since 1 January 2014, Irish Water has statutory responsibility for all aspects of the planning, delivery and operation of water and wastewater services at national, regional and local levels. As Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, I have no direct role in relation to the planning, delivery and operation of water and wastewater services, and I must respect the statutory authority that the Oireachtas has conferred on Irish Water in this regard.

However, I understand that the public water supply has been fully restored to the Belvelly area in recent days. I appreciate that some residents may still have concerns about water quality issues in the area and my colleague, Minister of State John Paul Phelan, undertook, in the context of a Topical Issue debate, to revert to the Deputy in the matter.

The Deputy, can, of course, also raise any outstanding matters with the dedicated team established by Irish Water to deal with representations and queries from public representatives. The team can be contacted via email to oireachtasmembers@water.ie or by telephone on a dedicated number, 1890 578 578.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Review

225. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to change the tenant purchase scheme. [47544/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In line with the commitment given in Rebuilding Ireland, a review of the first 12 months of the Scheme's operation has been undertaken. The review is now complete and a full report has been prepared setting out findings and recommendations.

I hope to be in a position to publish the review shortly, following completion of consider-

ation of a number of implementation issues arising.

Home Loan Scheme

226. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to change the Rebuilding Ireland loan as announced in February 2018 in view of the issues those applying for same are having; and the number of successful applicants as opposed to the number of applicants. [47545/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan Scheme was launched in February to replace the existing House Purchase and the Home Choice Loan Schemes. The Scheme has been established under the Housing (Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan) Regulations 2018, which also provide that I as Minister issue a Statutory Credit Policy. The purpose of the Policy is to set out in more detail the eligibility criteria for obtaining a loan and procedures to be followed by local authorities in considering loan applications. In addition the Housing Agency has been given the task of carrying out assessment of the loan applications on behalf of the authorities and making recommendations in respect of each application. Each local authority must have in place a credit committee and it is a matter for the committee to make the decision on applications for loans, in accordance with the Regulations and Statutory Credit Policy, having regard to the recommendations made by the Housing Agency.

In line with best practice, I have asked my Department to undertake a review of the operation of the Scheme. The review will have regard to the advice from local authorities, the Housing Agency and Housing Finance Agency, and will also take account of the issues raised by Dail Deputies over the last 9 months. However, in making any recommendations in relation to the operation of the Scheme, the review will also have to take account of the need to ensure that lending issued under it is provided on a prudential basis, so as to protect the financial interests of the local authorities.

The most recent figures for the scheme, as at the end of October, indicate that the Housing Agency had received a total of 3,309 applications for assessment since the scheme was launched in February. Of these, 619 were deemed invalid, while the assessment of 107 others was still in progress. Of the remainder, a total of 1,317 applications, or 51% of the total valid number assessed, had been recommended for approval.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

227. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when he will announce an affordable housing scheme for those unable to purchase their own homes. [47546/18]

229. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason for the delay in establishing the promised affordable housing scheme; and when full details will be issued to local authorities in relation to same. [47568/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 227 and 229 together.

I commenced the relevant provisions of Part 5 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 to provide a statutory basis for the delivery of affordable housing for purchase on lo-

cal authority sites. Part 5 contains significant detail on the procedures and operation of the new affordable purchase Scheme and it will be supported by associated Regulations and Guidance, which are close to finalisation following extensive consultation between my Department, the Housing Agency and local authorities. Last week, my Department hosted a workshop for all local authorities on affordable housing and local authority land activation issues.

In order to deliver affordable homes, in the areas of the country most affected by a lack of affordable housing supply, the Government has committed €310 million, over the 2019-2021 period under the Serviced Sites Fund (SSF). It will fund key facilitating infrastructure, on local authority sites, to support the provision of affordable homes to purchase or rent.

All local authorities are currently undertaking economic assessments of the requirement for affordable housing in their areas and the viability to deliver such affordable housing from their sites. A second call for proposals under the Serviced Site Fund will be made as soon as is practicable and the scope of that call will be influenced by the information received from local authorities, as part of the aforementioned economic assessments, which they have been requested to submit by 30 November.

Social and Affordable Housing

228. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 709 of 23 October 2018, the date on which his officials will hold their next quarterly meeting with Wicklow County Council to review projects funded by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47555/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The next of the meetings which are ordinarily held on a quarterly basis, between my Department's Architectural and QS Advisors and Wicklow County Council, is scheduled for 9 January 2019.

Question No. 229 answered with Question No. 227.

Proposed Legislation

230. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when he plans to proceed with legislation to address the issue of spiralling rents in student accommodation as promised in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47569/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department is working with the Department of Education and Skills (DES), including through the forum of the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Student Accommodation which is convened by the DES, to examine the wide range of student accommodation types (and ancillary services) available with a view to considering how best to regulate pricing arrangements, including, if appropriate, new regulatory or legislative proposals. My Department is engaged in consultations with the Office of the Attorney General to scope out, with the benefit of information provided by DES on the purpose built student accommodation (PBSA) sector, the legal feasibility of introducing related amendments in the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Bill 2018 as it passes through the legislative process in the Oireachtas.

It is worth noting that certain PBSA, provided by the private sector, let rooms on the basis of tenancy agreements that are registered with the Residential Tenancies Board. Other private

PBSA providers let their student rooms on the basis of licensing agreements which are not classified as a tenancy and, therefore, are not within the remit of the Residential Tenancies Acts 2004-2016.

If there is any doubt as to the type of agreement in place in respect of individual dwellings, for example whether it is a tenancy or licence, the matter should be referred to the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) for a determination.

It is important that the design of any new regulatory system to be introduced is mindful of the pressing need to secure the delivery of the pipeline of PBSA development in train and does not deter future necessary investment in the sector, given the critical importance of increasing the supply of rental accommodation for students and achieving a more balanced supply/demand position.

Social and Affordable Housing

231. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a company (details supplied) was involved in the building of social housing; and if so, the steps he is taking to ensure quality control. [47570/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The data requested is currently being compiled and will be provided to the Deputy in accordance with Standing Orders.

Energy Efficiency

232. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his Department is part of the public sector energy reporting programme; if so, the percentage of improvement in energy efficiency to date that has been achieved; the way in which this was achieved; if his Department noted a decrease in energy efficiency in view of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for energy efficiency targets; if targets will be met by the 2020 deadline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47594/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department's Energy Policy and Environmental Policy Statements recognise that good environmental performance is as relevant in our workplace as in the home and elsewhere, and is accordingly an integral part of our day-to-day management and activities. The office environment is demanding on many resources, including energy, water, paper, equipment and other consumables. In this regard, as part of our green housekeeping policy, we have placed particular emphasis on conservation and maximising energy efficiencies. The commitment of my Department is indicated by its accreditation to ISO 14001 International Standard for Environmental Management Systems for the Custom House.

My Department has reported a 24.5% improvement in energy efficiency to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) Public Sector Monitoring & Reporting (M&R) System in accordance with the provisions of the European Union (Energy Efficiency) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 426 of 2014) which transpose the Energy Efficiency Directive (Directive 2012/27/EU) into Irish Law, in respect of its offices in Ballina, Wexford and the Custom House between the baseline year 2009 and 2017. Met Éireann, which is a Division of my Department, has reported a 9.6% improvement in energy efficiency to the SEAI during the same period.

This has been achieved by staff efficiency awareness and energy saving initiatives and participation in the OPW Optimising Power@Work Programme and the SEAI's Energy Management Action Programme (EMAP). In order to achieve further efficiency gains, major lighting efficiency projects are currently underway in Ballina and Met Éireann which are envisaged to be completed by year-end. My Department remains committed to achieving a 33% improvement in energy efficiency by the 2020 deadline.

Inland Waterways Development

233. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the position regarding an infrastructural development (details supplied) in County Kildare. [47547/18]

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

The project in question will upgrade some 115km of existing navigation towpath which is also a National *Way-marked Way*. These upgrades will provide a multi-use shared leisure route connecting in County Kildare passing through a number of towns.

This proposal will improve access to the *Way-marked Way* for a wider range of users including walkers, cyclists, wheelchair users and families and will enhance safety and accessibility in all weather conditions.

The current position regarding the project is that Waterways Ireland has submitted a planning application to, inter alia, Kildare County Council for the towpath to enable it to become a Blueway. The applications were refused planning permissions in February 2018 for the 'river' elements of the navigation. Waterways Ireland has subsequently appealed those decisions to An Bord Pleanála and await their outcome.

Architectural Heritage

234. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of planning and development matters in County Tipperary between 2014 and 2017 in which her Department was consulted regarding the potential impact of proposed development on the archaeological heritage; the recommended conditions in these cases; the number of planning permissions recommended for refusal in the same period; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47564/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Under the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, planning authorities refer development proposals that may impact on our archaeological heritage to my Department so that recommendations can be made, as appropriate, to avoid or mitigate any such impacts.

The Regulations provide for the referral of such applications in relation to:

- a cave, site, feature or other object of archaeological, geological, scientific, ecological or historical interest,

- a monument or place recorded under section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment)

Act 1994 (No. 17 of 1994),

- a historic monument or archaeological area entered in the Register of Historic Monuments under Section 5 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1987 (No. 17 of 1987),

- a national monument in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister under the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2004.

The foregoing represent of the order of 140,000 archaeological sites and monuments nationally.

Between 2014 and 2017, there were 703 such referrals to my Department in relation to planning and development matters in Co Tipperary. In response, the Department recommended the inclusion of conditions relating to archaeological protection in 144 cases. The Department advised that it could not support the granting of permission in 5 cases and appealed 2 grants of permission to An Bórd Pleanála.

In responding to planning referrals, archaeological recommendations are made in line with national policy on the protection of the archaeological heritage as appropriate to the circumstances in each case. My Department's practice in all cases is to seek the inclusion of suitable conditions or design changes rather than recommending refusal which would only be considered as a last resort. This is evidenced by the small number of cases where the Department has indicated that it is not in position to support a grant of permission or has found it necessary to appeal against a planning approval.

Heritage Council

235. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when the workshops for the Heritage Ireland 2030 consultation will be announced; if she will meet with members of wildlife NGOs to discuss habitat protection; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47567/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Parliamentary Question No 10 today.

My Department will be happy to meet all stakeholders with an interest in Heritage 2030. Officials from the National Parks and Wildlife Service will engage with wildlife NGOs to discuss habitat protection and indeed are in ongoing liaison with various interest groups.

Gaeltacht Policy

236. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her Department has received notification of a proposal from Donegal County Council to establish an emergency deprivation task force, consisting of various State agencies and Departments dedicated to the development of the Donegal Gaeltacht region; her views on the proposal of the local authority; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47461/18]

238. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she has received notification of a proposal from Donegal County Council to establish an emergency deprivation task force, consisting of various State agencies and Departments, dedicated to the development of the Donegal Gaeltacht region; if her Department has to date responded to the proposal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47507/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 236 and 238 together.

I understand that the matter of establishing a task force, as outlined by the Deputy, was discussed at length at a meeting of Donegal Council in January of this year, on foot of a motion submitted. However, at this point in time, no notification regarding the establishment of the task force has been received either by my Department or by Údarás na Gaeltachta from Donegal County Council.

The establishment of a task force would require careful consideration. The Terms of Reference for such a task force would need to be clearly set out in advance, which would include such issues as the status of the task force, its reporting relationship into the relevant Government departments and agencies taking part and the servicing of same.

I should point out, however, that Údarás na Gaeltachta established an inter-agency working group in April 2014 to assess and propose solutions to mitigate against job losses in the Gaoth Dobhair area at that time. That working group prepared a report and action plan with the overall objective of creating 300 new jobs in the Gaoth Dobhair Business Park over the 3-year period of the action plan.

A report on the implementation of the 5 key recommendations contained in the action plan was published on 31 May 2018 and is available Údarás na Gaeltachta's website: <http://www.udaras.ie/faoin-udaras/foilseachain/eile>

Needless to say, any such notification referred to by the Deputy, if and when received, will be carefully considered by both my Department and Údarás na Gaeltachta.

Architectural Heritage

237. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she was consulted or if her attention was drawn to the decision by the OPW to dispose of a site (details supplied) by public auction; and if she will by order undertake its preservation as a monument of national importance in view of its uncertain future. [47463/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My functions as Minister with regard to the protection of our architectural heritage are set out in the Planning and Development Acts, as are the responsibilities of local authorities and owners.

In relation to the site mentioned by the Deputy, I am aware of the decision by the Office of Public Works (OPW) to dispose of the site. While the sale is a matter for the OPW, and I have no function as Minister, I do understand and appreciate the value such a building would have, particularly to those for whom it has a historic association.

The primary function of the National Monuments Acts is to record and protect ancient sites and features. The focus of the Acts on archaeological remains and traces does not extend to more modern buildings and structures. Accordingly, while the Model School is undoubtedly of local interest and importance, it would not, unfortunately, be an appropriate case for inclusion in the records of monuments compiled by the Department under those Acts.

The Planning and Development Acts give primary responsibility to local authorities to identify and protect our architectural heritage by including particular structures on their Record of Protected Structures (RPS). Inclusion on the RPS places a duty of care on the owners and occupiers of protected structures and also gives planning authorities powers to deal with develop-

ment proposals affecting them and to seek to safeguard their future.

As the Deputy is no doubt aware, the building mentioned is not on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS). Ultimately, the final decision as to inclusion of a building or structure on the RPS remains a reserved function of the planning authority, in this case Dublin City Council.

Question No. 238 answered with Question No. 236.

Special Areas of Conservation

239. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 276 of 3 October 2018, the number of appeals that were actually submitted regarding SAC designation on owners' lands rather than the number of appeals heard by the board in each of the years 2013 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47529/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 provide that a landowner may appeal, on scientific grounds, against the inclusion of land with a special area of conservation, within three months from the date of notification of the proposed designation of the site.

There are 2 stages in the appeals process:

Stage 1: A Departmental review of the proposed inclusion of the land within the special area of conservation is conducted by the local office of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department.

Stage 2: If an appeal is not successful at the Departmental review stage, the landowner may request that the appeal be heard formally by the Designated Areas Appeals Advisory Board. The Board is comprised of an independent chairperson and equal representation from a landowner/user/producer panel and from a conservation groups panel.

Details of the number of appeals against the inclusion of land within special area of conservation sites submitted to the Department from 2013 to 2018 (to date) are outlined in the following table.

Year	No. of appeals against the inclusion of land within special area of conservation sites submitted to the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
2013	1 (this appeal was deemed invalid as it was not submitted within 3 months from the date of notification)
2014	0
2015	0
2016	0
2017	0
2018	0

There were no appeals against the inclusion of land within special area of conservation sites submitted to the Designated Areas Appeals Advisory Board during this period.

Energy Efficiency

240. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her Department is part of the public sector energy reporting programme; if so, the percentage of improvement in energy efficiency to date that has been achieved; the way in which this was achieved; if her Department noted a decrease in energy efficiency in view of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan for energy efficiency targets; if targets will be met by the 2020 deadline; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47587/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I am advised that my Department is a participant of the Public Sector Energy Reporting Programme and provides energy consumption data to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) which manages the reporting process on behalf of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

The management of properties occupied by staff of my Department and the bodies under its aegis is primarily a matter for the Office of Public Works. As a consequence, an energy management company has been engaged by OPW to liaise with officials in my Department for the purposes of identifying better building energy management systems. This also includes consideration of proposals for building and facility upgrades, disseminating information to effect behavioural changes and other measures which contribute to improvement in overall energy efficiently performance levels.

In the SEAI's latest annual report published in 2017, the Department and its agencies recorded 28% energy savings as against baseline levels recorded in 2009, which represents significant progress towards the 33% savings target for 2020.

Creative Ireland Programme

241. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she proposes to support cultural projects in the arts and culture sectors in the course of 2018, with particular reference to annual or special events; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47627/18]

242. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she is likely to offer financial support to organisations involved in the promotion of various cultural events at local level with particular reference to the need to encourage interest in the arts and national heritage; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47628/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 241 and 242 together.

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

Under Pillar 2 - 'Enabling Creativity in Every Community' of the Programme, in 2018, my Department allocated a sum €2m and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government allocated a sum of €1m to all 31 local authorities (€96,000 each approximately) to enable them support an extensive programme of activities, events and initiatives in each county. To date in 2018, over 500 different initiatives around Ireland have been funded under Pillar 2. These include arts projects, grant schemes, concerts, conferences, exhibitions, festivals, outreach projects, publications, research programmes, and workshops among other activities.

They cover topics such as archaeology, architecture, biodiversity, crafts, heritage, dance, film, history, literature, music, photography, poetry, storytelling, theatre and the visual arts.

These activities form part of each local authority's five-year Culture & Creative Strategies which were launched by me, An Taoiseach and the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government on the 12 September.

These strategies highlight the critical role our Local Authorities play as providers and enablers of cultural and creative experiences in communities across Ireland, with all of the vitally important social, and indeed economic, consequences that follow. The strategies recognise that the arts and creative endeavours are crucial to society and community growth. With collaboration and shared purpose at the heart of the Creative Ireland Programme, each strategy provides meaningful opportunities for people and their communities, together with each Local Authority, to build and nurture a creative society. All the strategies and the activities supported under the strategies are available online at <https://creative.ireland.ie/en/creative-communities>.

As part of the Creative Ireland Programme, this year I launched Cruinniú na nÓg - a national day of creativity for children and young people which took place on 23rd June. Hundreds of free events and activities took place right across the country and specific funding was allocated to each local authority to roll-out this programme in their communities.

Culture Night took place on 21st September and saw venues and public spaces across the island of Ireland open their doors to host a programme of free entertainment, as part of an all-island celebration of arts, heritage and culture.

In addition to funding directly from my Department, the Arts Council also provides significant supports for the Arts at local level.

Architectural Heritage

243. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the degree to which her Department remains actively engaged in historical site and building restoration works at various sites; the extent to which she can play an expanded role in this area; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47629/18]

244. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of historical and-or heritage buildings under review with the objective of restoration with particular reference to the need to promote local items of historical interest; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47630/18]

247. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans for the maximisation of interest in historical sites and buildings with a view to the promotion of local and historical interest; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47633/18]

248. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of derelict or semi-derelict and-or abandoned castles and houses of historical interest with a view to possible restoration or use as museums or community centres; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47634/18]

249. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she can offer grant assistance towards historical buildings that may benefit from basic restoration works; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47635/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 243, 244 and 247 to 249, inclusive, together.

My functions as Minister with regard to the protection of our architectural heritage are set out in the Planning and Development Acts, as are the responsibilities of local authorities and owners.

The Planning and Development Acts give primary responsibility to planning authorities to identify and protect our architectural heritage by including structures on the relevant local authority's Record of Protected Structures. Inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures places a duty of care on the owners and occupiers of protected structures and also gives planning authorities powers to deal with development proposals affecting them and to seek to safeguard their future.

The decision as to whether a building is placed on, or removed from the Record of Protected Structures is a reserved function of the relevant local authority. My Department does not keep a record of derelict or semi-derelict sites across the country, nor does it keep heritage sites under review generally, except where these sites are national monuments in State care or otherwise part of the historic national heritage estate which is managed by the Office of Public Works.

As Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, I am the owner or guardian of almost 1,000 national monuments in State care right across the country, ranging from prehistoric burial monuments to medieval fortifications and religious sites. Sites in my ownership or guardianship are maintained by the Office of Public Works. Conservation matters in relation to these sites are managed through regular liaison between the OPW and my Department, identifying condition issues and proposing appropriate conservation actions, carried out under consent where relevant.

My Department is providing €350,000 of funding to the OPW in 2018 to assist in the conservation and presentation of historic buildings and national monuments in State ownership. My Department's National Monuments Service works in close collaboration with the OPW on survey, archaeological excavation and research work to optimise the protection, management, interpretation and presentation of national monuments in State care.

Financial support for owners and occupiers of historic buildings is provided by my Department through a number of structured schemes. €2m has been provided for the Built Heritage Investment Scheme 2018 and 370 projects have been approved for funding. €1,324,000 has been provided for the Structures at Risk Fund 2018 and 76 projects across the country have been approved for funding.

The Structures at Risk Fund will be revamped for 2019 and will become the Historic Structures Fund. The Fund will open for applications shortly, as will the Built Heritage Investment Scheme for 2019.

Details of the projects approved under both funding schemes are published on my Department's website and on local authority websites. Projects approved include a wide variety of types of structures with many different uses, both private and public.

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

In terms of future funding, *Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 – 2027*

represents a major capital investment scheme of €1.2 billion in funding over the next 10 years, as part of Project Ireland 2040. This plan will see increased investment in protecting and celebrating our heritage across the country. More details on the commencement and completion dates for projects and programmes, as well as the timing of the expenditure in relation to them, will emerge as we go through the process of appraisal and planning as required under the Public Spending Code.

The public consultation for Heritage Ireland 2030, which I launched on 1 November and which is open until the end of February 2019, gives everyone the opportunity to have their say on the future of our heritage and to help identify the priorities for €285 million identified in Project Ireland 2040 for investment in our built and natural heritage.

There are four ways that people can engage with this consultation and have their say: by logging on to my Department's website and completing the short survey at www.chg.gov.ie/heritage/heritageireland2030; by email to heritageireland2030@chg.gov.ie; by participating in local events and workshops that will be rolled out over the coming weeks; or by post to Heritage Ireland 2030, The Custom House, Dublin 1, D01 W6XO.

Architectural Heritage

245. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which ongoing evaluation is taking place in respect of heritage sites with a view to archaeological exploration and excavation in circumstances in which it is suitable in the context of the promotion of such sites for educational and tourism purposes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47631/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Question No. 40087/18 on 2 October 2018. The situation remains as outlined in that reply. I want to thank the Deputy for his continuing interest in these matters and my officials are happy to brief him directly if that is helpful.

Arts Funding

246. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she continues to liaise with local community organisations involved in the presentation of music and drama; the degree to which financial support will be offered directly or through the Arts Council; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47632/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Creative Ireland Programme is a culture-based whole-of-Government programme led by my Department and designed to promote individual, community and national wellbeing. Its core proposition is that participation in cultural activity drives personal and collective creativity, with significant implications for individual and societal wellbeing and achievement.

In 2018, under Creative Ireland Pillar II - *'Enabling Creativity in Every Community'*, my Department allocated a sum €2m while the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government allocated a sum of €1m to the 31 local authorities (€96,000 each approximately) to enable them support an extensive programme of activities, events and initiatives in each county. To date in 2018, over 500 different initiatives around Ireland have been funded under Pillar II. These include arts projects, grant schemes, concerts, conferences, exhibitions, festivals, outreach projects, publications, research programmes, and workshops among other activities.

They cover topics such as archaeology, architecture, biodiversity, crafts, heritage, dance, film, history, literature, music, photography, poetry, storytelling, theatre and the visual arts.

These activities form part of each local authority's five-year Culture & Creative Strategies which were launched by me, An Taoiseach and the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government on the 12 September.

Additional funding of approximately €650k was allocated to the local authorities in 2018 to enable them deliver Cruinniú na nÓg on 23 June 2018 which celebrated and encouraged children and young people's participation in culture and creativity through performance, coding, theatre, art and music workshops, readings, screenings, special events and much more. A sum of €350k was allocated to Dublin City to deliver Cruinniú na nÓg and a sum of €300k divided among the remaining 30 local authorities or €10k each. It is estimated that over 300 specific separate events took place for Cruinniú na nÓg across the country. It is my intention to establish Cruinniú na nÓg as a yearly celebration of creativity among children and young people.

In addition to the above, the following initiatives are supported by my Department:

- My Department also supports Culture Night with venues and public spaces across the island of Ireland hosting a programme of free entertainment, as part of an all-island celebration of arts, heritage and culture. Culture Night took place on Sep 21st 2018.

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

- My Department provides funding for the purchase of equipment under the Music Capital Scheme to performing groups and individual talented musicians nationwide. Support of €224,000 was recently under Scheme for 2017/18. The Scheme is managed by Music Network on behalf of my Department.

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

- The Cultural Schemes Unit of my Department arranges a number of schemes including the Cooperation with Northern Ireland Scheme, the Mobility of Collections Scheme, the Regional Exhibition Schemes and the Small Local Festivals and Summer Schools Schemes. Details for the 2018 Schemes may be found at <https://www.chg.gov.ie/arts/culture/grants-and-funding/> It is anticipated that these schemes will re-open for applications in Q1 2019.

- The Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016 - 2018 is focused on the refurbishment and enhancement of the existing stock of arts and culture facilities throughout the country. To date, funding of €10.214m has been allocated to 134 projects under three complementary grant streams. This is the most significant investment in cultural infrastructure in a decade with funding provided to a range of facilities, including arts centres, theatres, galleries and museums, as well as artists' studios and creative spaces. The Arts and Culture Capital Scheme is making a huge difference to many individual organisations and my Department is already seeing good outcomes and receiving positive feedback. My Department is currently giving consideration to new round of grant funding for Arts and Cultural Capital to be announced in the near future.

- The Arts Council also has a number of schemes and initiatives around the support of music and drama. Details of these can be accessed on its website at the following link: www.artscouncil.ie

- Scoileanna Ildánacha/Creative Schools is a flagship initiative of the Creative Ireland Programme to enable the creative potential of every child. Creative Schools is led by the Arts Council in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Creative Schools draws on the commitments set out in the Arts in Education Charter. Creative Schools will give expression to this goal as part of an integrated implementation plan for arts in education. Creative Schools aims to understand, develop and celebrate the arts, as a core aspect of school life, and to foster children and young people's creativity and participation in the arts as an integral part of their education in Ireland. It will establish a range of collaborative opportunities for schools and will develop and strengthen the relationships between schools and the broader cultural and community infrastructure within which they operate. The long-term aim is for every school to be supported to fully embrace the arts and creativity, ensuring a positive experience and strong outcomes for children and young people.

Questions Nos. 247 to 249, inclusive, answered with Question No. 243.

Film Industry Promotion

250. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she anticipates the film industry here and abroad to utilise the scenery here for filming on location; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47636/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Irish audio-visual industry utilises Ireland's wonderful scenery to great effect. This trend has been particularly pronounced in recent years with some excellent examples. In particular, I would highlight the film *Brooklyn*, the TV drama series *Vikings*, *The Young Offenders* which is both a film and TV drama series and of course *Star Wars: Episode VII – The Force Awakens* and *Star Wars: Episode VIII – The Last Jedi*.

Fís Éireann is the national development agency for Irish film making and the Irish film, television and animation industry. Its statutory remit is to assist and encourage the making of film in the State and the development of a film industry in Ireland. Fís Éireann supports writers, directors and production companies across these sectors by providing investment loans for the development, production and distribution of film, television and animation projects. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that €20.04m is to be allocated to Fís Éireann under Budget 2019. This is an increase of €2 million on the 2018 figure.

Fís Éireann also supports the Irish screen industries at major international markets and festivals, promotes inward investment, the use of Ireland as a location for international production and provides support for companies filming in Ireland. It also liaises with IDA Ireland and Tourism Ireland to maximise opportunities for the promotion of Ireland as a location for film productions as well as a tourism destination.

Fís Éireann also offers practical support and information for film makers in accessing skilled crew and studio and technical infrastructure. The Inward Production team provides ground logistical support and advice on filming in Ireland. A detailed guide together with a toolkit to filming in Ireland can be accessed on the website at the following link <https://www.screenireland.ie/filming/why-film-in-ireland>