

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 11, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 12 to 26, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 27 to 37, inclusive, answered orally.

SOLAS Training and Education Programmes Provision

38. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether the new procurement model being employed by SOLAS with regard to training is leading to a reduction in value and quality in training available to persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2549/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): The establishment of the Education and Training Boards, the dissolution of FÁS and the establishment of SOLAS in 2013 has led to major changes in the co-ordination, funding and delivery of further education and training provision. This includes changes in the operation of contracted training where ETBs engage the services of third party providers to deliver some of their education and training provision. These services were formerly contracted by Training Centres under the remit of FÁS.

A review of the contracted training model was undertaken by SOLAS in 2016 which included a number of recommendations to ensure contracted training was flexible, innovative and responsive. Following this review, the Office of Government Procurement on behalf of the ETBs invited expressions of interest from suitably qualified service providers for the provision of contracted training services for which it was proposed to establish multi supplier frameworks. This competition was completed in January 2018. Each ETB is a contracting authority in respect of the services it engages.

I can confirm that a detailed analysis on the value and quality of the provision will be undertaken once a full year's data is available. SOLAS have at this stage engaged with the ETBs in collating information in relation to contracted training in order to compare with previous years.

School Transport Eligibility

39. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to review the school transport system, in particular the system for the allocation of concessionary tickets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2726/19]

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.

There are currently over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

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

Children are eligible for school transport if they satisfy the distance criteria, are attending their nearest school and it is economically feasible to provide a service.

Children who are eligible for school transport and who have completed the application process on time have been accommodated on school transport services for the current school year where such services are in operation.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may be facilitated where spare seats are available after eligible children have been accommodated - these are often referred to as concessionary places. Where the number of ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available Bus Éireann allocates tickets for the spare seats on the basis of an agreed selection process.

The terms of the scheme (which are regularly communicated) make it clear that places for ineligible children are not guaranteed for the duration of a child's education.

Under the terms of the scheme, routes will not be extended or altered, additional vehicles will not be introduced, nor will larger vehicles or extra trips using existing vehicles be provided to cater for ineligible children. Making exceptions to this would effectively create an open ended scheme with unquantified exposure to the exchequer and the taxpayer for the resulting cost. The terms of the scheme are applied equitably on a national basis.

I am keeping the matter of concessionary transport under review, taking account of available resources and the need to ensure value for money within the scheme.

Education Welfare Service

40. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the request for the State to monitor and quantify the practice of reduced timetables in which children with behavioural difficulties have restricted hours in their education service. [52602/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I thank the Deputy for raising this issue.

Each child has a right to education to enable them to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual. All pupils who are enrolled in a school should attend school for the full day, unless exempted from doing so for exceptional circumstances, such as medical reasons.

Reduced timetables should not be used as a behavioural management technique, or as a de facto suspension or expulsion.

Where schools apply a shorter school day in relation to a child, such arrangements should

only be put in place in exceptional circumstances in order to assist a pupil to return to a school, where a pupil has been experiencing an absence due to a medical or behavioural related condition.

Any such arrangement should be a transitional arrangement, which is designed to assist the reintegration of a pupil to a school environment.

In making any such arrangements, school authorities should be mindful of the best interests of the child and of the child's right to a full day in school. Schools should seek the advice of the National Educational Psychological Service before implementing such arrangements.

My Department is engaging with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and TUSLA Educational Welfare Service on the matter of reduced timetables with a view to examining options which can be taken to address the issues raised.

Schools Building Projects Status

41. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a school (details supplied); and the actions that will be taken to progress the new building for the school. [2550/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): A building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is included in my Department's 6 year Construction Programme.

A project brief has been finalised and the project will be delivered via the ADAPT programme. The ADAPT programme uses a professional external Project Manager to coordinate and drive the respective design teams on each project.

In this regard, a tender competition is in train to establish a Project Manager framework which is expected to be in place by early March. The formulation of tender documentation is underway and once the framework has been established a tender exercise will be carried out to appoint a Project Manager for all projects under the ADAPT programme, including this particular project.

All schools with projects on the ADAPT programme will be contacted shortly by my Department to provide an update on the status of their respective project. I wish to confirm to the Deputy that my Department is committed to providing the necessary accommodation for the school in question.

Education and Training Boards

42. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the work the education and training boards undertake in reskilling and further education of the adult population; the way in which this co-ordinates with the work of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2730/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): Education and Training Boards offer a broad range of courses serving 320,000 learners each year. These courses seek to develop skills for the economy, to facilitate greater participation in society and to promote personal development.

This Government has a major focus on upskilling and reskilling the working age population. During the recession the focus was mainly on supporting unemployed people back into employment but the approach is now much broader, encompassing those already in employment and those not currently participating in the labour market. This is supported by an expanded and reformed National Training Fund. This year, ETBs are being allocated an additional €11million in funding for the new Skills to Advance policy, which delivers upskilling and reskilling to those in employment with lower skill levels.

ETB courses complement broader upskilling programmes and initiatives, such as Skillnets and Springboard, that play a crucial role in meeting the future skills needs of the economy. ETBs also participate strongly in the nine Regional Skills Fora, enabling them to deliver tailored solutions for employers and groups of employers and give enhanced employment opportunities to learners and upskill the regional workforce.

ETB programmes, alongside employment programmes delivered by DEASP, aim to assist unemployed people into work. ETBs and the Intreo offices work closely together at local level to develop and schedule FET provision to match the requirements of unemployed people. This collaboration is supported by protocols covering course provision, the referral of learners to programmes and a formal schedule of engagements between the agencies.

Apprenticeship Programmes

43. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress in relation to the action plan to expand apprenticeships and traineeships here; the number of apprenticeships that have been started to date under the plan; the gender distribution in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2762/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): The Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship 2016-2020 sets out a series of actions and annual targets to grow apprenticeship provision. The Plan targets 31,000 learner registrations on apprenticeship programmes over its lifetime. This represents a more than doubling of activity over the plan period.

This growth will be achieved through expanding employer engagement with existing craft apprenticeships and by expanding the apprenticeship model into new areas. Following two calls for proposals issued by the Apprenticeship Council, nineteen new consortia led apprenticeship programmes have been developed. These new programmes span a variety of sectors ranging from financial services and ICT to hospitality. Further new apprenticeships are due to get underway in 2019 in various sectors including construction, engineering and agriculture.

This expansion of the apprenticeship system has led to a welcome increase in female participation. Year on year we are seeing greater numbers of women choosing an apprenticeship for their career path. Many of our new apprenticeships are in occupations that have greater gender balance in the workplace such as hospitality and accountancy. At the end of 2018 there were 341 female apprentices registered, more than double the 2017 figure of 151.

As well as developments in new apprenticeships, as the employment and economic situation continues to improve, we have seen strong growth in registrations across the craft trades nationally during 2018 with 5,058 new registrations by year end, ahead of target and an increase 12% on 2017.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

44. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position with regard to the restoration of post-graduate grants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2724/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): The Programme for Government contains a commitment to increase financial supports for postgraduate students with a particular focus on those from low income households.

In response to this commitment, additional funding of €7m was secured in Budgets 2017 and 2018 to facilitate the reinstatement of full maintenance grants from September 2017 for the most disadvantaged postgraduate students. This benefitted circa 1,000 postgraduate students who met the eligibility criteria for the special rate of maintenance grant for the 2017/18 academic year and reversed the previous budgetary cut.

In addition, postgraduate students who qualify for the special rate of grant under the Student Grant Scheme are eligible to have their post graduate tuition fees paid up to the maximum fee limit of €6,270.

Alternatively, a postgraduate student may qualify to have a €2,000 contribution made towards the cost of fees. The income threshold for this payment is €31,500 for the 2018/19 academic year, increasing relative to the number of family dependents.

Students in third-level institutions experiencing exceptional financial need can apply for support under the Student Assistance Fund through the Access Office in the third level institution attended. An additional €1m was added to the Fund in 2017 which is specifically ring-fenced for part-time students who are lone-parents or members of the other access target groups. Prior to that the fund supported full-time students only. A further allocation of €1m for the Fund was recently announced. This additional funding will be aimed at students studying a Professional Master of Education programme in the 2018/19 academic year and who are experiencing financial difficulty. A total of €10.1m has now been allocated through the Student Assistance Fund (SAF) in 2018/2019.

Tax relief is also available for postgraduate tuition fees. Details in relation to same are available from the Revenue Commissioners.

Teacher Retirements

45. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the actions taken to date to address errors in the estimated number of teachers retiring or leaving the system each year; the subsequent cost incurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2720/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): For the purposes of the annual Estimates process, my Department makes forecasts, based on trend analysis, of the scale of teacher retirements expected for the following year.

While forecasting retirements in the education sector is complex, this approach has proved robust and has provided a good indication of the scale of likely retirements and the expenditure implications for the following year.

The need for supplementary estimates over the period 2014 to 2018 to cover additional pension costs did not arise due to errors in forecasting.

Prior to Budget 2019, and aside from allocations to cover pay agreements, there had been no significant increase in the expenditure base for pensions for a number of years, despite increased costs. Given that this expenditure is demand-driven and non-discretionary, it was therefore necessary to seek supplementary estimates to provide for retirements and pension costs over and above what would be supported by the original allocation, having regard to off-setting savings which arose in other expenditure areas.

This is an issue which has affected other Votes, as highlighted in last year's Spending Review on pensions expenditure in the Defence Forces.

My Department, and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, have worked closely to resolve this issue in order to better align the expenditure allocation with the expected pensions and retirements bill. In Budget 2019, the Government allocated an additional €147 million in funding for pensions in the education sector, in addition to €12.5 million to cover the pensions-related costs of the Public Service Stability Agreement. This was calculated on the basis of actuarial work undertaken by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform using data provided by my Department. Unlike in previous years, where the supplementary estimates did not increase the expenditure base, this additional €147 million will be added to the base and will bring the pensions allocation in my Department to around €1.35 billion in 2019. This compares to a pre-supplementary allocation of c. €1.19 billion in 2018. This should mitigate the need for a supplementary estimate for pensions expenditure in 2019.

Apprenticeship Programmes

46. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures being taken to raise awareness and promote uptake of apprenticeship opportunities among school leavers particularly in view of the fact that only 3% of school leavers here take up apprenticeships as opposed to 60% in Germany; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2763/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): It is important that learners and workers consider their options in an informed way throughout their education and working lives. The wide range of opportunities offered through the apprenticeship system should be an important part of this process.

This Government is committed to expanding the apprenticeship model into new sectors of the economy to give more choice to learners and to deliver key skills to employers. Government is working to promote apprenticeship as a programme of choice and have put significant additional resources into this area. A national promotional campaign, Generation Apprenticeship, has been underway since May 2017, led by the Apprenticeship Council and SOLAS.

In addition, an independent review of career guidance, which is being carried out by Indecon International Consultants, is examining the quality and range of information and resources available to students in schools and other settings. This will include an examination of how apprenticeship opportunities are presented to students.

In addition, work is also underway on a new portal to increase the visibility of apprenticeship opportunities. The portal will allow approved employers to advertise apprenticeships and to match with prospective apprentices. The new portal is expected to be rolled out in 2019 on completion of a pilot phase.

47. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cén fáth nach bhfuil an deontas do scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge á íoc le scoileanna atá faoi chúram na gCoistí Oideachais agus Oiliúna, na bPobalscoileanna agus na Scoileanna Cuimsitheacha; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [2634/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Sna socruithe cistiúcháin atá déanta ag an Roinn le haghaidh meánscoileanna deonacha, scoileanna cuimsitheacha agus pobail agus le haghaidh scoileanna agus coláistí na mBord Oideachais agus Oiliúna (BOO) léirítear na socruithe éagsúla bainistíochta agus úinéireachta a bhaineann le scoileanna an dara leibhéal.

Maoinítear meánscoileanna deonacha i scéim an tSaoroideachais, atá faoi úinéireacht agus bhainistíocht phríobháideach, trí dheontais per capita. Íoctar deontas per capita breise le scoileanna in earnáil na meánscoileanna deonacha ina múintear trí Ghaeilge go hiomlán nó i bpáirt. Ní hé seo an modh maoinithe áfach, a bhaineann le hearnálacha na scoileanna Pobail agus Cuimsitheacha ná le scoileanna na mBord Oideachais agus Oiliúna. I gcás na hEarnála Pobail agus Cuimsithe cuireann an Roinn maoiniú ar fáil ar bhonn buiséid atá bunaithe go príomha ar líon na scoláirí. Lena chois sin glactar san áireamh fachtóirí breise a athraíonn ó scoil go chéile, fachtóirí ar nós bail na bhfoirgneamh, méid na scoile srl.

Déantar leithdháiltí ar na BOO ar bhonn buiséid i ndáil le costais ardoifige agus costais eile lena n-áirítear iad siúd a bhaineann le scoileanna. Tugtar a lán neamhspleáchas do Bhoird Oideachais agus Oiliúna maidir le bainistiú agus leithreasú a gcuid buiséad agus tá cead ag gach BOO a chuid leithdháiltí a dháileadh amach de réir na dtosaíochtaí atá aige agus de réir a chuid riachtanas. Ní mór saincheistean maidir le maoiniú i dtaobh scoile ar leith a bhainistiú ó bhuiséad an Bhoid Oideachais agus Oiliúna lena mbaineann. Ní chuireann an Roinn leithdháiltí maoinithe ar leataobh do scoileanna aonair in earnáil na mBord Oideachais agus Oiliúna.

Tuigeann an Teachtaire Dála áfach go bhfuil tuilleadh feabhsuithe fógartha i mBuiséad 2019 sa mhéid go gcuirfear maoiniú caipitlíocha méadaithe ar fáil don earnáil scoile i gcomhair na scoilbhliana 2019/20 agus sna buiséid neamh-íoc san in earnáil na mBord Oideachais agus Oiliúna.

Oideachas Gaeltachta

48. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna an aontaíonn sé gur cosúil, de réir tuairiscí, go bhfuil ag éirí leis an bPolasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta, 2017-22, agus gur léir dá réir go bhfuil gá le straitéis nó polasaí iomlán a mbeadh spriocdhátaí leis maidir le múineadh na Gaeilge sa chóras oideachais ag gach leibhéal, ó na naiscoileanna go dtí na coláistí trí leibhéal. [1674/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Mar iar-Aire Gaeltachta, amharcaim ar theagasc na Gaeilge mar phríomhthosaíocht sa ról atá agam mar Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna.

Tá *An Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010 - 2030* tógtha ar bhunchloch stádas bunreachtúil na Gaeilge agus is é polasaí an Rialtais i leith na Gaeilge í. Tá an phríomhfhreagracht ar an Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta i gcomhar le Roinn an Taoisigh agus an Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna (ROS) chun an polasaí cuimsitheach seo a chur i bhfeidhm.

Tá prionsabail phríomhstraitéisí an Rialtais mar bhonn agus mar thaca ag *Plean Gníomhaíochta don Oideachas 2016-2019 de chuid ROS* lena n-áirítear *An Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge* agus mar sin tá tiomantas ann chun gnéithe oideachasúla na *Straitéise* a chur chun

tosaigh.

Chun baint amach na spriocanna atá leagtha amach sa *Straitéis 20 Bliain* a chur chun cinn, tá *Plean Gníomhaíochta 5 Bliana don Ghaeilge 2018 - 2022* foilsithe ag an Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta. Baineann na bearta ar aontaíodh orthu sa *Phlean Gníomhaíochta 5 Bliana* le naoi réimse gníomhaíochta, agus baineann an chéad cheann le cúrsaí Oideachais agus an ROS freagracht as. Tá creatlach comhtháite agus soiléir sa *Phlean Gníomhaíochta 5 Bliana* agus éascaítear ann rannpháirtíocht níos éifeachtaí le cuspóirí an Rialtais maidir leis an Ghaeilge. Sa phlean cuimsitheach seo tá bearta comhaontaithe faoi cheangal ama chun polasaí an Stáit i leith theagasc na Gaeilge sa chóras oideachais a chur chun tosaigh ar gach leibhéal ón mbunscolaíocht go dtí an tríú leibhéal.

Tá an Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta i gceannas ar chur i bhfeidhm an *Phlean Gníomhaíochta* i gcomhar leis na Rannóga cuí agus tá ionadaíocht ag an ROS ar an nGrúpa Ard-Leibhéal Maoirseachta.

Brexit Issues

49. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of Brexit preparedness within his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2718/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Firstly, as someone from a border county, let me say that a no deal Brexit is the worst possible outcome and would not be in the interests of the UK, Ireland or the EU. While I, along with my cabinet colleagues, continue to closely watch developments in the UK, my Department continues work to prepare for the UK's exit. This work, at national and EU level, continues to intensify, taking account of all possible outcomes.

Central to all planning scenarios, the maintenance of rights and privileges under the Common Travel Area (CTA) will protect much of the valuable and rich cooperation which takes place between education on a North-South and an East West basis. My officials have engaged with colleagues in the Department for Education in the UK on a set of principles which are designed to maintain and build on this cooperation. I am working closely with my Cabinet colleague, An Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, to conclude this process. It is important to note that, notwithstanding the type of Brexit, the CTA will be in place.

Naturally, I do not wish for a Disorderly Brexit, but prudently, I am preparing for this. As part of my Department's contribution to the Government Contingency Action Plan, an amendment to the Student Support Act 2011 has now been included as one of the parts of the proposed "Miscellaneous Provisions (Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union on 29 March 2019) Bill. This will facilitate the continued payment of SUSI grants to Irish students attending UK and Northern Irish higher education institutions and to UK and Northern Irish students studying in Irish higher education institutions.

As well as that amendment, I also recently announced that EU fees would continue to apply to UK students and Northern Irish for the 2019/ 2020 academic year. This brings certainty to UK and Northern Irish students who can be assured that the EU fees will apply for the duration of their studies in Ireland. However, equally important, both of these actions will ensure that Irish school leavers seeking to pursue their higher education in the UK and Northern Ireland will have certainty as they are making their CAO/ UCAS choices at this time.

My Department will continue to monitor all Brexit developments very carefully and I can assure all stakeholders in the education that the contingency planning is being constantly re-

fined to substantially reduce risks arising from Brexit.

Schools Building Projects Status

50. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when he expects works to commence on a new school building for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2741/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The major school building project for St. Patrick's is currently at an advanced stage of architectural planning, Stage 2(b) - Detailed Design, which includes the application for statutory approvals and the preparation of tender documents. The Stage 2(b) submission for the project has been reviewed by my Department and comments have issued to the school and its Design Team.

The Design Team has been requested to carry out one final review of all of its tender documentation for both the Main Contract and Reserved Specialists to ensure compliance with the Department's requirements and submit written confirmation from each Design Team member that they have completed this review and are satisfied that the Tender Documents are complete, correct and in compliance with Department and Building Control (Amendment) Regulations tender documentation requirements. These confirmations are currently awaited.

In order to expedite this project, my Department authorised the pre-qualification of contractors in April 2018. The pre-qualification of contractors for the main and reserved specialist contract involves the compiling of a shortlist of contractors to ensure that there are a number of appropriate and suitable candidates who can undertake the works successfully. The Design Team completed the pre-qualification process in December 2018.

My Department understands from the school and its Design Team that they are currently engaged with Fingal County Council in relation to a portion of land outside the school site, the use of which will minimise disruption to the school during construction. When this process has been concluded, the Design Team will be in a position to submit the requested Stage 2(b) confirmations and this project will then be progressed to tender. A tender stage normally takes between 7 and 8 months to complete.

Upon completion of tender stage the project will then be progressed to construction stage. A 24 month construction period is currently envisaged for this project.

My Department is fully committed to getting the project delivered as quickly as possible.

Schools Building Projects Status

51. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there are specific barriers preventing a school (details supplied) which was granted an extension and refurbishment ten years ago from progressing to the tender stage of the project. [2641/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy may be aware, the project to which she refers has been devolved for delivery to the local Education & Training Board (DDLETB). The Department is currently liaising with DDLETB with a view to resolving some issues that have arisen in respect of the project. These issues need to be addressed prior to proceeding to tender stage.

My Department acknowledges that the delivery of this project has taken longer than origi-

nally envisaged. I want to assure the Deputy that when the remaining issues are resolved my Department will be giving approval for the project to proceed to tender and construction.

Schools Facilities

52. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the details of the inspection mechanisms for physical education facilities; if he is satisfied that this provision is adequate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2721/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that many schools have a general purpose room/sports hall and practically all schools have outdoor play areas. In addition, many schools, use adjacent local facilities, including community halls, public parks, playing fields and swimming pools.

The provision of general purpose rooms, PE halls and outdoor hard play areas such as basketball courts, form part of the accommodation brief for all newly established schools.

The Deputy will be aware that under the National Development Plan (NDP), increased funding has been provided for the school sector capital investment programme. This funding allows for a continued focus on the provision of new permanent school places to keep pace with demographic demand and also provides for an additional focus on the refurbishment of existing school buildings to include the building and modernisation of PE facilities in post-primary schools.

Under the Ireland Project 2040, we will invest €8.4 billion (compared to €4.9 billion in the previous decade) in primary and post primary school buildings. This will include the provision of 50 large scale school building projects and 20,000 school places in state of the art new buildings.

The immediate priority of my Department is providing 20,000 new and replacement school places each year, to ensure that every child has a school place. The government will focus in the medium term on the provision of PE facilities in post primary schools.

Schools Amalgamation

53. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to ensure that the views of local communities in the west County Cavan area will be taken into account in his consideration of a proposal by Cavan and Monaghan ETB to close schools (details supplied); if his attention has been drawn to opposition of these communities to the ETB proposal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2761/19]

63. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to ensure that second-level school provision in the west County Cavan area will remain as provided for at present through schools (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2760/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 53 and 63 together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that the decision making authority for any amalgamation belongs to the Patron/Trustees of the school, and this is subject to the approval of the Department.

Any proposed change involves extensive negotiations at local level and must be well planned and managed in a manner that accommodates the interests of students, parents, teachers, local communities and contributes to an inclusive education system.

My Department has sought further information from the Patron of the schools concerned relating to the proposed amalgamation and this is awaited. The matter can be considered further following receipt of this information.

School Placement

54. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to improve access for children to ASD units in other localities if there are alternative places available in circumstances in which there is no ASD place available or an ASD unit in the locality of a child diagnosed with autism; his plans to ensure there is appropriate transport provided for children to attend an ASD unit rather than receive home supports in circumstances in which there is no ASD unit or available place in an ASD unit; if a child that has been diagnosed on the autism spectrum during ECCE years is entitled to an additional ECCE year under special circumstances as an alternative to home help which can cause a pre-primary school child to regress (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2768/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): My Department provides for a range of placement options and supports for schools, which have enrolled students with special educational needs, including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), in order to ensure that wherever a child is enrolled, s/he will have access to an appropriate education.

Special classes facilitate students with more complex special educational needs who are unable to access the curriculum in a mainstream class, even with support, for most or all of their school day.

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

- S/he has ASD
- S/he has complex or severe learning needs that require the support of a special class setting and the reasons why this is the case.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for the establishment of special class placements in various geographical areas where there is an identified need, in consultation with the relevant education partners and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

Since 2011, the NCSE has increased the number of special classes from 548 in 2011 to 1,459 across the country now, of which 1,196 are Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) special classes.

The NCSE is aware of emerging need from year to year, and where special class provision is required, it is planned and established to meet that need. This process is ongoing.

It is not always possible or practical that a special class placement would be available in a child's local school. In such circumstances, children are eligible for school transport where they are attending the nearest special class that is or can be resourced to meet their special educational needs. Eligibility is determined following consultation with the NCSE through its network of Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO).

From time to time, the NCSE identifies local areas where additional special class provision is required. In those circumstances, SENOs work with the schools and families concerned to

resolve the issues involved.

The Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 will assist in addressing this issue where the NCSE is of the opinion that there is insufficient education provision for children with special educational needs in an area.

Section 8 of the Act, which commenced on the 3rd of December 2018, provides the Minister with a power, after a process of consultation with the NCSE, the board of management and the patron of the school, to compel a school to make additional provision for the education of children with special educational needs.

In circumstances, where the NCSE confirm that there is no school placement available for a child with Special Educational Needs, my Departments Home Tuition grant scheme will provide funding towards the provision of 20 hours tuition per week as an interim measure until the NCSE confirms that a placement is available.

In recognition of the demand for group arrangements by parents of children in receipt of the Home Tuition grant, the scheme provides Parents the option to enter into a group arrangement with other parents of children for whom home tuition has been sanctioned. Parents wishing to enter into such an arrangement must notify my Department in advance for approval. The arrangements must conform to the general terms of the scheme.

My Department's policy is that all children must be enrolled in the primary school system, whether through placement in mainstream classes, in special classes or in special schools in the September prior to their sixth birthday.

Prior to enrolling in school children may participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. The current entitlement is to a maximum of two years of ECCE.

The upper age limit of 5 years and 6 months for completing the ECCE programme was set in consultation with the Early Years Education Policy Unit in DCYA and is consistent with the policy of my Department.

Current DCYA policy requires that any request for an overage exemption from ECCE eligibility criteria must be supported by a letter from a HSE/Medical Specialist (not a GP/Public Health Nurse) specifically recommending an extra year of pre-school for the child. This requirement relates to a need to maintain a clear and standard basis for applying for exemptions.

Overage exemption applications are also considered with regard to the original purpose of ECCE which is to provide a pre-school programme in the two years before a child starts school.

I would like to advise the Deputy that queries in relation to the operation of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme should be addressed the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

School Admissions

55. Deputy Thomas Byrne asked the Minister for Education and Skills if clarity will be provided with regard to the need for a baptism certificate in response to a small number of schools which have requested the submission of same as part of the admission process for the 2019/2020 academic year. [2719/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy is aware the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018, was signed into law by the President on the 18th

July 2018.

This Act is an important piece of legislation which will introduce a more parent-friendly, equitable and consistent approach to how school admissions policy operates for the almost 4,000 primary and post-primary schools in this country and a fair and balanced school admission process for all pupils.

The Act contains a provision, which was commenced on 3rd October 2018 and is operational since that date, which amends the Equal Status Act 2000 to prohibit the use of religion as a selection criterion in primary school admissions, with certain protections provided to ensure that a child of a minority religion can access a school providing a religious instruction or religious education programme consistent with his or her religious beliefs.

If the Deputy has been made aware of any schools that are not complying with the legislation in this regard I would be grateful if he would provide a list of such schools for the attention of my Department.

School Accommodation Provision

56. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if consideration is being given to the need to increase the number of school places for north County Dublin in view of the population growth in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2630/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas and uses a Geographical Information System, using data from a range of sources, to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level.

Where demographic data indicates that additional provision is required, the delivery of such additional provision is dependent on the particular circumstances of each case and may, depending on the circumstances, be provided through either one, or a combination of, the following:

- Utilising existing unused capacity within a school or schools,
- Extending the capacity of a school or schools,
- Provision of a new school or schools.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Government recently announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including the following new primary and post-primary schools to be established in the area referred to by the Deputy as follows:

- A new 8-classroom primary school to serve the Swords school planning area (South) to be established in 2019;
- A new 8-classroom primary school to serve the Swords school planning area (North) to be established in 2019;
- A new 16-classroom primary school to serve the Donabate school planning area to be established in 2020;

- A new 8-classroom primary school to serve the Killester_Raheny_Clontarf school planning area to be established in 2019;
- Two new 16-classroom primary schools to serve the Donaghmede_Howth_D13 school planning area to be established in 2019 and 2021; and
- Two new post-primary schools to serve the Donaghmede_Howth_D13 school planning area to be established in 2019 and 2021.

In addition, the following post-primary schools were also established in this area in recent years as follows:

- 1,000 pupil post-primary school established in 2013 to serve the Rush & Lusk school planning area;
- 700 pupil post-primary school established in 2014 to serve the Balbriggan school planning area;
- 1,000 pupil post-primary school established in 2018 to serve the Malahide and Portmarnock school planning areas as a regional solution; and
- 1,000 pupil post-primary school established in 2018 to serve the Swords school planning area.

The requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular would have regard for the increased rollout of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040. In addition to the new schools announced, my Department's capital investment programme also provides for devolved funding for additional classrooms for existing schools where an immediate enrolment need has been identified.

Schools Building Projects Status

57. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding funding being available for a school (details supplied). [2551/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): A building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is included in my Department's 6 year Construction Programme.

A project brief has been finalised and the project will be delivered via the ADAPT programme. The ADAPT programme uses a professional external Project Manager to coordinate and drive the respective design teams on each project.

In this regard, a tender competition is in train to establish a Project Manager framework which is expected to be in place by early March. The formulation of tender documentation is underway and once the framework has been established a tender exercise will be carried out to appoint a Project Manager for this particular project.

All schools with projects on the ADAPT programme will be contacted shortly by my Department to provide an update on the status of their respective project.

Teaching Qualifications

58. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the policies regarding the criteria that deems a person suitable to be a special education teacher were last reviewed in view of the large number of ASD units being established in primary schools nationally; his views on whether there is a need to review the efficiency of policy regarding both the training and qualifications of SNAs in order to maximise the potential of those working in the sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2764/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Under Section 38 of the Teaching Council Act, all initial teacher education (ITE) programmes in Ireland that lead to registration must have professional accreditation from the Teaching Council in accordance with the Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers (published in June 2011 and revised in March 2017).

The Teaching Council is currently carrying out a review of the impact of the current programmes, with a view to amending the Criteria and Guidelines before the next round of accreditation commences in 2020.

Under the Council's criteria for initial teacher education, student teachers in all accredited programmes are required to undertake study in Inclusive Education including Special Education.

A recently published report from the National Council for Special Education on Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion: Phase 1 and 2 (NCSE Research Report No. 26), found that there is in general much good practice related to inclusive education in ITE, particularly in relation to the fostering of positive attitudes to inclusion, while also noting scope for further alignment between theory and practice, in particular as between student placement and the university experience. These findings will be considered by the Teaching Council in the course of its work.

Schools should endeavour to assign experienced teachers to Special Classes with appropriate qualifications and, wherever possible, a background in working with students with special educational needs. Schools should also be proactive in meeting the continuing professional development needs of their special class teachers, in addition to developing and reviewing their whole school policies in relation to the education and inclusion of students with special educational needs.

In relation to training and qualifications for special needs assistants, the current entry level qualification for Special Needs Assistants is set out in my Department's circular 0021/2011 which requires a FETAC level 3 major qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications, OR a minimum of three grade Ds in the Junior Certificate, OR the equivalent.

The Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme which set out to ensure that the Scheme is achieving the best outcomes possible for children with special educational needs was published by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) in May 2018.

One of the recommendations in the Review is the development of a national training programme at FETAC level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications for existing and new SNAs, recognising the fundamental importance of building schools' capacity to meet students' additional care needs.

In response to the Review, I have undertaken to develop proposals for the implementation of the NCSE's recommendations and to return to Government following engagement with the Departments of Public Expenditure and Reform and Health, with a proposed implementation plan to include governance and accountability framework and detailed costings of any recommendations that subsequently may be approved by Government.

Work in this regard is underway and I expect to bring proposals for implementation of the Review's recommendations to Government shortly.

Schools Building Projects

59. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps he will take following the announcement of a new 1,000 pupil building for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2759/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The review of provision at post-primary level across the school planning areas in the South Kildare area is now complete and the Department is satisfied that the needs in the area can be met through the replacement and expansion of the existing Curragh Post-Primary School with a new 1,000 pupil school building.

The Curragh Post-Primary School is a multi-denominational Community College under the patronage of Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB) with over 130 pupils in the 2018/19 school year.

It is intended that this expansion will also cater for demand arising in the adjoining New-bridge and Kildare school planning areas.

In relation to the site for the proposed new post primary school , this will be determined as part of the site acquisition process. Due to commercial sensitivities with site acquisitions in general, I am unable to elaborate further at this time and it will be confirmed at a later date.

School Accommodation Provision

60. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied) for improved accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2728/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that the school in question has provided further information to my Department in support of its application for additional accommodation. My Department is also engaging with the National Council for Special Education relating to the matter and expects to be in a position to convey a decision on the application to the school shortly.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

61. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way in which the difficulties being experienced in ensuring a satisfactory support plan for a person (details supplied) will be addressed. [2547/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that at present, all schools are encouraged to use Education Plans. My Department's Inspectorate's advice is that the majority of schools are now using some form of education planning for children with special educational needs.

Guidelines for schools on educational planning and monitoring of outcomes and the man-

ner in which they should conduct educational planning, through the Student Support File, are contained in the Guidelines for Schools: Supporting Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools, available at:

<http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/Guidelines-for-Primary-Schools-Supporting-Pupils-with-Special-Educational-Needs-in-Mainstream-Schools.pdf>

The guidelines note that effective planning ensures that the school's resources are deployed efficiently and that they achieve the desired outcomes.

They also note that schools are encouraged to consult with parents in relation to their child's needs and support planning.

Matters such as this are therefore best resolved between the parent and the school in the first instance. The parent should discuss with the school, the type of planning which can be put in place to support their child in school. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Support Service is also available to provide support and training for schools around the provision of support for pupils with special educational needs. Further information is available from the NCSE *www.ncse.ie*.

Psychological Assessments Waiting Times

62. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the delays in assessments for children attending school that have developmental issues and may require specialised support; the efforts being taken to clear this backlog; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2743/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy may be aware my Department in September 2017 introduced a new model to support pupils with special educational needs in our schools. The new model differs significantly from the old Resource Allocation Model, in that Special Education Teacher allocation is now frontloaded into schools to support children with special educational needs. Rather than having to make individual application to the NCSE for additional supports schools can now respond to individual needs in a flexible way and pupils do not have to have a psychological assessment, or a diagnosis of a disability, in order to access Special Education Teaching. This means that those with highest level of need can access the highest level of support within the school in a timely manner.

Educational Psychologists from my Department's National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) work with schools using a problem solving model to help schools identify need and interventions to support those needs. Under the new model, NEPS encourages schools to use a continuum based assessment and intervention process whereby each school takes responsibility for initial assessment, educational planning and remedial intervention for pupils with learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Teachers may consult their NEPS psychologist should they wish to for advice. Only in the event of a failure to make reasonable progress, in spite of the school's best efforts in consultation with NEPS, will the psychologist become involved with an individual child for intensive intervention or assessment.

This system is in line with international best practice and allows psychologists to give early attention to urgent cases and also to help many more children indirectly than could be seen individually. It also ensures that children are not referred unnecessarily for psychological assessment and have equality of access to support prioritised on their individual needs.

Therefore, in response to your specific query I can advise that, in the first instance, parents should discuss their concerns in relation to their child or young adult with the Principal of the school involved with a view to discussing his/her response to interventions in place and the appropriateness of involvement of the NEPs psychologist for individual input including assessment.

However the Deputy will be aware that access to a range of specialist and therapeutic services for children with developmental issues fall within the ambit of HSE services and therefore her question, depending on the specifics, might more properly fall to my colleague the Minister for Health for response.

I hope this clarifies the issue for the Deputy.

Question No. 63 answered with Question No. 53.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

64. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans for increased current and capital investment in the provision of special autism units in schools in Clondalkin, Dublin 22 and Lucan, County Dublin to meet the significant level of need in those areas. [2644/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The policy of this Department is that all children with Special Educational Needs, including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in school settings through the primary and post primary school network.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) policy advice on Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (2016) found that students are generally well supported in schools with appropriate curriculum; extensive teacher and SNA supports; improving range of educational placements supported by improved accommodation and equipment; improved teacher knowledge and understanding and a generally good standard of provision at primary and post primary levels.

The greater proportion of children with ASD attend mainstream class, where they may access additional supports if required.

Special class placements are provided in mainstream schools for students with ASD and more complex needs, where it has been demonstrated that he/she is unable to learn effectively in a mainstream class for most or all of the school day even with appropriate supports.

Special school placements are provided for other students with ASD and very complex special needs who wouldn't manage in a mainstream school even for part of the week.

The NCSE, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), in consultation with the relevant education partners, is responsible for the establishment of special classes in various geographical areas where there is an identified need.

Since the 2013/14 school year the NCSE has increased the number of ASD special classes from 511 to 1196. This includes 237 special classes attached to mainstream schools in Co. Dublin. Of these, 17 are ASD early intervention classes, 139 are primary ASD classes and 41 are post primary ASD classes. The number of ASD special classes in Co. Dublin have increased from 66 in 2011/2012 to 197 in 2018/2019.

Details of all special classes for children with special educational needs are available by county on the NCSE website www.ncse.ie

My Department will continue to support the NCSE in opening ASD special classes in areas where there is an identified need.

Special Classes can be established within a schools existing accommodation. In such circumstances the school can apply to the Department for capital funding to re-configure existing spaces within the school building to accommodate the class and/or to construct additional accommodation.

In the case of all new schools, it is general practice to include a Special Education Needs Base (SEN Base) in the accommodation brief for new school buildings, unless local circumstances indicate that it will not be required. Typically, a two classroom SEN Base is provided in new primary schools and a two or four classroom SEN Base is provided in new post primary schools.

All school capital projects that have been approved by my Department under the Additional Accommodation Scheme, including special needs accommodation, may be viewed on my Department's website, www.education.ie and this is updated regularly.

Schools Building Projects Status

65. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the school redevelopment project at a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2769/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): A major building project for the school referred to by the Deputy, is included in my Department's Capital Programme.

It is acknowledged that this project will involve complex and careful master-planning of the site. A full technical site visit has been undertaken by my Department's technical staff, and the project brief for the school is being formulated. My Department will be in further contact with the school's patron when this process has been completed.

Student Accommodation

66. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of student accommodation units in the planning pipeline; and the number and percentages for both the public and private sectors. [1459/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As of the end of Q4 2018 the following figures (which may be subject to final revision) represent the known developments in the pipeline for student accommodation:

- 6,438 PBSA bed spaces have been completed
- 4,432 further bed spaces are under construction
- 7,691 additional bed spaces have been granted planning permission
- 822 are at the planning permission application stage

This represents a total number of 19,293 PBSA bed spaces in the development pipeline. Of these:

- 3,702 are publically owned representing a 19.18% share of the total developments
- 15,591 are privately owned representing an 80.8% share of the total developments

School Services Staff

67. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position with regard to the remuneration of school secretaries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2723/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I recognise the very important work done by school secretaries, and indeed by other support staff, in the running of our schools and I am grateful to them for the contribution they make to our education system. I have spoken to a number of school secretaries about their employment conditions.

Schemes were initiated in 1978 and 1979 for the employment of Clerical Officers and Caretakers in schools. The schemes were withdrawn completely in 2008.

These schemes have been superseded by the more extensive capitation grant schemes. The current grant scheme was agreed in the context of the Programme for Economic and Social Progress, published in 1991.

The majority of primary and voluntary secondary schools now receive assistance to provide for secretarial, caretaking and cleaning services under these grant schemes. It is a matter for each individual school to decide how best to apply the grant funding to suit its particular needs. Where a school uses the grant funding for caretaking or secretarial purposes, any staff taken on to support those functions are employees of individual schools. Specific responsibility for the pay and conditions rests with the school.

On foot of a Chairman's Note to the Lansdowne Road Agreement, my Department engaged with the Unions representing school secretaries and caretakers, including through an independent arbitration process in 2015. The Arbitrator recommended a cumulative pay increase of 10% between 2016 and 2019 for staff and that a minimum hourly pay rate of €13 be phased in over that period. This arbitration agreement covers the period up to 31 December 2019.

The arbitration agreement was designed to be of greatest benefit to lower-paid secretaries and caretakers. For example, a Secretary or Caretaker who was paid the then minimum wage of €8.65 per hour in 2015 prior to the arbitration will, from 1 January 2019, be paid €13 per hour which is a 50% increase in that individual's hourly pay.

Following the arbitration process, grant funding used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff was improved in order to enable schools to implement the arbitration outcome.

Apprenticeship Programmes

68. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the dangers posed to mechanics in the servicing and repairing of electric cars; his plans to draft new regulations to ensure that all mechanics required to work on electric cars are properly trained; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2538/19]

73. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to launch a public awareness campaign in respect of the specialist training needed by mechanics that are required to work on electric vehicles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2539/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 68 and 73 together.

The 2014 Review of Apprenticeship in Ireland recommended that curriculum reviews should be carried out on existing apprenticeships to keep pace with new methods and technologies in the workplace and to ensure that apprentices have a broader range of literacy, numeracy, ICT and teamworking skills.

The current motor mechanics apprenticeship has undergone a revision process and a new Fourth Version is planned for roll out in 2019, subject to validation by Quality and Qualifications Ireland. Significant changes in relation to the modernisation of the mechanics industry has been taken into consideration in this review. It is expected that the new version will incorporate additional material, including specific components on electric vehicles and safety.

In respect of mechanics already working in the industry, it is the responsibility of employers to maintain a healthy and safe workplace under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005. In addition, manufacturers engage with dealers in the industry in relation to providing training for mechanics working on their vehicles. While the education and training sector is involved in initial training, regulation and communications on health and safety in the automotive sector does not fall under my Department's remit.

Schools Building Projects Status

69. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied) for a new school building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2727/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): A major building project for the school in question which will deliver a new school building and replace all prefab units is currently at Stage 1 of the Architectural Planning Process.

Stage 1 is the Preliminary Design Stage where the Design Team analyses all the constraints of the site, develops a preferred design option and cost plan. A Stakeholders meeting was held in October 2018 where design proposals were presented by the school and its Design Team. Feedback was provided to the Design Team at the meeting and the Design Team is currently finalising an Addendum Stage 1 Report.

Upon satisfactory completion of Stage 1 my Department will be in a position to authorise the project to progress to the next stages of Architectural Planning which include detailed design, obtaining statutory approvals and the preparation of tender documents.

This project is included in the 6 year construction programme and is scheduled therein to go to construction in the years 2019 - 2021.

DEIS Eligibility

70. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school

(details supplied) previously excluded will be reconsidered for inclusion in the DEIS scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2663/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy will be aware DEIS Plan 2017 was the culmination of more than 18 months of consultation and discourse with education partners and other stakeholders to ensure that identification of schools and future delivery of interventions is fully informed by the practical experience of teachers, parents, students and non-governmental organisations working on behalf of children at risk of educational disadvantage and their families

My Department has introduced an objective, statistics based model for assessing which schools merit inclusion in the DEIS Programme, so that all stakeholders can have confidence that we are targeting extra resources at those schools with the highest levels of concentrated disadvantage.

The key data sources used in the DEIS identification process are the DES Primary Online Database (POD) and Post-Primary Online Database (PPOD) and CSO data from the National Census of Population as represented in the Pobal Haase Pratschke Deprivation Index (HP Index). The HP Index combines three underlying dimensions of affluence/disadvantage, identified as Demographic Profile, Social Class Composition and Labour Market Situation, to achieve a balanced measure of relative affluence and deprivation, which evenly applies across the urban-rural continuum. Variables used in the compilation of the HP Index include those related to demographic growth, dependency ratios, single parent rates, education levels, overcrowding, social class, occupation and unemployment rates. This data is combined with pupil data, anonymised and aggregated to small area, to provide information on the relative level of concentrated disadvantage present in the pupil cohort of individual schools. This data is applied uniformly to all schools in the country in a fair and objective way, to identify the relative level of concentrated disadvantage present in each school.

The calculation of the level of disadvantage in each school is based on the socio-economic background of their pupil cohort using centrally held data as previously outlined and is not based on the location of the school but on the geographical CSO Small Areas where the pupil cohort resides.

A detailed document explaining the methodology used in the Identification process is available on the Department's website at: <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Identification-Process.pdf>.

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

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

Therefore, in order to ensure the quality of the address data and conduct further analysis, it is not intended to extend the DEIS Programme to any further schools until this work is complete.

71. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding that has been approved for an institution (details supplied) in the past three years; the funding that has been specifically indicated for the campus at a location as part of that funding; the system used to ensure that allocations are used for the purpose proposed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2729/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): My Department allocates the recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for direct disbursement to the HEA designated higher education institutions including Institutes of Technology (IoTs) such as Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT).

In previous years, similar to a number of higher education institutions, LYIT experienced some financial difficulties. Following engagement with the HEA a 3 year financial plan was agreed with LYIT which has been subject to ongoing monitoring by the HEA. The plan included a rebranding of the School of Tourism in Killybegs to grow profile and potential demand, continue part-time student growth, development of new undergraduate programmes and other cost cutting measures which were rolled out across the campus.

My Department agreed to allocate ring-fenced funding of €750,000 to LYIT in respect of the Tourism College for a period of four years to 2020.

I am pleased to understand that as a result of the above steps and the recent overall increases in current funding to the higher education sector, there are signs of significant improvement in LYIT's financial position, with a surplus of €694,000 achieved for the 2016/17 financial year and an overall accumulated a surplus of €2.3 million at year end.

Details of the current funding allocated by the HEA to LYIT, including the ring-fenced funding provided for Killybegs, is set out in the table.

	2016	2017	2018
Core Grant	€11,408,502	€12,534,722	€13,747,305
Ring-fenced Funding	€0	€750,000	€750,000
Fees & Other	€2,818,289	€3,332,106	€3,245,679
Total	€14,226,791	€16,616,828	€17,742,984

Gaeltacht Policy

72. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if consideration will be given to reinstating the Gaeltacht grant at third-level to student teachers. [2745/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): There is no provision currently in my Department's budget for this grant or an element thereof in 2019. The decision to stop the Gaeltacht placement grants was taken during the economic crisis when, unfortunately, very difficult decisions had to be made to stabilise the nation's finances. Priority was given to protecting resources for front line education services as far as possible.

The Deputy should note that, to assist with the costs of the Gaeltacht placement, students who are in receipt of a student grant which includes a 100% fee grant, or who would have qualified for a full fee grant but for the Free Fees Scheme, can apply for funding towards travel and accommodation costs under the field trip element of a fee grant, subject to the normal terms and conditions of the student grant scheme. Apart from this, in circumstances of particular need, students may apply for support under the Student Assistance Fund. Information in relation to this fund is available through the Access Officer in the third level institution attended.

Question No. 73 answered with Question No. 68.

School Accommodation Provision

74. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the alternative accommodation arrangements for a school (details supplied) once the lease expires on its current temporary accommodation in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2660/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy is aware a major capital project for the provision of permanent accommodation for the school referred to by the Deputy to cater for a long term projected enrolment of 1,000 pupils is being addressed through my Department's Capital Programme.

With regard with the school's interim accommodation, as the Deputy is aware the lease on the school's temporary accommodation is due to expire on the 30th April 2019 and the property is up for sale. My Department's preferred option for interim accommodation is for the school to remain in this location. Accordingly, my Department has indicated to the owner of the property that it would be interested in exploring the potential to licence or lease the property from a potential purchaser should the purchaser be amenable to such an arrangement.

My Department is also exploring other options should it not be possible for the school to remain in the existing property. In this context, my Department is engaging with the patron body of the school and KWETB regarding all other possible short term accommodation solutions.

School Accommodation Provision

75. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the school building programme is proceeding in line with expectations nationally and throughout County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2733/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Deputy will be aware that my Department's Capital Programme continues to address the challenges posed by the significant bulge in pupil enrolments going through our schools. This has seen a significant expansion in the rate of provision of new school places.

The 2019 Primary and Post Primary Infrastructure allocation amounting to €672m will be expended primarily on the delivery of large scale projects and on the Additional Accommodation Scheme. Typically, expenditure levels of between 70% and 80% of the capital allocation available to schools annually is in respect of large scale projects and the Additional Accommodation Scheme. The balance available in 2019 will be expended on site acquisitions, the Summer Works Scheme, the Emergency Works Scheme, furniture and equipment provision and other smaller programmes.

The Capital Programme details the school projects that are being progressed through the architectural planning process, including schools at primary and post primary level in County Kildare. The Capital Programme also provides for devolved funding for additional classrooms, if required, for schools where an immediate enrolment need has been identified or where an additional teacher has been appointed. Details of schools listed on this programme can be found on my Department's website www.education.ie and this information is updated regularly.

The Deputy will also be aware of my announcement in April 2018 regarding the establish-

ment of 42 new schools, including new primary schools in Maynooth, Leixlip and Naas and a new post primary school in Enfield to meet demand in the Kilcock school planning area, over the next four years (2019 to 2022). This announcement followed nationwide demographic exercises carried out by the Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

School Accommodation Provision

76. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the lack of secondary school places in north County Dublin, specifically in Malahide, Kinsealy, Portmarnock and Swords; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2540/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that the current status of large-scale projects, including those in North County Dublin, being delivered under the school building programme may be viewed on my Department's website, www.education.ie and this information is updated regularly. In addition, a list of large-scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

As the Deputy will be aware, 2 Post Primary schools have been established to provide additional school capacity in the Malahide/Portmarnock and Swords area in North County Dublin. These schools opened in temporary accommodation in September 2018.

The Capital Programme also provides for devolved funding for additional classrooms, if required, for schools where an immediate enrolment need has been identified or where an additional teacher has been appointed. In this regard, I can confirm that my Department has recently received applications for such funding from two Post Primary schools in North County Dublin. These applications will be assessed and a decision will be conveyed to the school authorities when the assessment process has been completed.

All school capital projects that have been approved by my Department under the Additional Accommodation Scheme, may be viewed on my Department's website, www.education.ie, and this is updated regularly.

DEIS Administration

77. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the actions he will take to accelerate the narrowing of the gap between DEIS and non-DEIS schools and further improve the outcomes for those attending DEIS schools in view of the recent evaluation report of DEIS schools which shows a narrowing of the gap between the schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2661/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I welcome the findings in this latest ERC evaluation of the DEIS programme which shows a narrowing of the gap between DEIS and non-DEIS schools both in terms of performance at Junior Certificate level and retention rates. It is also very encouraging to see a rise in the percentage of students in DEIS schools taking English and Mathematics at Higher Level.

This research provides further valuable evidence that the DEIS programme is working. These improvements would not be possible without the commitment and dedication shown by the principals and teachers in these schools.

It is also worth noting that the study also supports the rationale for providing additional supports to those schools with the highest concentrations of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

However, it is still apparent that a gap still remains between DEIS and non-DEIS schools. The aim of DEIS Plan 2017 is to continue to work towards narrowing this gap and it contains 108 actions regarding the implementation of the Plan. Work has commenced on the implementation of these actions in with a focus on targeting extra resources as closely as possible at those students with the greatest level of need.

For the first time key targets have been set in specific areas such as literacy and numeracy, retention rates and progression. All DEIS schools receive a suite of supports with those with the highest levels of disadvantage benefiting from lower class size. DEIS schools receive financial resources in the form of a DEIS grant as well as an enhanced book grant. They also have access to literacy and numeracy supports, priority access to professional development and the Centre for School Leadership, enhanced guidance allocation, access to Incredible Years and Friends Programme, access to School Meals Programme and Home School Community Liaison Scheme and School Completion Programme.

Another example of an action we are taking to narrow the gap is the School Excellence Fund-DEIS. This enables schools to apply for funding to implement innovative programmes which are context-specific and aimed at improving learning outcomes. Full details on DEIS Plan 2017 can be found at: <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/DEIS-Plan-2017.pdf>

The implementation of the various actions, to further improve the educational outcomes of those attending DEIS Schools, will continue during 2019.

Schools Building Contractors

78. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the remedial works carried out in primary schools in Tyrellstown recently; the estimated cost of the works; if the work has been completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2771/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Precautionary works to the two primary schools in Tyrellstown were completed on the 12th of December last. These are interim measures to ensure that the buildings can be safely occupied. St. Luke's NS opted to return to its building at that time. Tyrellstown ETNS opted to return to its building after the Christmas holidays and is in full occupation since then.

The second phase of assessments at schools built by Western Building Systems was initiated on Friday, 18/1/19.

This involves detailed investigations to determine and design permanent remediation solutions across the 40 buildings concerned.

This second-phase programme will focus initially on the bundle of 22 schools in which precautionary measures were implemented. This includes the two schools in Tyrellstown.

Five schools are scheduled for detailed assessments in the first tranche of the second phase assessment programme. These are:

Presentation	Convent NS Portarlinton
Carrigaline	ETNS
Scoil	Chaitlin Maude NS, Tallaght
Gaelscoil	Eiscir Riada, Lucan
St. Paul's NS	Ratoath

Second-phase investigations also includes Ardgillan Community College, part of which remains closed.

Investigation work in these schools will take place over successive weekends, starting 18/01/19. This approach is to prevent disruption to the schools and so that they can open the following Monday morning.

A schedule for investigations in the remainder of the 22 schools in which precautionary measures were implemented, including the Tyrrelstown schools, will be finalised when assessments of the first five are completed.

Building investigations in schools that did not require precautionary measures will be scheduled for the 2019 summer break.

John Sisk & Son has been appointed as the contractor to conduct the opening-up and testing works to facilitate the investigations. Ove Arup and Partners Ireland Limited (t/a Arup) has been appointed to carry out the investigations and to design the permanent engineering solutions as required for each individual school.

The delivery of the permanent remediation solutions works will be planned when the extent of the work needed is established. Works will be prioritised for delivery with the aim of maximising use of school holiday periods.

Precautionary measures will remain in place at the schools until permanent solutions have been implemented.

As precautionary works only have been carried out in the Tyrrelstown schools, the estimated costs for the complete project, which will include the permanent solution when devised, are not yet available.

Schools Healthy Living Strategies

79. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason involvement in the extra curriculum activities of sports is not being considered as part of the timetabled wellness programme in second-level schools. [2548/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): My Department fully supports the promotion of healthy lifestyles in schools and has issued circulars to support and strengthen schools' efforts in developing in young people the skills and attitudes needed to make informed decisions about their health. Through the curriculum students are taught the key skills and knowledge to enable them to make healthier life choices.

All post primary schools must provide a wellbeing programme as part of its timetable to junior cycle students. In this Wellbeing programme, Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE), Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) and Physical Education are given equal parity in supporting student learning in Wellbeing and are allocated similar time over the three years of junior cycle. Key events within the school calendar which involve all students are also incor-

porated in a Wellbeing programme and may include sporting activities such as sports day.

Another significant development in the area of physical education is the introduction on a phased basis from September 2018 of a new examinable Leaving Certificate Physical Education subject and a new non-examinable Framework for Senior Cycle Physical Education.

Schools Site Acquisitions

80. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a site has been identified for a new school build (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2659/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy may be aware, a building project for the school in question is included in my Department's capital programme.

Officials in my Department have identified a preferred site for the school and negotiations are ongoing at present.

Officials are working to progress matters as expeditiously as possible in order to facilitate the school building at the earliest possible date. The school patron body is being kept informed on the matter.

Education and Training Boards Places

81. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which he remains satisfied regarding the availability on an ongoing basis of sufficiently qualified young persons with the skill set requirement sufficient to meet the demands of the modern workplace, academically and technically; the degree to which corrective steps are needed to address deficiencies in this area in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2734/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The education and training system at all levels has a number of key strategies in place to ensure we meet existing and future skills demands in the workplace and equip young people with the skills to meet these demands, to enhance the level of human capital in Ireland and provide a solid basis for long-term economic sustainability and rising living standards. These strategies include, in particular, the National Skills Strategy 2025 and the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019, .

According to an OECD 2017 Report, the employment prospects and expected financial benefits from completing tertiary education in Ireland are also higher than in most other European countries, suggesting that the education system provides skills that are relevant to the labour market.

In relation to graduate supply, in 2017 there were a total of 48,931 graduates from the Higher Education system. Of this number, a significant proportion were in key skills areas, 2,765 were in ICT, 5,729 in Engineering Manufacturing and Construction and 4,200 in Science and Maths.

A new ICT Skills Action Plan has been developed by my Department in consultation with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, the National Skills Council and other key stakeholders and is expected to be published shortly. A central objective of the Plan is to increase graduate supply in this critical skills area.

I am satisfied that these and other important elements of my Departments strategies ,developed in collaboration with key stakeholders, will help ensure that we are well prepared to meet our skills needs on an ongoing basis and to support the long-term success of our economy.

Schools Building Projects Status

82. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of and timeframe for the completion of work on a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2629/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy may be aware, the project to which she refers has been devolved for delivery to the local Education & Training Board (DDLETB). The Department is currently liaising with DDLETB with a view to resolving some issues that have arisen in respect of the project. These issues need to be addressed prior to proceeding to tender stage.

My Department acknowledges that the delivery of this project has taken longer than originally envisaged. I want to assure the Deputy that when the remaining issues are resolved my Department will be giving approval for the project to proceed to tender and construction. While it is not possible to say exactly when, it is hoped that these issues will be resolved shortly.

Literacy Programmes

83. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the programmes in place to improve workplace literacy, particularly in the context of the report of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs and the sizeable number of persons in the workforce that need to improve their literacy, numeracy or digital skills in order to progress in the workplace; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50417/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Adult education and training is a crucial component of the European Commission's long term strategy The EU Skills Agenda. Ireland is participating in this agenda through a range of measures including developing initiatives to support 'Upskilling Pathways' designed to improve workplace literacy, numeracy and digital skills and one of the main legislative proposals of the " New Skills Agenda for Europe"

My Department has established an Upskilling Pathways multi-agency steering group to identify priority cohorts and appropriate measures to implement the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation.

As part of the Upskilling Pathways initiative, my Department launched the Skills to Advance Programme in September 2018 with a specific focus on those who have lower skills levels and who need more opportunities to advance in their working lives and careers.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

84. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the gap between the provision of and need for social needs assistants in classrooms in schools especially in Lucan, County Dublin, Clondalkin and Dublin 22; and his plans to increase investment in 2019 and 2020 to meet current need. [2643/19]

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 the Department's website at www.education.ie, in order that students who have care needs can access SNA support as and when it is needed.

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

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 2018 there were nearly 15,000 Special Needs Assistants working in our schools, a 42% increase on 2011.

The SNA allocation for Dublin increased from 2,869 posts at the end of the last school year to 4,234 posts for the 2018/19 school year.

I am satisfied that the very significant levels of additional provision we have made in recent years, to provide for extra SNAs, means that all schools, including those in Lucan, Clondalkin and Dublin 22, are sufficiently resourced to provide for the special educational needs and care needs of children in their schools.

Oideachas Gaeilge

85. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cén uair a bheidh an t-athbhreithniú atá á dhéanamh maidir le díolúintí do dhaltaí scoile ón nGaeilge a fhoghlaim críochnaithe agus na cinntí a éireoidh as déanta; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [2633/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Tá an comhairliúchán poiblí maidir le beartas agus cleachtas na Roinne maidir le díolúintí ó staidéar na Gaeilge a seoladh ar 7 Nollaig 2018 críochnaithe anois.

Tá an-áthas orm leis maidir leis an leibhéal rannpháirtíochta, nach bhfacthas riamh roimhe, a chruthaigh an comhairliúchán sin. Fuarthas os cionn 10,000 freagra ar an suirbhé ar líne féin. Déanfar anailís chúramach ar fhreagraí ar an suirbhé ar líne agus ar aon fhaisnéis bhreise a gheobhaidh mo Roinn le linn na tréimhse comhairliúcháin agus déanfaidh sé sin eolas d'aon athbhreithniú breise is gá ar na dréachtchiorcláin athbhreithnithe a chuirfear i láthair sa *Páipéar Comhairliúcháin* a threorú.

Táthar ag súil leis na ciorcláin athbhreithnithe nua faoina bhféadfar díolúintí ó staidéar na Gaeilge ag leibhéal bunscoile agus iar-bhunscoile a cheadú a fhoilsiú roimh dheireadh na scoilbhliana seo le cur i bhfeidhm ag scoileanna ó Mheán Fómhair 2019.

School Staff

86. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a school (details supplied) was granted a third deputy principal in view of the fact that office space for that position will not be provided; the way in which the building in its current form will adequately service 900 students in view of the change in building specifications since the school was built; the reason a third ASD class has been approved for allocation at the school while the school only has space for two in view of the fact agreement has not been given to build the additional space needed to develop same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2646/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that the appointment of Deputy Principals, as per the Department's Circular 0007/2018, is based on confirmed enrolments at a school. The school in question qualified for the third Deputy Principal on this basis.

The current priority of my Department is the provision of essential classroom accommodation for additional teaching posts where no provision exists within the existing school building. It was not possible to provide funding for a specific designated space for the Deputy Principal post in question.

I can confirm to the Deputy that the school has submitted an application for funding to increase its Special Educational Needs accommodation to include a third class base and my Department has been in contact with the school in this regard. The application is currently being assessed and a decision on the application will be conveyed to the school authority shortly.

Schools Building Projects Status

87. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the school redevelopment project at a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2770/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): A building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is included in my Department's 6 Year Construction Programme .

In this regard my Department has undertaken a technical site visit to the school and the project brief is currently being determined. My Department will be in further contact with the school Patron when this process has been completed.

In the interim period, my Department has approved the provision of additional temporary accommodation (a block of 8 temporary classrooms) to cater for the immediate needs of the school.

Schools Health and Safety

88. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the procedures in place for the inspection of school buildings to ensure they comply with health, fire and safety issues particularly older school buildings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2642/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): In accordance with the Safety,

Health and Welfare at Work Act, it is the responsibility of school management authorities to have a safety statement in place in their schools. Schools are obliged to identify possible hazards, assess the risks to health and safety and put appropriate safeguards in place.

Individual school authorities are responsible, in the first instance, for ensuring the safety and welfare of children and others in their care. It is open to school management authorities or individuals to make direct contact with the Health and Safety Authority in relation to matters of concern to them and my Department would not necessarily be aware of such communication. Where they are issued, notifications from the Health and Safety Authority are sent to the management authorities of schools, in the first instance.

Provision is built into the School Building Programme to enable schools to address urgent health and safety problems. Primary schools are given an annual allocation, currently amounting to €5,500 plus €18.50 per mainstream pupil and €74 per special needs pupil attending a special school or special class, under the grant scheme for minor works which can be used entirely at the discretion of school management to address basic health and safety issues relating to the school infrastructure.

In addition, my Department's Summer Works Scheme provides capital grants for small scale improvement works at primary and post-primary schools during the summer holidays. A total of 307 schools were recently approved in excess of €40m to carry out improvement works during summer 2019. A new Summer Works Scheme will open for applications in Q1 2019 for projects to be delivered from summer 2020 onwards.

My Department also sets-aside a contingency sum each year to deal with emergency works in primary and post-primary schools, including health and safety works. Urgently required health and safety works may be grant-aided under the Department's Emergency Works Scheme.

Departmental Expenditure

89. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Taoiseach the amount spent in each of the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in respect of capital projects; and the specific capital project in respect of which the costs were incurred. [2300/19]

The Taoiseach: My Department had no capital budget for the years in question and therefore had no expenditure with accountancy or consultancy firms in relation to such projects.

Cabinet Committee Meetings

90. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Taoiseach if Cabinet committee F (National Security) has recently met; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2496/19]

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

Arrangements are being made for the next meeting of Cabinet Committee F but a date is not yet finalised.

The role of Cabinet Committee F is "to keep the State's systems for the analysis of, prepa-

ration for, and response to, threats to national security under review and to provide high-level coordination between relevant Departments and agencies on related matters". Work on national security issues continues.

Last month, the Government approved 'A Policing Service for the Future' - the Government's 4 year Plan to implement the recommendations of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland including the establishment of a Strategic Threat Analysis Centre. My Department is leading on the implementation of the Plan's actions on the STAC.

As the Commission's work deals with national security and policing issues, it has been considered by Cabinet Committee G, which includes all relevant Ministers. Cabinet Committee G will receive regular progress reports on its implementation.

Commissions of Investigation

91. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he has received a reply from a person (details supplied) regarding his request for a further interim report in 2019. [2683/19]

The Taoiseach: Following receipt of the IBRC Commission's Fifth Interim Report in November 2018, I consulted with opposition representatives regarding the Commission's request for a further extension of its reporting deadline. There was a strong shared concern about the level of progress achieved by the Commission to date, the timeframe now proposed for concluding the first module of the Commission's work, and the risks of further delays and cost escalations.

I subsequently wrote to the Commission on 19 December 2018 and requested a further Interim Report from the Commission, under section 33 of the Commissions of Investigation Act 2004, with:

- any interim findings or conclusions which the Commission is in a position to make at this stage;

- any options which the Commission believes would reduce the timeframe and/or cost for production of a final report on the first module of the investigation;

- the Commission's view of risks to completion of the first module of the investigation within the requested new timeframe (i.e. end-March 2020); and

- the Commission's best estimate of the likely final costs of the first module.

I also extended the Commission's timeframe until the end of March 2019.

I have not yet received a reply to my letter from the Commission. When a reply is received, I will consult opposition party representatives on the issues arising.

Departmental Expenditure

92. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will publish the airline costs for his Department for 2018. [2699/19]

The Taoiseach: The total amount spent on air travel by my Department for 2018 was €193,560.03. This includes the cost of commercial flights taken by myself, Ministers of State, officials and advisers travelling on official business, particularly in the context of managing EU,

British-Irish and international relations. A breakdown of spend between specific airlines is not available.

Detailed information on foreign travel costs for myself, advisers and senior officials who travel with me, as well as costs related to the Government Chief Whip and Ministers of State, are published on a monthly basis on my Department's website (www.taoiseach.gov.ie).

The figure provided for 2018 is based on provisional outturn and may be subject to revision, as part of the finalisation of my Department's 2018 Appropriation Account.

Departmental Expenditure

93. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if the cost of newspapers in his Department in 2018 will be published. [2716/19]

The Taoiseach: My Department's expenditure on newspapers and online newspaper subscriptions for 2018 was as follows:

2018	Amount
Newspapers	€57,970.43
Online newspaper subscriptions	€13,575.47
TOTAL	€71,545.90

My Department liaises closely with the Office of Government Procurement on all matters related to public procurement and monitors all areas of expenditure, including on print media, on an ongoing basis to ensure that value for money is being achieved.

The figures provided for 2018 are based on provisional outturn and may be subject to revision, as part of the finalisation of my Department's 2018 Appropriation Account.

Defence Forces Retirements

94. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare can avail of the extension to retirement age under the new Public Service Superannuation (Age of Retirement) Act 2018. [2329/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Public Service Superannuation (Age of Retirement) Act 2018, extending the retirement age for certain civil and public servants to 70 years of age, was signed by the President on 26th December, 2018, and came into effect from that date.

The Act allows for an increase in the compulsory retirement age from age 65 to age 70. Civilian Employees serving on 26th December, 2018, are subject to the Act and may remain in service up to age 70. Accordingly, the person to whom the Deputy refers can avail of the extension to retirement age under the Act.

Defence Forces Reserve

95. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans for a general service recruitment campaign for the Defence Forces Reserve in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2619/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Reserve Defence Force (RDF) is comprised of the First Line Reserve, the Army Reserve and the Naval Service Reserve. The Government recognises the important role that the three elements of the RDF play in contributing to Ireland's defence capability. The White Paper on Defence (2015) is clear that there is a continued requirement to retain and develop the Reserve Defence Force and it is currently on a developmental path arising from the recommendations of the White Paper.

The military authorities have informed me that they plan to run two recruitment campaigns for the Army Reserve and the Naval Service Reserve this year, one in March and a second in October. Exact opening and closing dates have not yet been confirmed.

Departmental Expenditure

96. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will publish the airline costs for his Department for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2689/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): In 2018, an amount of €76,340.27 was expended by my Department on costs associated with ministerial and Department officials' air travel. These costs are incurred in the discharge of the functions of my Department.

Departmental Expenditure

97. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will publish the cost of newspapers in his Department in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2706/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The cost of newspapers to my Department in 2018 amounted to €8,446.72.

Defence Forces Personnel Data

98. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of females who were recruited into the Permanent Defence Force in 2017 and 2018. [2901/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The number of females recruited into the Permanent Defence Force in 2017 and 2018, as advised by the military authorities, is outlined in the table below.

	Total Inductions	Total Female Inductions	% of Female Inductions
2017	730	68	9.3%
2018	611	50	8.2%

Departmental Expenditure

99. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the cost of air transport provided by the Air Corps to each Minister and Minister of State in each Department in

each of the years 2016 to 2018, inclusive; the number of trips by year; the cost per trip by date; and the number of passengers per trip by year in tabular form. [2948/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Ministerial Air Transport Service (MATS) provides the Government and the President with an independent and flexible air transport service to assist in meeting national and international obligations.

Information in relation to MATS is publicly available on my Department's website, www.defence.ie/ministerial-air-transport-service-mats.

In relation to costs, my Department follows the normal practice in the aviation business of costing aircraft by reference to the cost per flying hour under each of two headings:

(a) The variable cost, which comprises costs incurred only when the aircraft is flown including maintenance, fuel and support services i.e. it does not include costs associated with having the aircraft; and

(b) The total cost, which comprises the variable cost plus the fixed cost associated with having the aircraft. The latter comprises personnel costs and depreciation.

These average hourly costs, for each aircraft type used for MATS missions in the period covered by the Deputy's question, are set out in the table below.

For clarity, an additional average fixed cost per hour column has been included in the table below showing the cost associated with having the aircraft. These costs will be the same regardless of how frequently the aircraft is flown.

Aircraft	Average Fixed Cost per hour	Average Variable Cost per hour	Average Total Cost per hour
Learjet	€1,730	€2,050	€3,780
CASA	€1,290	€1,860	€3,150
Agusta AW139	€1,400	€1,780	€3,180

Israeli Settlements

100. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on whether a stronger stand should be taken on supporting persons who have been displaced and robbed of their property and possessions in Palestine (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2349/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Ireland and our EU partners have consistently made clear our view that the building and expansion of Israeli settlements in Palestinian Territory is illegal under international law, and undermines the viability of the two-state solution and the prospects for achieving a durable peace. The activities to which the Deputy has referred, including forced transfers, evictions and demolitions, are an inherent element of the settlement project, intended to clear Palestinians off the land in favour of Israeli settlers. These actions are also illegal, deeply unjust, and provocative.

With the political process as such essentially frozen, Ireland has for some years focussed its efforts on the Middle East issues, both in the region and at international level, on trying to combat or mitigate these destructive and inhumane policies. We have discussed these aspects here in the Oireachtas on many occasions.

Locally, in the region, Ireland regularly conveys our views on these actions to the Israeli

authorities, both directly and through the EU. I have done so myself on my visits to the area. During my visit in July 2017 Ireland joined a number of other international partners in the West Bank Protection Consortium, a grouping where we seek to work together to protect Palestinian communities. Irish and other EU representatives have visited threatened communities and attended legal hearings related to their cases. Ireland also funds Israeli and Palestinian NGOs engaged in defending these communities.

At EU level, the European Union has taken a number of actions relating to settlements. These include the levying of higher tariffs on goods from settlements compared with goods from within Israel's recognised borders, prohibiting the use of EU research funding in institutions located in settlements, and rules to prevent misleading labelling of goods from settlements as being from Israel. Ireland has been to the fore in securing many of these actions.

At Israel's Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council last year, Ireland raised the continued expansion of settlements, and urged that Israel abide by its international legal obligations, including under the Fourth Geneva Convention, on the treatment of a civilian population under military occupation. I reiterated our concerns about these policies in my speech to the UN General Assembly in September.

These actions by Ireland and others have had some effects in halting, delaying or mitigating some actions, but we are all aware that the pressure on Palestinian communities continues and is growing. I again call upon the Israeli authorities to halt the demolitions of Palestinian property and the removal of Palestinian communities, and will continue to work to that end.

Brexit Issues

101. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has discussed with his UK counterpart the issue of border checks on trucks originating here and arriving in the UK from Rosslare Europort but which plan to travel onwards to another country within the European Union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2584/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Government's preparedness and contingency planning for Brexit has from the start included issues relating to the continued effective use of the UK landbridge. This is a priority for the Government given its importance for Irish exporters and importers as a means of access to the rest of the single market, in particular with regard to agri-food products. This is an important issue with regard to protecting the competitiveness of our producers and ensuring continued unhampered access to the EU Single Market.

To this end, I welcome the EU's agreement that the UK may join the Common Transit Convention upon its departure from the EU, and the number of formal steps taken to allow this to happen on 4 December 2018. The UK's accession to the Common Travel Convention will play an important role in ensuring Ireland's access to other EU Member States via the UK landbridge.

Retaining the effective use of the landbridge post-Brexit has been discussed at both political and official level with both the UK and the EU. As a result of these contacts, the importance of maintaining the landbridge has been recognised through the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland in the draft Withdrawal Agreement, which reaffirms the commitment of the UK to facilitate the efficient and timely transit through the UK of goods moving from Ireland to another EU Member State or another country, or vice versa.

Departmental Expenditure

102. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will publish the airline costs for his Department for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2693/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department is responsible for two Expenditure Votes, Vote 27 - International Co-operation and Vote 28 - Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The airline costs incurred by Ministers and staff of the Department, across both Votes, in the year ending 31 December 2018, including in the network of overseas Missions, was €2,650,469. These costs are provisional and subject to audit. As the Deputy will appreciate, the work of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of necessity involves extensive travel. In 2018 airline costs represented 1.3% of the Department's total administration budget.

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

Departmental Expenditure

103. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will publish the cost of newspapers in his Department in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2710/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The effective functioning of a Foreign Ministry requires continuous access to the most up to date international and national news. This is more important than ever in the context of Brexit, on which my Department leads. My officials need timely, accurate information from multiple sources in order to navigate effectively in the highly dynamic and complex environment surrounding Brexit and other issues of vital national interest.

In 2018, the Department's Library and Information Service spent €195,287 on subscriptions to print and digital newspapers for headquarters and missions abroad.

Brexit Issues

104. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has held discussions with the EU as to whether, in the event of a no-deal Brexit, there will be a transition period regarding implementation of the regulatory requirements in view of the administration requirement that this will entail; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2773/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): As part of prudent preparation for Brexit, steps need to be taken at national level, at EU level and by business and citizens who will be affected.

A no-deal Brexit would mean that on 29 March 2019 the UK's status under EU law would change from that of a Member State to that of a third country with no trade or co-operation

agreements in place with the EU. The transition period, as provided for in the Withdrawal Agreement, would not apply.

Ireland is in close bilateral contact with the European Commission. As part of these contacts, I met with Chief Negotiator Barnier yesterday while attending the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels. Minister Humphreys will meet with Commissioner Vestager in Dublin on 24 January 2019 to discuss Brexit preparations. Other Ministers are in regular contact with Commissioners with responsibility for their sectoral areas.

In addition to close bilateral contact at Commissioner level, Ireland has engaged regularly at official level with the Commission on preparedness for Brexit. This included a meeting between senior officials from the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Commission Preparedness Group on 30 November 2018, to discuss issues of particular concern and impact for Ireland. Further engagement at a senior level will take place in the coming weeks.

As part of the planning and work at EU level a series of expert preparedness meetings involving officials from all Member States and the Commission have been underway since November and are currently ongoing. These seminars have covered a wide range of topics, including financial services, transport, data, fisheries, and citizen's rights. A full list of the topics covered in the expert seminars is included in the Government's Contingency Action Plan published on 19 December 2018.

Many of the actions aimed at mitigating the effects of a no deal outcome will be taken at the EU level as they involve areas of EU competence and sectors regulated by EU law. The EU has already published over 80 sectoral notices with detailed guidance across a range of sectors and are a source of advice for operators, businesses and regulators.

On 13 November 2018, the Commission published a Contingency Action Plan - Preparing for the UK withdrawal from the EU on 30 March 2019, which highlights key issues in the areas of citizens, financial services, air transport, road transport, customs, SPS requirements, personal data and EU climate policy. The Commission emphasises that it stands ready to engage with the Member States that will be most affected by a no deal withdrawal and expressly states that "the Commission will support Ireland in finding solutions addressing the specific challenges of Irish businesses."

In its communication on 19 December 2018, the Commission adopted a package of contingency measures preparing for a possible no deal Brexit. The package consists of a Communication "Implementing the Commission's Contingency Action Plan", five legislative proposals, four delegated acts, four implementing acts and one Commission Decision.

Much of the contingency work taking place at the EU level is in the context of efforts to make regulatory provision for the gaps that would inevitably result from a no deal Brexit and to ensure that there is minimal disruption for EU citizens and industry. In a no-deal scenario, the Commission envisages a limited number of time-limited contingency measures to mitigate significant disruptions in a number of defined areas.

Passport Applications

105. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the options available to a person (details supplied) to avail of an Irish passport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2822/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): All passport applications are subject to the provisions of the Passports Act, 2008 as amended (“the Act”). The Act provides that a person must, among other things, be an Irish citizen before a passport can be issued to him or her. The Passport Service is obliged to seek evidence of citizenship before a passport application may be processed.

Citizenship is in turn determined by the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 (as amended), which sets out the different means through which a person may be or may become an Irish citizen.

Until November 2005, non-Irish spouses of Irish citizens had the option of signing a post-nuptial declaration in order to be recognised as Irish citizens themselves. This option was repealed with effect from 30 November 2005 and cannot be claimed retrospectively.

A person may claim citizenship by descent if:

1. One of their grandparents was born in Ireland, or;
2. One of their parents was an Irish citizen at the time of their birth, even though they were not born in Ireland.

In these cases, a person can become an Irish citizen through Foreign Birth Registration. Once a person is entered onto the Foreign Births Register they are an Irish citizen and entitled to apply for an Irish passport.

If the individual in this case is not eligible to apply for citizenship via descent, it would appear that naturalisation is the only available means through which to establish Irish citizenship. This comes under the remit of the Department of Justice and Equality and further information is available from www.inis.gov.ie.

Consular Services Provision

106. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the case of a person (details supplied) with a view to returning them to their family due to their personal circumstances and declining health; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2878/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I can confirm to the Deputy that I am fully aware of this difficult and long-running consular case.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has been providing extensive and ongoing consular assistance to this citizen and his family since 2011. The local Irish Embassy has been engaging continuously with the local Foreign Ministry and other relevant local authorities.

Earlier this year the Embassy facilitated this citizen’s access to medical treatment and stands ready to do whatever it can to help with any further practical assistance.

The Government, through the Irish Embassy, has been active in support of the citizen’s request that he be permitted to return to Ireland, and my Department, our Ambassador and his team will continue to follow up on this matter with the relevant local authorities.

Ministerial Meetings

107. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he spoke with Mr. Michel Barnier in the aftermath of the vote in the House of Commons on the Withdrawal Agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2917/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I met with Michel Barnier on 21 January, in the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels. We discussed the disappointing but not unexpected outcome of the 15 January vote in the House of Commons on the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement. Both Mr Barnier and I are in agreement that what we need from the UK is clarity on how it proposes to move forward, and ultimately what it wants to achieve. The EU could then consider any next steps it might take. The EU continues to take a united approach to the negotiations and I thanked Mr Barnier for his unwavering support for Ireland.

Mr Barnier and I remain firmly of the view that the only way to ensure an orderly withdrawal is to ratify the Withdrawal Agreement as endorsed by the European Council and agreed with the British Government. The European Council has made clear that it stands by the Withdrawal Agreement and that it is not open for renegotiation. The EU stands ready to work further on the Political Declaration as we look to the future relationship.

Mr Barnier reaffirmed his commitment to the backstop provisions contained in the Agreement, which is the only agreement on the table that provides the essential legal guarantee to avoid a hard border in any circumstances and protect the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts.

In light of the ongoing uncertainty in Britain, however, the European Council has asked that preparedness work at the national and EU level intensify, taking account of all possible outcomes. I outlined Ireland's approach in this regard, including planned legislation and other contingency measures. I also thanked Mr Barnier for the Commission's continued helpful and constructive engagement in this area, and their understanding of the particular challenges faced by Ireland.

NAMA Social Housing Provision

108. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Finance if he has examined the possibility of the State acquiring and using a location (details supplied) in Dublin 8 as a site for public, affordable and cost-rental housing units supported by central funding and the involvement of Dublin City Council and approved housing bodies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2524/19]

109. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Finance if his Department had meetings or discussions with NAMA officials about a location (details supplied) in Dublin 8; if so, the details of the meetings; if his attention has been drawn to the NAMA-appointed receiver's appeal to have the location removed from the vacant site register; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2525/19]

110. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Finance if he has had discussions with NAMA officials in relation to a location (details supplied) in Dublin 8; if the use of this site for the provision of social, public and affordable homes by the local authority and approved housing bodies will be supported; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2526/19]

111. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Finance if NAMA has considered offering a location (details supplied) in Dublin 8 to the local authority or an approved housing body for the provision of public and affordable housing; and if NAMA will be instructed to prepare a report on the feasibility of such action. [2527/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 108 to 111, inclusive, together.

I am advised by NAMA that it no longer has any involvement with the Player Wills site. The loans attaching to the site were fully repaid at par value by the borrower in late December 2018 and NAMA accordingly was obliged to release its legal charge over the site.

It is important to note that NAMA does not own or control property; rather NAMA owns loans for which the properties act as security. If a property owner repays the value of their loan, as occurred in this case, then NAMA no longer holds any security over the owner's property. Thereafter, it is entirely a matter for the owner, in conjunction with the planning authorities, to determine how the property should be utilised.

Even in cases where the property owner has not repaid the value of their loan, NAMA cannot force a borrower to take action which would reduce his or her repayment capacity, such as providing a property for social or public housing where that is not the financially optimal course of actions for the borrower. To do so would compromise a borrower's capacity to repay his or her debts to NAMA and would constitute a direct breach of the borrower's property rights, protected under Article 43 of the Constitution.

NAMA was established as an independent commercial body and I do not have a role in its operations or decisions, or in relation to the properties securing its loans. In that respect, neither I nor any official from my Department met with the former receiver of the Players Wills site in order to discuss any matter related to the property.

Tax Yield

112. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Finance the revenue obtained each year from the parking levy on employee car parking in key urban areas to dissuade use of the private car for commuting purposes as provided for under action 8 of the Smarter Travel Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 - 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2574/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Finance (No. 2) Act 2008 facilitated the introduction of a car parking levy in urban areas. The enabling of the measure would require a Ministerial Order. Such an Order has not been made to date and consequently there has been no revenue collected nor any employees levied.

Tax Code

113. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the details of the decision of the Revenue Commissioners to commence taxing medical services provided by a company (details supplied) to workers and pensioners who have worked with the company; the rationale for the decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2388/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As outlined in my reply to Parliamentary Questions 139, 140 and 147 of 11 December 2018, the Deputy will be aware that the administration of the tax code is a matter for Revenue. The Deputy will also be aware that, in accordance with S851A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 Revenue does not comment on the tax affairs of individual taxpayers.

The position in tax law is that where an employer provides free access to medical services to employees or provides refunds to employees in relation to medical services paid for by the

employees, the employees are subject to tax on the services or refunds received. However, Revenue does not seek to apply benefit-in-kind where employees have free access to a general practitioner employed or retained by their employer. In addition, one medical check-up per year, and check-ups that are mandatory for work purposes, may also be provided. These exceptions are set out in published Revenue guidelines, and they apply as appropriate to all employers.

Where free access to medical services is provided to retired employees by their former employer, these services are not taxable. If retired employees are reimbursed by their former employer for medical services, the amounts reimbursed are taxable.

The relevant tax legislation applies to all employers equally and there are no exceptions to the rules for particular employers, employees or retired employees. The way any company provides services to its employees or retired employees is entirely a matter for that company to agree with their employees and retired employees.

Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland Data

114. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Finance the targets the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland set for lending to SMEs in 2017 and 2018; and the progress to date on same in tabular form. [2406/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) is Ireland's national promotional institution. The purpose of the SBCI is to deliver effective financial supports to Irish SMEs that address failures in the Irish SME finance market as well as encouraging and promoting competition and innovation, and the efficient and effective use of EU resources and financial instruments. The SBCI achieves this through the provision of low cost liquidity and risk-sharing guarantee activities that support the provision of appropriately priced, flexible funding to Irish SMEs.

The SBCI does not lend directly. Rather, the SBCI operates through its partner finance providers, known as on-lenders. The SBCI has provided funding to a mixture of both banks and non-bank finance providers; the SBCI currently has three bank and three non-bank on-lenders: AIB; Bank of Ireland; Ulster Bank; Finance Ireland; Bibby Financial Services Ireland and FEXCO Asset Finance.

The SBCI aims to ensure on-lenders and financial intermediaries maximise the benefit and the service provided to Irish SMEs as well as protecting taxpayer money and the investment of both State and European institutions. I am advised that the SBCI is keen to work with any lender, large or small, that can demonstrate it can deliver the required funding advantage to eligible SMEs on terms that protect taxpayer money.

The Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland commenced its activities in March 2015. To the end of March 2018, the total amount of SBCI supported lending activity, including loans made under the SBCI's risk-sharing guarantee Schemes, was €972 million to 24,002 Irish SMEs supporting 129,300 jobs. The SMEs who received SBCI finance are from all sectors of the Irish economy and have a wide geographical spread, with approximately 85% of loans going to small businesses based outside of Dublin.

The SBCI is currently seeking to broaden its distribution capability and market coverage thereby serving to meet the needs of Irish SMEs and encourage and promote competition in the SME finance market. The SBCI continues to work on developing new innovative products, such as the Brexit Loan Scheme, which was launched in March 2018. This €300 million scheme is to provide working capital support to SMEs to enable them to adapt and innovate in response

to the challenges posed by Brexit.

Following on from launch of the Brexit Loan Scheme, a Future Growth Loan Scheme has been developed to provide long-term investment financing for Irish businesses to help them strategically invest in a post-Brexit environment. There is an absence of financing available for businesses in excess of seven years and the Future Growth Loan Scheme is intended to provide finance of eight to ten years for investment in process and organisational innovation, and investment in tangible and intangible assets on agricultural holdings linked to primary agricultural production. The SBCI recently launched an open call for participating finance providers to offer this Scheme through, which is expected to launch once successful lending partners have been appointed.

Chronological Table of SBCI Funds and Guarantees Committed to On-Lenders

Date	On Lender	Liquidity (Funds)	Risk Sharing (Guarantees Provided)
December 2014	Bank of Ireland	€200m	
February 2015	Allied Irish Bank	€200m	
October 2015	Finance Ireland	€51m	
November 2015	Merrion Fleet	€25m*	
November 2015	Allied Irish Bank	€200m	
December 2015	Ulster Bank	€75m	
May 2016	First Citizen Agri Finance	€40m**	
June 2016	Bibby Financial Services Ireland	€45m	
November 2016	Fexco Asset Finance	€70m	
January 2017	Bank of Ireland		€65m
January 2017	Allied Irish Bank		€60m
January 2017	Ulster Bank		€25m
March 2018	Bank of Ireland		€128m
March 2018	Allied Irish Bank		€122m
March 2018	Ulster Bank		€50m
May 2018	Bibby Financial Services Ireland	€25m	
Total		€531m	€450m

*Facility closed in July 2017 following the sale of Merrion Fleet to Société Générale

**Facility closed in October 2018 following the raising of commercial funding by First Citizen Agri Finance.

The SBCI's lending to SMEs is largely driven by market demands and needs that are not fully met by the private sector. The Deputy can rest assured that the SBCI is working to develop a more diverse range of on-lenders and innovative products. This will enable it to broaden its distribution capability and market coverage, meet the evolving requirements of the SME finance market and contribute to a sustainable and competitive economy in the medium to long term.

115. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the process to review the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland by the NTMA. [2407/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, known as the SBCI, has been Ireland's national promotional institution since it was established in September 2014. The SBCI's role as a national promotional institution is to focus on delivering effective financial supports to Irish SMEs, facilitating the availability of appropriate and flexible finance to Irish small businesses, and encouraging competition and innovation in the SME finance market.

As the Deputy will be aware, since the SBCI began its activities in March 2015, the total amount of SBCI supported lending activity, including loans made under the SBCI's risk-sharing guarantee schemes, was €972 million to 24,002 Irish SMEs supporting 129,300 jobs. The SMEs who received SBCI finance are from all sectors of the Irish economy and have a wide geographical spread, with approximately 85% of loans going to small businesses outside Dublin and 26% of loans going to the agriculture sector.

The Minister for Finance is the sole shareholder in the SBCI and a significant amount of SBCI activity is supported by a State Guarantee from the Minister for Finance; this is provided for in the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland Act 2014. Such guarantees constitute a contingent liability on the State's balance sheet, as the Deputy knows.

As the fourth anniversary of the SBCI incorporation has now passed, it is timely and opportune to engage an independent external consultant to undertake a review of the SBCI and its activities as part of developing its future strategy. It is also important from the perspective of prudent and sustainable management of public finances and best practice for such reviews to be undertaken.

To complete this process, the NTMA issued a public Request for Tender on etenders.gov.ie on 8 January 2019 for those services with a deadline for receipt of tenders of 25 February 2019. I am advised that it is anticipated that a contract will be awarded in March 2019 and the review is expected to be completed within approximately 8-10 weeks.

The SBCI is a valuable policy instrument for supporting Irish small businesses which are vital to sustainable economic growth and development and employment in Ireland.

Tax Data

116. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Finance the number of SMEs that had interest applied on late payment of income tax based on the latest annual information; the rate of interest applied on such late payments here; and the rate of interest applied in the UK and in other EU and OECD countries in tabular form. [2408/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that interest on late payment statistics are collated on the basis of interest charges paid and not on the number of SMEs charged. A total of 14,244 taxpayers paid interest amounting to €33.37m in 2017 in respect of the late payment of Income Tax, including interest charged as part of audit settlements.

The current rate of interest in respect of late payment of Income Tax is 8% per annum (0.0219% per day).

It is not possible to provide an EU or OECD tabular breakdown in the manner requested by

the Deputy because the systems operating across the various jurisdictions are not directly comparable. For example, some jurisdictions apply surcharges and penalties in addition to interest charges, while others apply different rates for different taxes and for different periods of default. However, detailed data on penalties and interest for non-compliance/failure to pay tax on time in the UK, EU and OECD countries is contained in an OECD/Forum on Tax Administration publication entitled “Comparative Information Series”, details of which can be found at:

<http://www.oecd.org/tax/forum-on-tax-administration/publications-and-products/comparative/CIS-2010.pdf>.

The data is contained in Table 57 on page 260 of that publication.

VAT Rate Application

117. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if there will be a change in VAT applied to food supplements from 1 March 2019; if so, the number of food supplement products impacted; the type of food supplements impacted; the expected revenue from the change; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2435/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Under the VAT Consolidation Act 2010, the standard rate of VAT applies to all food supplements, which are not foods in the ordinary and everyday meaning of the word. A long-standing concession provided for in Revenue Commissioners guidance permitted the zero rating of certain types of food supplements (vitamins, minerals and fish oils). New guidance was published on 27 December 2018 concerning the rate of VAT that applies to food supplements. The new guidance withdraws the concessionary application of the zero rate to certain food supplements, and outlines that these products will be liable at the standard rate from 1 March 2019. Products, including folic acid and vitamin products, licensed by the Health Products Regulatory Agency (HPRA), will continue to be liable at the zero rate.

The operation of the concession became extremely problematic as a result of efforts by certain businesses in the industry to extend the concession beyond the scope permitted. Consistent challenges to Revenue guidance and decisions on the VAT rating of products gave rise to serious concerns about compliance within the industry and unfair competition between compliant and non-compliant businesses.

Traders are not required to separately identify the yield generated from a particular activity or product type on their VAT return. Therefore, it is not possible to provide an estimate of the yield from an increase of the VAT rate for the food supplement products affected, but it is expected that the additional yield will not be substantial. For the same reason, it is not possible to identify the number of products impacted.

Excise Duties

118. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the position on the proposed amendments to the excise structures directives to allow a reduction in excise duties for small cider producers; his views on a similar change to allow an exemption for small commercial distillers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2503/19]

143. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether excise tax should be reduced for small commercial distillers in line with that already in place for

small brewers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2873/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 118 and 143 together.

EU Directive 92/83/EEC deals with the harmonization of the structures of excise duties on alcohol and other alcoholic beverages. This Directive provides that Member States may apply reduced rates of excise for small beer producers and also for small distilleries (spirit drinks producers). Ireland has exercised the option to apply reduced rates of excise for small beer producers.

Having regard to public health concerns, Directive 92/83/EEC set the production threshold for the application of excise relief for small distilleries at 10 hectoliters of pure alcohol per annum. In fact only seven Member States apply an excise relief for small distilleries and the commercial viability of such a scale of production was found by the European Commission to be very limited, most beneficial to ancillary producers.

A proposal to amend the current Directive 92/83/EEC was published by the European Commission in 2018. The legislative proposal includes an option for Member States to apply reduced rates of excise for cider and other fermented drinks, but it does not amend the existing small distilleries threshold nor is there any discernible interest among Member States in making any such amendment.

Tax Code

119. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Finance if consideration will be given to including the skill of hurley making in section 195 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 to enable the Revenue Commissioners exempt this skill from payment of income tax (details supplied). [2516/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Section 195 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provides for the exemption of certain earnings of writers, composers and artists and allows the Revenue Commissioners to make determinations in respect of artistic works in the following categories only:

1. a book or other writing
2. a play
3. a musical composition
4. a painting or other like picture
5. a sculpture

Guidelines were drawn up by the Arts Council and the then Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, for determining whether a work which falls within the scope of the activities listed in the section is an original and creative work and whether it has, or is generally recognised as having, cultural or artistic merit and consequentially can qualify for the exemption.

As identified by the Minister for Finance, Mr. Charles Haughey TD, in his budget speech in 1969, the policy basis of the artists’ exemption is to provide “further encouragement to the creative artists in our midst and to help create a sympathetic environment here in which the arts can flourish”.

In light of this policy intent, I do not consider it appropriate to extend the exemption as proposed by the Deputy, as the activity described does not fall into the realm of artistic endeavor.

Tax Code

120. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Finance if he has reviewed the tax treatment of widowers; if the way in which widowers are treated in comparison to married or cohabiting couples has been considered; his views on whether they are financially disadvantaged in comparison; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2528/19]

121. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Finance if consideration has been given to extending the widowed parent tax credit beyond five years; if further consideration has been given to altering the tax relief available in the five year period; the estimated cost of extending the relief to ten years; the estimated cost of maintaining the relief at €3,600 for five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2529/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 120 and 121 together.

The Irish Income Tax code has many favourable provisions relating to the tax treatment of widowed persons and, in particular, widowed parents.

In the year of bereavement, a widowed person is entitled to the same personal tax credits as a married couple. A widowed parent tax credit is then available to a widowed person with dependent children for the five years following the year of bereavement. This credit tapers out over the five years and amounts to €3,600 in year one, €3,150 in year two, €2,700 in year three, €2,250 in year four, €1,800 in year five. This credit was introduced in 1991 specifically to assist such parents in the transition from married to widowed status. The estimated cost of maintaining the relief at €3,600 for five years is of the order of €1.7m. This is based on 2016 data and assumes the number of claims for this credit will remain static at 2016 levels. It also does not take account of future economic growth, or the resulting change in income levels, which would have an effect on the taxable income and as a result the ability of taxpayers to fully absorb the credit.

In relation to the estimated cost of extending the relief to ten years, at the current tapering rate of €450 per year there would only be 3 additional years before the credit is reduced to zero (€1350 in year 6, €900 in year 7, €450 in year 8). The cost of extending the relief to include the 3 additional years is estimated to be of the order of €5m which would be fully materialised after a period of 3 years, again assuming the number of claims for this credit will remain static at 2016 levels and it also does not take account of future economic growth, or the resulting change in income levels, which would have an effect on the taxable income and as a result the ability of taxpayers to fully absorb the credit.

However, both during and after this five-year period a widowed person with dependent children is also entitled to claim the Single Person Child Carer Credit (SPCCC), in addition to the single personal credit. This ensures that their basic personal credits, before taking into account the additional widowed parent credit, will be equivalent to those granted to a married couple while he or she continues to have dependent children.

Widowed parents who qualify for the SPCCC are also entitled to an increased standard rate band of €39,300. This compares favourably with the single person’s tax band of €35,300 currently. This ensures that in 2019 a widowed parent will not be subject to the higher rate of income tax until their taxable income exceeds €39,300.

Furthermore, widowed persons without dependent children, who therefore do not qualify for the SPCCC or the widowed parent credit, are entitled to the widowed person tax credit of €540 per year in addition to the normal tax credits for a single person.

It should also be noted that widowed persons who are in receipt of the social welfare non-contributory widow's pension are not liable to the Universal Social Charge on that payment.

I am satisfied that the significant provisions currently in place relating to the tax treatment of widows and widowed parents are targeting limited resources to where they are most needed.

Brexit Issues

122. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Finance the steps he has taken to date and plans to take in preparation for post-Brexit customs checks at ports here, specifically Rosslare Europort; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2587/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The continued free-flow of trade through our ports and airports is a key priority for the Government. Revenue have undertaken and continue to undertake significant preparations to facilitate this post-Brexit.

During 2018, Revenue chaired an Inter-Departmental group which was established to consider the adequacy of port and airport infrastructure and facilities, post-Brexit. The group included representatives from Revenue; the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine (DAFM); the Department of Health; the HSE's Environmental Health Service (EHS); the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTS); the OPW; the Department of Justice; and An Garda Síochána.

I am advised that the group considered the requirements for both the 'Central Case' and the 'no-deal' scenarios and the physical infrastructure requirements to facilitate and support the movement of legitimate trade; including requirements of Revenue; DAFM; and the HSE's EHS; to carry out any necessary Customs interventions and Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) checks at ports and airports. The group identified that infrastructure was required at Dublin Port, Rosslare Europort and Dublin Airport and agreed proposals on the nature and scale of new or extended facilities that would be required.

In relation to Rosslare Europort, the group identified the infrastructural requirements including service delivery and accommodation requirements. Following a Government Decision in September 2018, the OPW were tasked with leading the engagement with relevant stakeholders, with a view to ensuring that the necessary additional infrastructure for both the central case and the no-deal scenarios becomes operational in a timely manner. This work is ongoing and it is planned to have temporary facilities in place to cater for a no-deal scenario in March 2019 as well as permanent facilities in place by 1 January 2021.

Ireland Strategic Investment Fund Investments

123. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the assets held in the discretionary portfolio in the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund as at 31 December 2018 or for when the latest figures are available in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2625/19]

124. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the return from the discretionary portfolio in the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund in 2018; and if he will make a state-

ment on the matter. [2626/19]

125. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the breakdown of the directed portfolio in the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund as at 31 December 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2627/19]

126. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the return from the directed portfolio in the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2628/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 123 to 126, inclusive, together.

I am informed by the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) that the Fund information for 31 December 2018 is not yet available, however preliminary information will be published no later than 1 February 2019.

In the interim, please find as follows the requested information for 30 June 2018.

The assets in the ISIF Discretionary Portfolio amount to €8.9 billion. The return of the ISIF Discretionary Portfolio has been +2.3% per annum since inception and -0.3% for the first half of 2018.

The table contains a breakdown of the Directed portfolio.

Bank of Ireland (Ordinary Shares)	€1.0bn
AIB (Ordinary Shares)	€9.0bn
Total Bank Investments	€10.bn
Cash	€0.2bn
TOTAL Directed Portfolio value	€10.2bn

The return of the Directed portfolio has been +5.3% per annum since inception and -10.9% for the first half of 2018.

Departmental Expenditure

127. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Finance if he will publish the airline costs for his Department for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2692/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In response to the Deputy's question, my Department spent €318,000 on airline costs in 2018.

An amount of €136,000 of these costs is recoupable in respect of meetings run by the Council of the European Union and other bodies such as the European Commission.

The above figures are rounded to the nearest €100.

Departmental Expenditure

128. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Finance if he will publish the cost of newspapers in his Department in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2709/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In response to the Deputy's question,

my Department spent €8,100 on newspapers in 2018.

In addition, my Department holds a number of corporate licenses giving online access to publications such as the Irish Times, Financial Times and New York Times which cost €25,600 in 2018.

The above figures are rounded to the nearest €100.

Insurance Coverage

129. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Finance if the way in which insurance cover could be put in place for customers of a company (details supplied) that had previously latent defect and structural warranty insurance with this company before it ceased trading will be examined; his plans to facilitate arranging insurance cover for the customers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2749/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): At the outset I would like to say that as Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation, and have no role in the day to day supervision of insurance companies. The provision of insurance cover and the price at which it is offered is a commercial matter for insurance companies and is based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept and adequate provisioning to meet those risks. Neither I, as Minister for Finance, nor the Central Bank can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products or have the power to direct insurance companies to provide cover to specific individuals or businesses.

In preparing a response to this PQ, my officials sought an update from the Central Bank of Ireland on Alpha Insurance. The Central Bank has advised me that it was notified by the Danish Financial Supervisory Authority (“DFSA”) on 7 March 2018 that the latter had ordered Alpha Insurance A/S (“Alpha”) to cease writing new business including renewal of existing contracts and business with immediate effect. It was further notified on 9 May 2018 that the liquidators of the insurance company Alpha had filed a petition for bankruptcy.

The Central Bank has also indicated that as Alpha is a Danish-based insurance firm, it is subject to prudential supervision by the DFSA, and therefore it had no role in this decision. It has also informed me that Alpha was selling non-life insurance policies in Ireland through the broker network on a freedom of services basis and that it also operated in Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom.

The insolvency administrator has provided updated figures to the Central Bank as of December 2018 on the latent defects policies. Present figures stand at 1,617 policies, 1,163 of which are currently with the homeowner (these policies were transferred from the developer to the homeowner following completion of the build). The remaining 454 policies were on houses that were not finished and therefore the policy had not transferred to a homeowner at the time of the liquidation i.e. the policy remained with the developer.

The claims handler (BCR Legal Group Limited) confirmed that its representative CRL wrote to the developers who had purchased these latent defects policies, on two occasions, to advise that Alpha had been placed in bankruptcy, that policies would be cancelled from 11 August 2018 and to request details of the owner of the properties insured under these policies. BCR subsequently wrote to all homeowners affected by the liquidation of Alpha, following receipt of their details from the developers, to advise that Alpha had gone into liquidation, their latent defects policies had been terminated and that they should consider replacing this policy. BCR also provided these homeowners with an information sheet from the liquidators. BCR can

be contacted at policyupdates@bcr.co.uk.

It should be noted that the Danish liquidator of Alpha continues to provide country-specific updates of the latent defects policies on <https://alphagroup.dk>. The Central Bank of Ireland has also published information in relation to Alpha, which it will update if further information becomes available.

In conclusion, I acknowledge that this is an unfortunate position that these householders have found themselves in however as Minister for Finance I am not in a position to facilitate the arranging of new insurance cover.

Brexit Issues

130. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance if his officials have met with or made representations to the relevant EU and UK officials to ensure that the United Kingdom recognises the legal requirements such as the Authorised Economic Operator, AEO, qualification for Irish hauliers transiting through the UK following its decision to leave the EU. [2753/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that while Customs legislation and procedures are applied and executed by the Member State's (MS) Customs authorities acting in their own capacity, Customs is the sole competence of the EU. The Union Customs Code (UCC) which came into force on 1 May 2016 is the legal framework for Customs and this sets out the customs procedures across the EU. Revenue participate in regular meetings with their MS counterparts to ensure a common interpretation of customs matters in line with the UCC and a consistent approach to its implementation.

The UCC provides for certain simplifications, procedures and authorisations that can further facilitate trade. The Authorised Economic Operation (AEO) is one such authorisation. I am advised by Revenue that recognition of authorisations post-Brexit, including AEO status, will be a matter for the UK and the EU and mutual recognition of the AEO status will form part of the future trading relationship negotiations between them. There has been no decision to date in relation to mutual recognition of AEO status in a no-deal scenario.

Revenue have clarified that it is not necessary to avail of any of the specific trade facilitation measures allowable under the UCC such as AEO status in order to trade with a non-EU country. The only requirement for businesses that wish to trade with a non-EU country is that they obtain an Economic Operators' Registration and Identification (EORI) number from Revenue. This is a straight forward process and can be applied for online via the Revenue website.

Stamp Duty

131. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the revenue generated from non-residential property stamp duty in each of the years 2015 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2792/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that receipts from Stamp Duty on non-residential property in the years 2015 to 2017 are as provided in the table.

Year	Stamp Duty on non-residential property
2015	€178 m
2016	€256 m
2017	€206 m

The latest Revenue figures show that just over €489 million was collected under this heading in 2018.

In the year to end-December 2018, €661 million was collected by Revenue in property related stamp duty (both residential and non-residential).

The principal aim of the stamp duty increase I announced in Budget 2018 was to help encourage increased home building and to stabilise the Irish property market. I consider that this it has made a positive contribution in this regard, with an increase in new home building seen in 2018, particularly in Dublin, and with house price inflation slowing.

Departmental Communications

132. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the purpose of the Guidance Note: Minister for Finance’s Approval of Transfers of Banking Business under Part III of the Central Bank Act 1971 published on 7 January 2019; the way in which this note changes the current requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2852/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I wish to clarify for the Deputy that the recent guidance note on ‘Transfers of Banking Business under Part III of the Central Bank Act 1971’ published by my Department does not in any way change the requirements in relation to seeking the approval of the Minister for Finance as set out in the Central Bank Act 1971 (as amended). Rather this guidance note is intended to bring clarity to this process for any Irish authorised bank considering seeking my approval as Minister to transfer their business to another authorised institution. In particular the note seeks to highlight the timelines involved in the process, and to encourage any bank considering transferring its business to engage with my Department at an early stage.

My officials must undertake an analysis of the proposed transfer and prepare a submission to me. This analysis may necessitate follow up with the bank in question, including queries on the transfer, and my officials may request written information notes, telephone calls or face-to-face meetings.

I must also consult with the Governor of the Central Bank of Ireland on any proposed transfer of banking business, so as to be fully informed of the relevant regulatory, supervisory and prudential considerations, and sufficient time must be allocated to allow me to do this.

The Statutory Instrument pertaining to the transfer of business must be drafted by the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel, and again sufficient time should be allocated.

The statute sets out a deadline that, “the Minister, after consultation with the Bank, may, not less than two months before the transfer date, either approve or decline to approve of the scheme by order”. To allow sufficient time for the necessary processes, my Department recommends submitting the transfer proposal with a minimum of two months’ notice prior to the deadline (i.e. at least four months before the proposed transfer date). However, earlier submission is strongly advised.

Because the Central Bank does not disclose confidential information, neither I nor my of-

officials will be aware of any proposed transfers of banking business until the proposal is submitted to me directly. Any bank considering transferring its business should engage with both my Department of Finance and the Central Bank at an early stage in the process.

I made Orders approving two transfers of banking business in 2018, both in the context of the Brexit preparations of the banks involved.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

133. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of social homes and affordable homes, respectively, that have been built by NAMA debtors since its launch. [2854/19]

134. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of homes built by NAMA debtors since its launch; and the number of these homes built under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000. [2855/19]

135. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of units per development (details supplied) that have been allocated to the various local authorities under Part V agreements; and the agreement which was reached in place of an allocation of units. [2856/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 133 to 135, inclusive, together.

I am advised that NAMA funded the delivery of 9,669 homes by its debtors and receivers between January 2014 and December 2018.

I am advised that debtors and receivers whose projects are funded by NAMA must comply with the same statutory obligations in relation to Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as all other residential developers. The Deputy will be aware that legislation covering Part V obligations has been amended over the years. In many cases, even residential developments currently under construction may relate to older planning permissions granted at a time when legislation provided that Part V obligations could be fulfilled through a range of options, including monetary payments to local authorities, the transfer of land, the construction and transfer of houses on-site, the transfer of houses off-site or a combination of two or more options. I am also advised that, for some NAMA-funded developments, the Part V obligations had already been met prior to the transfer of the associated loans to NAMA.

The specific means by which Part V obligations are met is the subject of negotiation between the developer and the local authority in each particular instance and ultimately it is for the local authority to determine its preference, based on its own criteria and circumstances. In relation to NAMA-funded projects, I am advised that NAMA does not participate in those negotiations. On a project-by-project basis, NAMA supports and facilitates debtors and receivers in meeting their Part V obligations, however given the broad range of options that have been open to debtors in meeting those obligations in the past, NAMA does not track the overall delivery of Part V obligations which is a matter for the local authorities.

The Deputy will be aware that there is no statutory obligation on developers to provide affordable homes. Debtors and receivers funded by NAMA are no different in this respect from developers whose funding is from other sources.

I would point out to the Deputy that, since 2012, NAMA has worked with its debtors and receivers to deliver social housing units beyond the requirements of Part V. The purpose of

its social housing initiative was to maximise social housing delivery from the assets securing NAMA's loan portfolio. Through this programme, NAMA has delivered 2,481 units directly through approved housing bodies (AHBs), local authorities and its special purpose vehicle, NARPS.

As regards the Deputy's question in relation to a number of named development sites, the Deputy will be aware that I am prohibited from providing information on specific assets under the control of NAMA debtors and receivers as such information is considered to be confidential by reference to Sections 99 and 202 of the NAMA Act 2009. Agreements reached between local authorities and developers in relation to the fulfilment of Part V obligations are a matter for the parties involved.

NAMA Operations

136. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the date NAMA will be wound up; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2857/19]

137. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the plans which have been put in place for the wind-down of NAMA; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2858/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 136 and 137 together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that it is expected that NAMA will substantially complete its work by 2020/2021. NAMA is on track to have repaid all its subordinated debt and to have reimbursed the private shareholders in the NAMA DAC by that time. NAMA will have also substantially completed its residential funding programme and its Dublin Docklands SDZ programme. Once these activities have been completed NAMA will be in a position to start transferring its expected €3.5bn surplus to the Exchequer.

As the expected wind down date for NAMA's work approaches, there is a possibility that a small number of loans may not be resolved by 2021 due to ongoing litigation that is largely outside NAMA's control. In addition, there is a possibility that NAMA may also be left with a small residual loan portfolio where best value for the State may not be achieved through sale or disposal before the end of 2021. Such assets are currently expected to represent less than 1% of NAMA's original portfolio.

Active consideration is underway regarding NAMA's end of life strategy and the maximisation of the return of any surplus to the State in respect of these remaining assets. These considerations will be examined in my forthcoming Section 227 review of NAMA. This review is required every 5 years under the NAMA Act to assess the extent to which NAMA has made progress towards achieving its overall objectives and to decide whether the continuation of the agency is necessary. The previous Section 227 review was published in 2014 and current review is due to be published later this year. I intend to use the publication of the next Section 227 review to make a decision as to how to best wind down NAMA in the context of the need to ensure that the State extracts maximum value from any residual assets remaining after 2020/2021.

NAMA Debtors

138. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of debtors left in NAMA; the par value of the debt; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2859/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by NAMA that, as at November 2018, there were 223 debtors remaining under management. Of these connections, 139 were in support or forbearance strategies and 84 were subject to enforcement. At the same date, these debtors had a combined par debt balance of €23.9bn. The value of the assets securing this debt is very low and NAMA is working to maximise the amount of debt that can be recovered for taxpayers. Such work includes negotiating effective workout strategies with debtors and receivers and providing funding for investment in assets where it will enhance value. I am advised that, in the end-year review that it recently issued, NAMA indicated that its portfolio had an estimated carrying value of €2.3 billion at the end of 2018.

NAMA Staff Data

139. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff left in NAMA; the number that will be made redundant in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2860/19]

140. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the amount paid in redundancy or severance to former staff of NAMA; the amount paid to incentivise staff to remain with the agency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2861/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 139 and 140 together.

The NAMA Voluntary Redundancy Scheme (“VRS”) was first approved by the NAMA Board in 2015. The nature of the redundancy payments has previously been outlined to the Dáil and is in keeping with established public sector norms; that is, two weeks statutory pay per year of service, capped at €600 per week, plus three additional weeks of base salary per year of service with an overall cap of two years base salary.

NAMA has advised that the retention portion of the scheme is being implemented in line with the stipulated parameters, agreed by the previous Minister for Finance and NAMA in March 2015, regarding the quantum of any payment under the scheme, the timing of any such payment and employee eligibility under the scheme. Retention payments are only made where staff are departing the organisation under the Agency’s redundancy programme. The retention payment for individual staff is dependent on NAMA achieving its targets and on satisfactory individual performance ratings.

A breakdown of the costs of the scheme to date is provided in the table following. It should be noted that included in the total VRS costs are costs associated with garden leave for employees departing under the scheme as well as statutory and other redundancy costs and a retention payment, if applicable.

Year	Voluntary Redundancy Scheme (VRS) Costs €m	Retention Payments (included in total VRS costs) €m
2015	3.6	1.0
2016	3.9	0.8
2017	0.8	0.2
Total *	8.3	2

*the final figures for the 2018 VRS have not yet been finalised.

I am advised that as at 31 December 2018, 238 staff were assigned to NAMA. I am advised

that it is not yet possible to estimate the exact number of NAMA staff expected to take voluntary redundancy in 2019. Any future schemes will take into account the ongoing business needs of the Agency at that time, as determined by the NAMA Board's objectives. The Deputy will be aware that as Minister, I have no role in respect of NAMA's commercial operations or decisions, including determining NAMA's staffing numbers and redundancy requirements, which are internal considerations for the NAMA Chief Executive and Board.

Stability Programme Data

141. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance when he plans to publish the stability programme update 2019 setting out the macroeconomic and fiscal projections for different Brexit scenarios, including a no-deal, cliff edge Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2862/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In accordance with the requirements of the European Semester, the stability programme update (SPU) 2019 will be published before the end of April 2019.

As was the case for Budget 2019, the SPU macroeconomic and fiscal projections will incorporate the latest information on the macroeconomic impacts of the UK's most likely exit scenario, and will also include sensitivities around this 'baseline' assumption.

EU Directives

142. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views in relation to the proposed amendments to the Excise Structures Directive 92/83 being considered by the EU Council and which will allow member states to reduce excise tax rates for small cider producers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2872/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): EU Directive 92/83/EEC deals with the harmonization of the structures of excise duties on alcohol and other alcoholic beverages. This Directive provides that Member States may apply reduced rates of excise for small beer producers, an option which Ireland has exercised.

A proposal to amend the EU Directive 92/83/EEC was published by the European Commission in 2018. The legislative proposal includes an option for Member States to apply reduced rates of excise for cider.

This is currently being considered at EU level as part of the overall Commission proposal, of which Ireland is broadly supportive. If agreement is reached at EU level on the proposed amendment, it will be a matter for each Member State, during the course of transposing the amended Directive, to decide whether it wishes to exercise the option of applying reduced rates of excise for qualifying small producers of cider, and any other type of drinks which the EU legislature may wish to include within the amended Directive.

Question No. 143 answered with Question No. 118.

Revenue Commissioners

144. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Finance if the attention of the Revenue

Commissioners has been drawn to the delays experienced by persons using a telephone number (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2911/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the telephone number quoted by the Deputy is the National PAYE Customer Helpline, which deals with a range of queries from PAYE employees such as tax credit entitlements, credit allocations across employments and tax overpayment or underpayment situations.

The demand for this service is traditionally highest in the early months of each year when PAYE customers review their tax paid for the previous year or query any tax related changes to their take home pay. The service has experienced particularly heavy demand in recent weeks and is currently dealing with approximately 4,500 telephone calls per day in addition to almost 2,000 visits per day to local offices and approximately 5,000 items of on-line and paper correspondence per day. A significant portion of the additional demand has arisen from employers updating their employee records in late 2018 in advance of the move to real-time reporting on 1 January 2019 under PAYE Modernisation.

Revenue is fully aware of the recent difficulties being experienced by some PAYE customers in accessing the service and has redeployed significant resources to meet the demand. The additional resources bring the number of telephone operatives on the Helpline to over 200, which will reduce waiting times and the delays to which the Deputy is referring. Revenue has also confirmed that it will continue to monitor the demand levels each day and will further increase resources should it be necessary to do so.

Tobacco Seizures Data

145. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the percentage of illicit tobacco products and non-Irish paid tobacco here; the percentage of these products that are cigarettes, illicit whites, counterfeit or the relevant applicable breakdown for same in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3077/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that it jointly conducts an annual survey with the HSE's Office of Tobacco Control to provide an estimate of the level of illegal tobacco usage in Ireland.

The 2017 'Illegal Tobacco Products Research Survey' contains the information requested by the Deputy for the years 2009 to 2017 and is available on the Revenue website at link: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/research/illegal-tobacco-survey-2017.pdf> .

Results from the 2018 survey, which was carried out in October and November of last year, are currently being analysed and will be published in due course.

Ports Facilities

146. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he is proceeding with plans to purchase land at Rosslare and Dublin Ports for the purposes of constructing new customs facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2340/19]

156. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when the detailed action plan on the requirements of Rosslare Europort in advance of Brexit is due for publication and or finalisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2586/19]

157. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the OPW has acquired property, by lease, purchase or otherwise at Rosslare in the past 12 months; if so, the exact location of the property; the nature of the acquisition; the cost of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2588/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 146. 156 and 157 together.

On the 19 December 2018, the Government published its Contingency Action Plan which gives an overview of the comprehensive, cross-Government preparations that are underway. This includes putting in place the infrastructure required at Dublin ports and airports as a consequence of the UK leaving the EU.

The Office of Public Works has been mandated to secure the property required at Dublin Port and Rosslare Europort and to undertake the necessary work to ensure that the additional infrastructure required as a consequence of the UK leaving the EU becomes operational in a timely manner. This work is ongoing.

Tax Reliefs Application

147. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if applications for the tax saver ticket scheme can be opened all year around to members of the Civil Service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2577/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I have raised this matter with the National Shared Services Office (NSSO), which is a Scheduled Office under the aegis of my Department.

I understand from the NSSO that the Tax Saver Scheme is available to all serving permanent Civil Servants. There are two periods of application during which Civil Servants can avail of this 12-month scheme: July – June and January – December. An open-ended application system was given consideration but it was determined that this would lead to an increase in the cost and complexity of the implementation of the scheme.

Exceptional circumstances do occur, and with the support of the relevant Department issuing payment, officers can avail of this scheme outside the bi-annual application window in those circumstances. The priority is to continue to provide the service to customers in a timely and cost-efficient fashion within dedicated timeframes, with the option where Departments may allow for exceptions to this year-round in exceptional circumstances.

Brexit Issues

148. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the contingencies being taken to secure PEACE IV funding beyond 2020 in the event a no-deal Brexit. [3084/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Irish Government's clear and consistent position has been that it is committed to the successful implementation of the current PEACE and INTERREG programmes and to a successor programme post-Brexit. I am pleased, therefore, that the Government's ambition for the programmes was reflected in the EU-UK Joint Report on Brexit in which both parties undertook to honour their commitments to the PEACE and INTERREG programmes under the current Multiannual Fi-

nancial Framework and to examine the possibilities for future support favourably.

As regards the current PEACE and INTERREG programmes, the draft Withdrawal Agreement between the EU and the UK provides that UK involvement in the current programmes will continue up to their normal completion.

As regards a no-deal scenario, the Commission brought forward a proposal last month for a specific Regulation to enable the PEACE and INTERREG programmes to continue in such a situation. This proposal, which I welcome, will give legal certainty to the programmes in the event of no-deal.

Turning to a future programme, I am very pleased that when the Commission published its proposals for the next round of Cohesion policy last May it included a specific proposal for a special new PEACE PLUS programme to build on and continue the work of both PEACE and INTERREG.

Community Employment Schemes Supervisors

149. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the issue of pension provision for community employee supervisors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2389/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I would refer the Deputy to my response to PQ 49206/18 of 27 November 2018.

Pension Provisions

150. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 160 of 25 September 2018, the reason a person (details supplied) has not received the third stage of the part unwinding of the public service pension reduction, PSPR, as part of pension restoration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2394/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I have been informed by the National Shared Services Office that the third instalment due to the person in question in respect of the part-unwinding of the Public Service Pension Reduction (PSPR) under the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Act 2015, was to have been paid on 1 January, 2018.

However, due to an administrative error this payment was delayed. The person in question has been contacted by the NSSO and has been advised that the third instalment will be paid to him (including any arrears due) on 24 January 2019. The National Shared Services Office has apologised to the person in question for this delay and any upset it may have caused.

State Properties

151. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the Office of Public Works will be requested to cut back ivy at a location (details supplied) in Dublin 7; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2439/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Commis-

sioners of Public Works confirm that the ivy was pruned in December 2018 as part of the winter works programme for Grangegorman Military Cemetery and that the gardening team monitor the ivy growth there on an ongoing basis.

Garda Stations

152. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position with regard to the established need of An Garda Síochána for additional space at Tubbercurry Garda station, County Sligo (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2467/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Officials of the Office of Public Works (OPW) have been in regular contact with the Receiver of this property. The representative of the Receiver has advised that the property in question is currently not for sale.

Both the Receiver and Estate Agent involved know of OPW's interest in the property and have advised that they will contact the OPW if and when the property is placed on the market.

Hospital Equipment

153. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if funding for equipment (details supplied) has been approved by the chief operations officer of the digital Government oversight unit; and when this equipment will be available for use. [2476/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Digital Government Oversight Unit (DGOU), in the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, considers requests for approval of ICT-related expenditure by hospitals following an assessment of proposals by the HSE and the Department of Health. The Unit has not recently received a request for approval of expenditure on ViewPoint foetal assessment equipment and has no outstanding requests in this area.

A request for approval of ViewPoint software-related expenditure for hospitals in County Louth was agreed at a meeting of the HSE, the Department of Health and DGOU in early December. It was indicated at the meeting that it would not be necessary to purchase additional ICT storage or server capacity to support the operation of ViewPoint in those hospitals.

The timing for deploying and bringing equipment into use is a matter for the HSE in consultation with the relevant hospitals.

Peace and Reconciliation Programme

154. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the funding made available to capital development projects supported by PEACE programmes since the inception of the PEACE programme in 1995, in tabular form; and the location of these capital projects. [2532/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The PEACE and INTERREG Programmes are managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), a North South Implementation Body established under the Good Friday Agreement.

Questions - Written Answers

The current PEACE Programme, PEACE IV (2014-2020), has allocated €53.7 million capital funding to date under its Shared Spaces theme. The funding relates to larger individual capital build projects under Action 3.1 and smaller capital builds under Action 3.2, which is incorporated into each local authority's PEACE Local Action Plan.

The PEACE III Programme (2007-2013) allocated €104.7 million under Theme 2.1 Creating Shared Public Spaces.

The PEACE II Programme (2000-2006) did not have a specific capital build programme theme and there is no breakdown available for capital funding provided under the PEACE I Programme (1995-1999).

The breakdown for PEACE IV Action 3.1, PEACE IV Action 3.2 and PEACE III Theme 2.1 are as follows:

PEACE IV Action 3.1 Shared Spaces	County	Total Project Value
Waterside Shared Village	Derry	€ 8,057,292.72
Ballycastle Shared Services Project	Antrim	€ 3,140,539.48
Connecting Pomeroy Project	Tyrone	€ 5,984,923.32
Newforge Community Development Trust Project	Antrim	€ 5,792,108.38
Monaghan Peace Campus	Monaghan	€ 9,541,081.47
Total PEACE IV Action 3.1		€ 32,515,945.37

PEACE IV Action 3.2 Local Authority Peace Action Plans Shared Spaces	Total Infrastructure and Works
Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council	€ 2,641,880.02
Ards & North Down Borough Council	€ 1,212,046.44
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council	€ 1,810,705.28
Belfast City Council	€ 6,006,805.47
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council	€ 1,054,268.34
Cavan County Council	€ 760,026.00
Derry City & Strabane District Council	€ 753,206.98
Donegal County Council	€ 1,689,906.00
Fermanagh & Omagh District Council	€ 778,800.00
Leitrim County Council	€ 434,305.00
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council	€ 503,459.98
Louth County Council	€ 689,000.00
Mid & East Antrim Borough Council	*No capital build element. This part of the Action Plan focuses on the shared services aspect of the Shared Spaces and Services theme.
Mid Ulster District Council	€ 849,600.00
Monaghan County Council	€ 988,212.00

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	€	790,216.50
Sligo County Council	€	268,598.00
Total PEACE IV Action 3.2	€	21,231,036.01

PEACE IV Theme			
2.1 Creating Shared Public Spaces			
Project Title	Organisation	Value Awarded	County
Skatepark	Belfast City Council	€ 462,792.00	Antrim
The Skainos Project	Skainos Ltd	€ 7,350,997.20	Antrim
Castlesanderson - All Ireland Scouting/ Jamboree Centre	Cavan County Council	€ 3,675,345.00	Cavan
OASIS - Omagh Accessible Shared Inclusive Space	Omagh District Council	€ 4,900,080.00	Tyrone
River Foyle Foot and Cycle Bridge	Ilex URC Ltd	€ 16,688,412.00	Derry
Restoration of the SS Nomadic	Department for Social Development	€ 2,789,736.00	Antrim
Clones Erne East Sports Partnership Project	Monaghan County Council	€ 8,506,687.00	Monaghan
Pettigo / Tullyhomon - The Termon Project	Donegal County Council	€ 8,123,841.00	Donegal
The Glen Community Complex (Bacon Factory) Redevelopment	Apex Housing Association	€ 4,379,049.60	Antrim
Small Wonders Childcare II	Shankill Womens Centre	€ 840,888.00	Antrim
Sharing Our Space	Groundwork Northern Ireland	€ 2,930,199.60	Antrim
Orange Interpretive and Educational Resource	Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland	€ 4,142,152.76	Antrim
Shared Process and Community Engagement (SPACE)	Craigavon Borough Council	€ 6,314,511.60	Armagh
Heroes of the Great Siege Shared History & Visitor Centre	Derry City Council	€ 2,935,938.00	Derry
City Centre Garden of Reflection	Inner City Trust	€ 2,555,973.60	Derry
The Girdwood Community Hub	Belfast City Council	€ 10,556,698.80	Antrim

PEACE IV Theme 2.1 Creating Shared Public Spaces			
Project Title	Organisation	Value Awarded	County
Peace & Reconciliation through - Education, Activity, Regional and Local Sharing - The EARLS	Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council	€ 8,486,296.80	Tyrone
Voices from the Valley Park	Newtownabbey Borough Council	€ 5,127,290.40	Antrim
Girdwood Infrastructure Project and the development of a 3G playing pitch	Department of Social Development	€ 3,918,204.00	Antrim
Total PEACE IV Theme 2.1		€ 104,685,093.36	

Peace and Reconciliation Programme

155. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the funding made available to projects supported by all PEACE programmes since the inception of the PEACE programme in 1995, by county and year in tabular form. [2533/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware, the PEACE and INTERREG Programmes have made a real and visible contribution towards supporting peace and reconciliation and promoting economic and social cohesion in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland for more than two decades. The programmes are managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), a North South Implementation Body established under the Good Friday Agreement.

The table sets out the funding made available to projects by year under the PEACE II, III and IV programmes. A breakdown by year is not available for the 1995-1999 PEACE I programme which predated SEUPB's establishment. The data is not available by county as the majority of projects are programme or service based and would typically have activity and beneficiaries on a regional basis.

* Note re funding amounts:

Where both currencies are provided, they represent equivalent amounts and not separate amounts of funding. PEACE I funding amounts are only available in sterling and PEACE IV funding amounts are only available in euro.

	Year	Amount Awarded STG*	Amount Awarded EUR*
PEACE I	1995-2000	445,977,234.67	
PEACE II	2000	191,209.17	296,374.22
	2001	1,765,817.80	2,737,017.59
	2002	126,310,581.03	195,781,400.60
	2003	268,367,126.67	415,969,046.34

	Year	Amount Awarded STG*	Amount Awarded EUR*
	2004	103,105,624.97	159,813,718.70
	2005	13,258,789.80	20,118,037.59
	2006	101,483,507.91	147,584,788.31
	2007	17,901,917.39	26,141,597.81
	2008	3,595,598.97	5,247,063.66
	Unknown	9,987,865.06	15,481,190.85
Total PEACE II		645,968,038.77	989,170,235.68
Peace III	2008	47,563,938.39	57,076,726.07
	2009	73,890,837.15	88,669,004.58
	2010	18,116,263.05	21,739,515.66
	2011	52,712,797.57	63,255,357.08
	2012	42,218,203.79	50,661,844.54
	2013	14,397,230.60	17,276,676.72
	2014	11,344,656.00	13,613,587.20
	2015	3,265,170.00	3,918,204.00
Total PEACE III		263,509,096.55	316,210,915.86
Peace IV	2017		79,837,187.86
	2018		116,555,331.20
	2019		180,536.67

Questions Nos. 156 and 157 answered with Question No. 146.

Deer Culls

158. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if a risk assessment on the safety of the public was conducted prior to the operation of the recent deer cull in the Phoenix Park overseen by the OPW; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2612/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Commissioners of Public Works confirm that a detailed and comprehensive Risk Assessment was carried out prior to the deer cull which took place on the 9th January 2019. The risk assessment was carried out by Phoenix Park management and covered all aspects pertaining to the cull including public safety.

Deer Culls

159. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the precautions undertaken by his Department and the OPW to safeguard the public and to alert the public that firearms would be used as part of the recent deer cull in the Phoenix Park overseen by the OPW; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2613/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): OPW has a comprehensive operating procedure for the deer cull which includes the preparation of a detailed Risk Assessment in advance and the completion and implementation of a detailed safety plan designed to safeguard the public, Park users, staff and operatives involved in the cull itself.

As is standard practise, and in line with the safety plan for the cull, signage notifying the public of the cull and detailing the public exclusion zone was erected on the day before the cull.

All institutions in the Park were informed of the cull and of the public exclusion zones by letter.

Only two competent individuals who are fully trained and qualified in the use of firearms are permitted to take part in the cull. The OPW complies with the Fire Arms Regulations 2009.

Deer Culls

160. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if An Garda Síochána was informed in advance of the operation of the recent deer cull in the Phoenix Park overseen by the OPW and that firearms would be discharged as part of the operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2614/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Commissioners of Public Works confirm that, as part of the Standard Operating Procedures for the recent deer cull, An Garda Síochána at Cabra Garda Station was notified in advance and was aware that firearms would be discharged as part of this operation.

Deer Culls

161. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the considerations given to animal welfare in relation to the recent deer cull in the Phoenix Park overseen by the OPW; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2615/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Office of Public Works has a Deer Policy for the Phoenix Park which has been endorsed by both the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the School of Biology & Environmental Science at University College Dublin. This policy addresses all aspects of deer welfare and management of the deer herd in line with international best practice. The Phoenix Park team has long-standing experience in managing the herd of wild fallow deer at the Park.

Together with the School of Biology & Environmental Science at U.C.D., OPW has explored the various culling methods appropriate to a wild herd. Based on this research, the methodology of the cull, as undertaken on January 9th, is considered the most appropriate and humane approach.

Ports Development

162. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to rely on his powers to direct the Office of Public Works in circumstances in which planning permission is needed to provide the necessary facilities for a Border control post at Rosslare Europort. [2678/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Office of Public Works has been mandated to secure the property required at Rosslare Europort and to undertake the necessary work to ensure that the additional infrastructure required as a consequence of the UK leaving the EU becomes operational in a timely manner. Planning require-

ments will be adhered to.

Departmental Expenditure

163. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will publish the airline costs for his Department for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2697/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The amount spent on airline costs by my Department in 2018 was €91,400.38. Of this amount, €16,228.37 was recouped in respect of EU Council meetings and other recoupable meetings.

Departmental Expenditure

164. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will publish the cost of newspapers in his Department in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2714/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In answer to the Deputy's question, the amount spent on the purchase of newspapers in my Department in 2018 was €15,369.96.

Staff in my Department are strongly encouraged to use online subscriptions to the relevant media outlets in order to reduce costs.

Office of Public Works Properties

165. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of visitors who availed of guided tours of Trim Castle, County Meath in each of the years 2015 to 2018, in tabular form. [2902/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The table sets out the number of visitors.

	Total Visitors to Trim Castle	Visitors who availed of a guided tour
2015	86,972	33,771
2016	101,127	36,319
2017	104,354	37,169
2018*	106,877	37,856

*2018 figures are provisional and subject to change

Flood Risk Management

166. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the stage at which the proposed Buncrana and Luddan, County Donegal flood scheme is at; the proposed capital works involved; and when it is likely to be delivered. [3011/19]

167. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the Buncrana and Luddan, County Donegal flood scheme can be split into separate schemes (details supplied) [3012/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 166 and 167 together.

In May 2018 I launched 29 Flood Risk Management Plans for all the main river basins identifying a total of 118 flood relief projects to protect the main flood risk areas throughout the country. These Plans and projects are a key part of the overall flood risk management strategy set out in the National Development Plan 2017 - 2028 involving total investment of almost €1 billion over the ten year time frame of that Plan. As it is not possible to implement all of the 118 projects at the one time, a total of 50 projects were prioritised for the initial tranche of investment and delivery based on the level of risk and number of properties to be protected.

15 flood relief projects have been identified for County Donegal as part of the 118 projects in total included in the Flood Risk Management Plans. Following consultation and discussions between the Office of Public Works (OPW) and Donegal County Council, six of the Donegal projects have been identified to be progressed in a first phase of implementation and the OPW and the Council will be working closely over the coming year to progress these projects. Plans are currently being put together to appoint consultants over the coming months for each of the projects to be advanced in the first phase.

The proposed project at Buncrana and Luddan, Co. Donegal was assessed as a single project within the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) process and it is not currently proposed to progress separate elements of the proposed project as the progression of a piecemeal design on any project can result in the overall effectiveness of that project being compromised.

The proposed project at Buncrana and Luddan, Co. Donegal, at an estimated cost of €3.3m, consists of a series of sea walls, flood embankments and flood walls, which will provide flood protection to approximately 32 properties when completed. While the proposed project is not in the first phase of projects to be progressed, OPW and Donegal County Council will work closely to ensure that it will be commenced in the coming years and within the 10 year time-frame for the programme of investment.

Public Expenditure Policy

168. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the date the review of the public expenditure guidelines commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3063/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Investment Projects and Programmes Office (IPPO) was established within the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in 2018. This was on foot of the recommendations contained in the Public Investment Management Assessment (PIMA) Report and a commitment set out in the National Development Plan 2018 to 2027. The IPPO is redesigning the requirements in relation to the different stages involved in the process of selection, appraisal, approval and delivery of capital investment projects. This work commenced in Quarter 4 2018 and will be completed in Quarter 1 2019. It is intended that the updated capital appraisal guidance will be included in a revised Public Spending Code during the course of 2019.

More generally, the Public Spending Code is reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that it

takes account of the changing environment, and to ensure best value for public funds.

Construction Industry

169. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when his attention was drawn to the fact that there will be labour shortages for major capital projects in 2019 which will require a review of the public expenditure guidelines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3064/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Measures to address potential capacity constraints in the construction sector have been a priority for a number of years now.

A mid-term review of the 2016-2021 Capital Plan was published by my Department in September 2017. That review noted that the scale of increase in public capital spending will accentuate capacity pressures for that sector. The review highlighted the priority of reinforcing existing initiatives to meet the skills and capacity needs of the sector and support its strategic development in line with medium and long-term requirements of the Irish economy. To that end, initiatives are ongoing in the Department of Education and Skills, and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

Furthermore, in my own Department and as announced in the NDP, a Construction Sector Group has been established to ensure regular and open dialogue between Government and the construction sector. The CSG is made up of each of the key segments of the industry along with officials from relevant Departments and Agencies. One of the main elements of the CSG's remit is the supply of necessary skills and measures enhancing capacity. The group met twice in 2018 and will shortly finalise its work programme for 2019.

The newly established Investment Projects and Programmes Office in DPER will play an important role in strengthening the appraisal and evaluation of investment projects and programmes and to ensure that public capital investment is efficient and value-for-money. This will require the operation of the project appraisal and evaluation arrangements set out in an improved Public Spending Code as recommended by the 2017 IMF Public Investment Management Assessment (PIMA). A review of the Public Spending Code is underway to ensure best practice and reflect leading international practice in major project appraisal and planning.

National Children's Hospital Expenditure

170. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if extra money is being allocated to the Department of Health to cover the extra costs projected for the national children's hospital in 2019; the areas from which these moneys will come; if moneys will come from the capital envelopes in other Departments; if so, the Departments in relation to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3065/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department is engaging with the Department of Health on the topic of the National Children's Hospital, and how the increased costs of the project will be managed within the overall agreed NDP capital allocations. To that end, the Government has decided that in relation to the 2019 increased costs, €50 million will have to be found within the 2019 capital allocation for the Department of Health, with the remaining €49 million to be met by reallocation within the overall €1.5 billion (26%) increase on the 2018 REV allocation for all Departments.

The Deputy will appreciate that, even with this adjustment, all sectors will still receive substantial additional resources in 2019 to pursue their priority projects. Public investment this year will reach 3.5% of national income (GNI*) compared to an EU average in recent years of 2.7% (GDP).

My officials are currently engaging with the Department of Health on the funding requirements for the National Children's Hospital over the period to 2022. When that engagement is complete, I expect to revert to Government with proposals in relation to how the increased costs of the project will be met, within the existing agreed annual NDP ceilings.

Schools Amalgamation

171. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for closing two schools in County Cavan in favour of opening one larger school creating a longer commute for residents; if public consultation was carried out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2354/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that the decision making authority for any amalgamation belongs to the Patron/Trustees of the school, and this is subject to the approval of the Department.

Any proposed change involves extensive negotiations at local level and must be well planned and managed in a manner that accommodates the interests of students, parents, teachers, local communities and contributes to an inclusive education system.

My Department has sought further information from the Patron of the schools concerned relating to the proposed amalgamation and this is awaited. The matter can be considered further following receipt of this information.

School Accommodation Provision

172. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to meet future demand for second-level education in County Wexford (details supplied) in view of the growing population in the area; his further plans to expand schools; if not, his further plans to construct a new school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2358/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas and uses a Geographical Information System, using data from a range of sources, to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level.

Major new residential developments in a school planning area have the potential to alter demand in that area. In that regard, as part of the demographic exercises, my Department engages with each of the local authorities to obtain the up-to-date data on significant new residential development in each area. This is necessary to ensure that schools infrastructure planning is keeping pace with demographic changes as there is a constantly evolving picture with planned new residential development, including additional residential developments arising from the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF).

Where data indicates that additional provision is required, the delivery of such additional

provision is dependent on the particular circumstances of each case and may, depending on the circumstances, be provided through either one, or a combination of, the following:

- Utilising existing unused capacity within a school or schools,
- Extending the capacity of a school or schools,
- Provision of a new school or schools.

As the Deputy may be aware, the Government recently announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022). This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. While the announcement did not include a new post primary school for the area referred to by the Deputy, the requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular will have regard for the increased rollout of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

It is open to an individual school to apply for accommodation under the additional accommodation scheme if the school does not have sufficient capacity to meet school places.

My Department's capital programme prioritises building projects for areas where significant additional school places are required. Details of the current status of the 7 major school projects (primary and post-primary) in County Wexford that are included on the capital programme may be viewed on my Department's website www.education.gov.ie.

With regard to the details supplied by the Deputy, a 1,000 pupil post primary school was established in 2011 in the area referred to by the Deputy and moved into its permanent accommodation in 2014 and the school has capacity to meet demand in the area.

Minor Works Scheme Payments

173. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the minor works grant 2018 has issued to a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2375/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Minor Works Grant 2018/2019 was paid to the school referred to by the Deputy on 26th November, 2018.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

174. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if students applying for the CAO for 2019 and commencing a course in Northern Ireland or Britain in September 2019, will be eligible to avail of SUSI grants for the duration of their course regardless of the number of years it takes even in the event of a hard Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2400/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Eligible Irish and EU nationals wishing to enrol on approved courses in the UK for the 2019/20 academic year will be able

to avail of SUSI grants.

Eligible UK students who enrol for eligible courses for the current 2019/20 academic year in a third level college recognised for the purposes of free fees and student grant purposes, will be eligible to avail of the Department's Free Fees and Student Grant schemes. This includes the student contribution fee for Irish and EU citizens which currently stands at €3,000 for the 2018/19 academic year.

This will mean that the student grant and tuition fee arrangements that are currently in place will continue to apply for those students entering higher education in the 2019/2020 academic year for the duration of their course. The position will be reviewed in advance of the 2020/2021 academic year.

Changes to the Student Support Act 2011 are also proposed under the Government's Brexit Contingency Action Plan; to ensure that eligible students attending colleges in the UK and eligible UK nationals studying here, continue to receive grant support.

It is anticipated that the Student Grant Scheme and Student Support Regulations for the 2019/20 academic year will be published in early April 2019. Students attending college in the academic year 2019/20 will be required to submit their grant application to SUSI (via www.susi.ie) to have their eligibility for grant assistance assessed.

Student Support Schemes

175. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Education and Skills the criteria necessary for receipt of the 1916 bursary fund; if these criteria are uniformly applied across higher education institutions; the person or body which decides which students receive funding; if there is oversight regarding these decisions from an authority separate to the higher education institution offering the award; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2483/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The 1916 Bursary Fund supports 600 students over the course of three academic years commencing in 2017/18. These Bursaries differ from existing bursaries in a number of respects, in that they are targeted at non-traditional entry and can support undergraduate study on either a full-time or part-time basis. The Fund provides financial support through bursaries to new entrants to higher education who are identified by regional clusters of HEIs as meeting the eligibility criteria for the Fund.

To be considered for a bursary students must be socio-economically disadvantaged and from one of the target groups identified in the National Access Plan. Target groups include entrants from under-represented socio-economic groups and communities; entrants with disabilities; first time mature entrants; members of the Irish Traveller community; students entering on the basis of a further education award; part-time flexible learners, Lone parents and ethnic minorities

The Guidelines for the 1916 Bursary Fund were drawn up by the Department of Education and Skills in partnership with the HEA to reflect the aim of the Fund to encourage participation and success in higher education by students from sections of society significantly under-represented in higher education. The emphasis is on encouraging learners from disadvantaged groups and communities that may never previously have considered higher education as a possible option or had any opportunity to participate in higher education.

The 1916 Bursary Fund devolves the responsibility for identifying eligible students to the clusters of HEIs who are best placed to identify the target students. Clusters of HEIs are respon-

sible for selecting the students to be awarded bursaries and are responsible for the implementation of the Bursary fund. As part of the student selection process the HEIs will be required to ensure that successful students meet the eligibility criteria as per the call for proposals, and as set out in section 2.4 of these guidelines. Selection processes should be fully documented, which include an appeals process. HEIs report to the HEA on the operation of the Fund. The Bursary Fund will be subject to a full review and overall evaluation in year 3.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

176. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the pupil-teacher ratio that pertained pre-budget 2012, that is, three teachers per 49 pupils will be reinstated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2492/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Budget 2012 increased the appointment and retention ratios for small schools, i.e. schools with four classroom teachers or fewer.

Since 2015, measures have been introduced to improve the staffing of these schools which has seen improvements in the appointment and retention thresholds for the 2nd, 3rd and 4th classroom teacher and more favourable enrolment thresholds for one teacher schools situated 8km or more from the nearest school of the same type of patronage and/or language of instruction.

Budget 2017 announced two adjustments in relation to one teacher schools. Where the school is the sole primary school on an island the school will be able to appoint a second teacher. In relation to single teacher schools generally with an enrolment of 15 or more pupils the school can apply to the staffing appeal board for a second post where the single teacher has children across 6 or more class groups.

Small schools have also benefitted from the 1 point improvement to the primary staffing schedule for all schools implemented in 2016 and again in 2018. For the current school year, the staffing schedule at Primary level operates on a general average of 26 pupils to every 1 teacher (26:1) which is historically the lowest ever allocation ratio at primary level.

In addition, the staffing process includes an appeals mechanism for schools to submit a staffing appeal under certain criteria, including a specific appeal measure for small schools, to the Primary Staffing Appeals Board.

Any additional improvement in the pupil teacher ratio would have to be considered as part of the next annual budgetary process, alongside the many other demands from the education sector.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

177. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a widow’s pension and qualified child increase are included as means in determining their child’s entitlement to the SUSI grant; if maintenance payments are included as means in determining eligibility for the SUSI grant in the case of lone parents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2530/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Student Grant Scheme, administered by SUSI, provides maintenance grants to students who meet the prescribed condi-

tions of funding, including those relating to nationality, residency, previous academic attainment and means.

Widows' /Widower's pension is included as reckonable income for the purposes of the student grant means test.

Widow's/Widower's pension is also a qualifying payment for the special rate of grant where the reckonable income is less than €23,500. Where the pension includes a CDA (child dependent allowance) the CDA element may be deducted from the payment for the purposes of qualifying for the special rate of grant and determining total reckonable income.

Maintenance payments are included as reckonable income for student grant purposes. However, the income limits for grant eligibility are increased relative to the number of students in a family applying for a grant.

If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant on the grounds of his/her initial classification as an independent or dependent student, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI. Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down in writing by SUSI and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal, outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board at www.studentgrantappeals.ie within the required timeframe.

School Accommodation Provision

178. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to increase the number of secondary school places in the Wexford town area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2603/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas and uses a Geographical Information System, using data from a range of sources, to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level.

Major new residential developments in a school planning area have the potential to alter demand in that area. In that regard, as part of the demographic exercises, my Department engages with each of the local authorities to obtain the up-to-date data on significant new residential development in each area. This is necessary to ensure that schools infrastructure planning is keeping pace with demographic changes as there is a constantly evolving picture with planned new residential development, including additional residential developments arising from the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF).

Where data indicates that additional provision is required, the delivery of such additional provision is dependent on the particular circumstances of each case and may, depending on the circumstances, be provided through either one, or a combination of, the following:

- Utilising existing unused capacity within a school or schools,
- Extending the capacity of a school or schools,
- Provision of a new school or schools.

As the Deputy may be aware, the Government recently announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022). This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Based on the current analysis, this need can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools.

While the announcement did not include a new post primary school for the Wexford town area (which is located in the Wexford school planning area), the requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular will have regard for the increased rollout of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

It is open to an individual school to apply for accommodation under the additional accommodation scheme if the school does not have sufficient capacity to meet school places.

As the Deputy maybe aware, Loreto College, Wexford which formed part of the Schools Bundle 5 PPP project, was completed in August 2018 and provides for 900 post-primary places. My Department also recently approved a grant to a post-primary school in Wexford town to provide an additional mainstream classroom and science lab and this project has been devolved to the school for delivery.

My Department's capital programme prioritises building projects for areas where significant additional school places are required. Details of the current status of the 7 major school projects (primary and post-primary) in County Wexford that are included on the capital programme may be viewed on my Department's website www.education.gov.ie .

School Accommodation Provision

179. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether a secondary school is needed in a location (details supplied) in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2604/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas and uses a Geographical Information System, using data from a range of sources, to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level.

Major new residential developments in a school planning area have the potential to alter demand in that area. In that regard, as part of the demographic exercises, my Department engages with each of the local authorities to obtain the up-to-date data on significant new residential development in each area. This is necessary to ensure that schools infrastructure planning is keeping pace with demographic changes as there is a constantly evolving picture with planned new residential development, including additional residential developments arising from the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF).

Where data indicates that additional provision is required, the delivery of such additional provision is dependent on the particular circumstances of each case and may, depending on the

circumstances, be provided through either one, or a combination of, the following:

- Utilising existing unused capacity within a school or schools,
- Extending the capacity of a school or schools,
- Provision of a new school or schools.

As the Deputy may be aware, the Government recently announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022). This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Based on the current analysis, this need can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools.

While the announcement did not include a new post primary school in Riverchapel (which is located in the Gorey school planning area), the requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular will have regard for the increased rollout of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

It is open to an individual school to apply for accommodation under the additional accommodation scheme if the school does not have sufficient capacity to meet school places.

Departmental Expenditure

180. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will publish the airline costs for his Department for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2690/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Department of Education and Skills airline costs for 2018 was €97,116.67. The Department of Education and Skills utilises the travel agent contracted through the Office of Government Procurement to procure flights and keep airline costs to the Department to a minimum.

Departmental Expenditure

181. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will publish the cost of newspapers in his Department in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2707/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): For the Deputy's information, as extracted from the Department's Financial System (FMS), payments made from the Department's administration expenditure indicate that the total expenditure for the purchase of newspapers and subscriptions to online newspaper content was €10,315.24 in 2018.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

182. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the decision not to open a junior unit at a school (details supplied) that would allow students in the early intervention unit transition further into their primary education will be reversed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2772/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): ASD Early intervention classes are available for children aged 3-5 with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Early intervention classes are intended to provide early support for children with ASD before they start school.

Following early intervention most children will attend a mainstream class, but will some require the environment of a special class.

Special classes enable students with more complex special educational needs who are unable to access the curriculum in a mainstream class, even with support, for most or all of their school day.

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

- S/he has ASD
- S/he has complex or severe learning needs that require the support of a special class setting and the reasons why this is the case

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), in consultation with the HSE and relevant education partners, is responsible for the establishment of special classes in various geographical areas where there is an identified need.

Since 2011, the NCSE has increased the number of special classes from 548 in 2011 to 1,459 across the country now, of which 1,196 are Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) special classes.

There are 246 special classes attached to mainstream schools in Cork City and County. Of these, 28 are ASD early intervention classes, 120 are primary ASD classes and 53 are post primary ASD classes. The number of ASD special classes in Cork has increased from 50 in 2011/2012 to 201 in 2018/2019. Details of all special classes for children with special educational needs are available by county on the NCSE website www.ncse.ie

The local SENO, in looking to open special classes, must take into account the present and future potential need for such classes, taking particular account of the educational needs of the children concerned. The local SENO will also take account of location and sustainability in looking to establish special classes in certain areas.

In addition, the local SENO will consider:

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

The decision to sanction a special class in a specific school is a matter for the NCSE local SENO. My Department has no role in making such determinations.

The NCSE has informed my Department that the local SENO is satisfied that there are currently sufficient special class placements available to meet identified need for the forthcoming school year in the area referred to by the Deputy.

Should the NCSE identify the requirement for additional ASD special class placements in the area the local SENO will consider all schools in the area in relation to establishing an ASD special class.

Schools Site Acquisitions

183. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his officials will engage with officials from the Department of Defence in relation to a site for a new school for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1811/19]

184. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the announcement of a new school build for a school (details supplied); the support his Department can provide in the next stage to identify a suitable site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1812/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 183 and 184 together.

My Department recently decided in order to meet future capacity needs across the area, that the school to which the Deputy refers should be replaced and expanded with a new 1,000 pupil school building. A new site will be required for the school and the Department will be liaising with KWETB with a view to the process for identifying a suitable site. The standard identification process includes identifying suitable sites already in public ownership. I can assure the Deputy that my Department will make every effort to progress the matter

School Accommodation Provision

185. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to build primary and post-primary schools in an area (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2791/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas and uses a Geographical Information System, using data from a range of sources, to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level. For school planning purposes Meakstown is located in the Finglas East_Ballymun_Dublin 11 school planning area.

Major new residential developments in a school planning area have the potential to alter demand in that area. In that regard, as part of the demographic exercises, my Department engages with each of the local authorities to obtain the up-to-date data on significant new residential development in each area. This is necessary to ensure that schools infrastructure planning is keeping pace with demographic changes as there is a constantly evolving picture with planned new residential development, including additional residential developments arising from the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF).

Where data indicates that additional provision is required, the delivery of such additional provision is dependent on the particular circumstances of each case and may, depending on the circumstances, be provided through either one, or a combination of, the following:

- Utilising existing unused capacity within a school or schools
- Extending the capacity of a school or schools,
- Provision of a new school or schools.

As the Deputy will be aware, in April 2018, the Government announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next 4 years (2019 to 2022). This announcement follows nationwide, demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country.

In addition to the new schools announced, there may be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future which can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools.

The requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular will have regard for the increased rollout of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040. It is open to an individual school to apply for accommodation under the additional accommodation scheme if the school does not have sufficient capacity to meet school places.

Schools Data

186. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of new and additional school places created in each year since 2011, by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2793/19]

188. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the new primary schools completed since the start of 2011, by county in tabular form. [2795/19]

189. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the new post-primary schools completed since the start of 2011, by county in tabular form. [2796/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 186, 188 and 189 together.

The tables outline on a county basis the number of new primary and post primary schools completed from 2011 to 2018. A further table details the number of additional and replacement places provided from 2011 to 2017 through the delivery of new school buildings and large scale extensions. Over the same period a total of 53,722 additional permanent school places were provided under the Devolved Additional Accommodation Scheme.

157	Mayo	20046M	Gaelscoil Na Cruaiche, Cathair na Mart,	2011
158	Meath	20180Q	Scoil Eoin National School, Navan	2011
159	Meath	20215J	St. Paul's NS, Ratoath	2011
160	Waterford	19629G	Holy Cross School, Ballycarnane, Tramore	2011
161	Westmeath	18812P	Loch an Ghair NS Mullingar	2011

PROJECTS AND PLACES 2011 -2017

COUNTY	PROJECTS	ADDITIONAL PLACES	REPLACEMENT PLACES	TOTAL PLACES
Carlow	6	1,314	280	1,594
Cavan	6	1,140	781	1,921
Clare	3	860	936	1,796
Cork	36	8,978	3,678	12,656
Donegal	11	1,901	370	2,271
Dublin	76	28,528	2,292	30,820
Galway	23	5,301	1,956	7,257
Kerry	7	548	1,396	1,944
Kildare	23	6,760	1,474	8,234
Kilkenny	5	829	336	1,165
Laois	12	3,064	1,596	4,660
Leitrim	1	100	300	400
Limerick	12	2,068	2,236	4,304
Longford	4	364	0	364
Louth	15	4,328	2,548	6,876
Mayo	4	558	280	838
Meath	28	10,047	2,432	12,479
Monaghan	6	1,595	168	1,763
Offaly	9	1,653	1,441	3,094
Roscommon	2	364	84	448
Sligo	2	287	837	1,124
Tipperary	10	340	852	1,192
Waterford	9	1,962	1,638	3,600
Westmeath	6	878	1,180	2,058
Wexford	13	2,832	1,554	4,386
Wicklow	11	2,763	2,252	5,015
TOTAL	340	89,362	32,897	122,259

New Post-Primary Schools completed 2011-2018

	County	Roll No.	School	Year
1	Dublin	68262N	Bremore Educate Together, Balbriggan	2018
2	Louth	76195U	Cú Cúlainn Community College, Dundalk, Louth	2018
3	Wexford	63660A	Loreto Secondary School, Wexford Town	2018
4	Wicklow	70821M	Coláiste Raithin, Bray	2018
5	Cavan	76313A	Dun Na Rí	2017
6	Cork	68264R	Edmund Rice College, Carrigaline	2017

	County	Roll No.	School	Year
7	Dublin	68083N	Le Cheile Secondary School, Mulhuddart	2017
8	Galway	91412M	Scoil Phobail, Clifden	2017
9	Clare	62020F	St Joseph's Secondary School, Tulla	2016
10	Cork	62490T	Skibbereen Community School	2016
11	Dublin	68082L	Coláiste Ghlór na Mara, Balbriggan	2016
12	Dublin	68101M	Hansfield Educate Together, Dublin 15.	2016
13	Louth	63890R	St Mary's College, Dundalk	2016
14	Meath	71970L	St Fintina's PP School, Longwood, Enfield	2016
15	Meath	76196W	New Post-Primary School, Ashbourne, Meath	2016
16	Offaly	72560U	Tullamore Vocational School	2016
17	Tipperary	72400B	Comeragh Community College, Carrick-on-Suir	2016
18	Wicklow	70740M	Arklow Community College, Coolgreaney Rd, Arklow	2016
19	Cork	76067L	Coláiste Mhuire, Buttevant, Co Cork	2015
20	Dublin	76152C	Clonburris Post-Primary School, Clonburris, Lucan	2015
21	Galway	71330V	Coláiste na Coiribe, Bóthar Thuama	2015
22	Kerry	61410N	Presentation School, Milltown	2015
23	Louth	91573N	Ballymakenny College, Drogheda	2015
24	Wicklow	61790D	St Brendan's College, Bray	2015
25	Wicklow	68081J	Temple Carrig Secondary School, Greystones	2015
26	Galway	76096S	Merlin College, Doughiska	2014
27	Leitrim	91519H	Ballinamore Community School	2014
28	Limerick	68121S	Scoil na Trionoide, Doon	2014
29	Meath	76173K	Coláiste na Mí, Navan	2014

Questions - Written Answers

	County	Roll No.	School	Year
30	Waterford	68141B	Ard Scoil na Mara	2014
31	Westmeath	71410T	Athlone Community College	2014
32	Wexford	76127D	Gorey Community College	2014
33	Cork	81008W	Ashton Comprehensive School, Blackrock Road	2013
34	Donegal	76081F	Coláiste Ailigh, Letterkenny	2013
35	Dublin	76130P	Luttrellstown CC	2013
36	Dublin	76213T	Lusk Community College	2013
37	Galway	76233C	Claregalway	2013
38	Monaghan	76091I	Gaelcholáiste Oiriall	2013
39	Monaghan	76095Q	Monaghan Institute of Further Education (MIFET)	2013
40	Cavan	61060M	St Patrick's College, Cavan, Co. Cavan	2012
41	Dublin	60450U	Coláiste Mhuire na mBráithre, Cabra	2012
42	Meath	76103M	Colaiste Na hInse, Laytown	2012
43	Offaly	65610S	Colaiste Choilm, O'Moore Street, Tullamore	2012
44	Sligo	65170Q	Summerhill College, Sligo	2012
45	Waterford	64970U	Coláiste na Maighdine, Presentation Secondary School	2012
46	Wicklow	61800D	Presentation College, Bray	2012
47	Donegal	71240U	Stranorlar Vocational School (Finn Valley College)	2011
48	Dublin	76098W	Pobail Scoil Se-tanta, Phibblestown	2011
49	Dublin	76104O	Donabate Community College	2011
50	Wexford	76127D	Gorey Community College	2011
51	Cork	76090G	Bantry Community College - PPP Project	2011
52	Kildare	91530S	Kildare Town Community School - PPP Project	2011
53	Limerick	76093M	Abbeyfeale Community College - PPP Project	2011

	County	Roll No.	School	Year
54	Meath	91517D	Athboy Community School - PPP Project	2011
55	Wicklow	76099B	Wicklow Town Community College - PPP Project	2011

Schools Building Projects Expenditure

187. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the capital expenditure including summer works, minor works, emergency works and other capital expenditure on school buildings in each year since 2011, by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2794/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The table outlines, each year from 2011 to 2018 on a county basis, the capital expenditure incurred under Subhead D.3 - the building, equipment and furnishing of primary and post-primary schools.

-	2011	2012	2013	2014
Carlow	7,307,294.17	9,222,650.89	8,556,150.90	7,745,688.48
Cavan	9,637,295.67	8,805,051.46	4,598,344.95	7,340,508.37
Clare	4,768,765.89	3,476,383.43	8,965,676.41	4,772,961.57
Cork	31,194,326.17	30,827,761.52	45,370,230.45	53,665,492.44
Donegal	13,893,148.09	10,076,942.43	7,268,337.01	6,836,123.90
Dublin	120,933,334.82	81,748,576.37	86,410,419.61	123,021,637.57
Galway	17,068,524.02	13,682,722.79	26,579,446.03	25,291,906.84
Kerry	12,690,659.68	11,683,014.48	5,036,737.62	12,692,996.50
Kildare	51,397,600.44	13,133,469.72	13,598,068.06	31,760,086.10
Kilkenny	6,607,896.81	4,410,479.04	10,990,556.66	7,097,001.52
Laois	8,697,729.22	6,309,335.31	12,347,909.68	3,176,236.27
Leitrim	1,968,342.59	447,646.16	1,405,261.69	1,332,715.73
Limerick	16,184,335.39	9,315,629.71	12,692,255.31	12,729,358.49
Longford	2,627,937.31	1,233,575.39	3,330,841.03	4,895,857.40
Louth	19,818,316.41	16,003,027.29	12,271,881.40	15,740,325.37
Mayo	9,696,431.65	5,769,704.63	6,271,087.11	9,423,413.32
Meath	21,985,716.81	19,922,822.55	41,258,814.42	24,072,251.74
Monaghan	6,589,310.04	34,310,401.18	3,288,818.39	5,465,984.21
Offaly	12,534,812.02	5,658,855.65	3,547,400.49	11,564,166.73
Roscommon	3,950,775.98	1,894,499.99	1,450,104.57	2,413,621.09
Sligo	5,781,548.56	10,989,858.31	4,743,524.13	2,777,777.28
Tipperary	15,103,060.41	18,611,363.62	10,551,532.74	13,113,049.90
Waterford	13,501,570.82	4,019,486.99	4,600,589.86	13,771,965.67
Westmeath	8,118,038.92	5,771,601.86	4,507,604.10	7,837,917.80
Wexford	16,304,484.27	11,388,457.92	8,712,577.09	11,724,895.28
Wicklow	14,155,430.36	5,415,802.68	12,017,466.46	14,235,092.69
Not Specified	2,557,240.68	2,749,092.54	1,002,581.90	3,927,271.67
Total	455,073,927.20	346,878,213.91	361,374,218.07	438,426,303.93

table contd.

Questions - Written Answers

-	2015	2016	2017	2018
Carlow	7,850,519.26	2,793,259.64	6,766,036.26	12,112,677.31
Cavan	8,589,538.01	16,349,375.81	21,501,002.19	9,819,298.10
Clare	4,022,866.24	6,435,074.62	13,903,774.98	21,276,889.96
Cork	58,875,549.77	63,308,520.41	61,102,101.02	41,133,842.63
Donegal	12,260,761.60	7,574,986.77	13,171,696.34	5,264,825.21
Dublin	119,703,799.58	145,758,255.01	114,546,359.11	192,752,098.42
Galway	30,355,397.80	35,566,059.64	48,583,542.82	43,889,044.59
Kerry	19,216,299.47	7,225,163.37	10,387,427.21	5,940,116.06
Kildare	23,802,089.25	15,868,942.08	27,974,111.06	28,600,064.00
Kilkenny	8,869,557.65	9,557,390.44	4,128,743.08	6,250,150.66
Laois	6,682,817.52	13,771,546.24	14,665,033.18	8,670,024.59
Leitrim	1,670,038.28	791,883.03	3,118,116.43	5,274,046.20
Limerick	12,215,170.82	15,216,462.78	28,137,073.93	24,368,085.45
Longford	6,063,232.01	4,117,375.45	6,245,255.09	2,381,041.13
Louth	24,445,106.07	17,664,372.82	29,670,121.33	33,664,426.05
Mayo	9,050,971.49	11,062,617.27	14,315,388.77	15,870,092.40
Meath	31,951,875.72	42,166,779.97	25,096,451.15	13,901,460.70
Monaghan	8,088,547.41	4,534,031.41	3,026,486.27	3,726,377.39
Offaly	12,975,820.58	12,306,323.09	8,313,758.62	12,236,741.41
Roscommon	2,322,731.94	3,175,634.61	7,154,093.60	3,201,933.77
Sligo	3,505,181.84	1,507,882.34	1,678,856.82	2,256,542.08
Tipperary	13,793,015.15	12,084,509.39	11,295,805.34	8,331,644.38
Waterford	12,602,009.97	10,074,253.90	12,451,913.97	5,829,534.98
Westmeath	9,255,187.54	3,696,041.34	6,819,602.03	14,666,178.86
Wexford	19,298,293.52	30,757,997.98	19,672,086.85	12,217,567.36
Wicklow	35,869,468.74	15,361,163.97	11,887,172.97	10,590,980.24
Not Specified	3,124,634.13	21,064,245.23	5,195,964.01	1,524,591.07
Total	506,460,481.36	529,790,148.61	530,807,974.43	545,750,275.00

Questions Nos. 188 and 189 answered with Question No. 186.

School Management

190. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a college (details supplied) is entitled to implement rules stating that its pupils cannot park on the school grounds during college hours; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2808/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Under the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the Board of Management is the body charged with the direct governance of a school. In general, the Board has the responsibility to ensure that the school operates efficiently and effectively.

My Department does not issue specific guidelines on rules for the particular situation outlined by the Deputy, it is therefore a matter for each school to devise guidelines around this situation which are in line with relevant legislation such as Health and Safety legislation.

However, I do believe that schools need to be accountable to parents and we need greater levels of communication, engagement and transparency in how schools serve their communi-

ties. On 5 December 2016, my Department published the General Scheme of an Education (Parent and Student Charter) Bill 2016, which will require every school to consult with parents and students, and publish and operate a Parent and Student Charter.

Island Communities

191. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to bring forward legislation on island proofing at all levels of policy making; and the status of the report on challenges facing island schools. [2811/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): My Department recognises the very important role played by the island schools in maintaining the communities and culture of the islands, and is therefore strongly committed to the maintenance of the schools on the islands. For this reason and in recognition of the unique challenges faced by island schools my Department has provided additional supports to such schools.

Following the submission of correspondence to the Department, including the Oireachtas report identifying the unique challenges facing island schools, an intradepartmental working group was established in the Department of Education and Skills to explore the options for addressing these challenges and to set out recommendations to support post-primary schools located on islands in the Gaeltacht.

The working group recommended the provision of a ring-fenced package of supports to be provided to island post-primary schools from September 2018 as part of the implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022, as follows:

The teacher allocation for each of the island post-primary schools has increased from 1 whole-time equivalent (WTE) post to 1.5 WTE posts from September 2018.

An additional ring-fenced non-pay budget of €15,000 per annum has been allocated to each post-primary island school to cover the additional operational costs of these schools.

Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin, Co Galway, previously designated as a Language Unit (Aonad) attached to Coláiste Colmcille, Indreabhán, has been recognised as an independent stand-alone school under the aegis of Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board, from September 2018.

The above package of supports was implemented in full from September 2018. This package of supports was provided to the relevant schools in addition to supports that have already been provided under the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme, as outlined in Circulars 0034/2017 and 0022/2018, and any other scheme which a post-primary school may be eligible to access.

Officials of my Department will continue to monitor educational provision in island schools including the impact of relevant legislation and policies, and will liaise with officials of other Government Departments and agencies, as appropriate.

Schools Building Projects Status

192. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a building project for a school (details supplied); if the building works will make provision for additional ASD unit places; if so, the number; the timeline for completion of same; if it will be before September 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2874/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Deputy will be aware that the project to which he refers has been devolved for delivery to Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB).

My Department has given approval to KWETB to proceed with the appointment of a Design Team for the project. That process is currently underway. At this early stage it is not possible to provide a timeline for completion of same.

I can confirm that the building works will include a 4 classroom SEN Base.

State Examinations Commission

193. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a reply will issue from the State Examinations Commission further to his reply to parliamentary questions Nos. 209 to 2014, inclusive, of 16 October 2018, in view of Standing Order 42A(1) (a) of Dáil Éireann. [2882/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): A written response was issued by the State Examinations Commission to the Deputy's Dáil Eireann office on 26th October 2018 in compliance with Standing Order 42A(1)(a), which requires replies to be provided within ten days after the Question has been answered, not reckoning a Saturday, Sunday or public holiday.

Schools Building Projects Status

194. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if additional funding will be allocated towards the completion of a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2890/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I can confirm that officials from my Department have been in contact with the school authority of the school to which the Deputy refers regarding its application for additional funding.

Additional information has been requested from the school in respect of this application. When this information is submitted, the request for additional funding will be assessed. A final decision will issue directly to the school authority thereafter.

Schools Site Acquisitions

195. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the length of time the sourcing of land for the new school building to replace a school (details supplied) will take. [2891/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): My Department recently decided in order to meet future capacity needs across the area, that the school to which the Deputy refers should be replaced and expanded with a new 1,000 pupil school building. A new site will be required for the school and the Department will be liaising with KWETB with a view to the process for identifying a suitable site. At this early stage in the process, it is not possible for me to provide a timeframe. I can assure the Deputy that my Department will make every effort to progress the matter.

Ministerial Meetings

196. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has met a person (details supplied); the issues discussed; and when he will next meet the chief executive officer. [2900/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): At this time I have not had a dedicated meeting with a formal agenda with the person referred to by the Deputy. However, I met the person referred to when I informally met the CEOs of SOLAS and the Education and Training Boards prior to one of their scheduled meetings with my Department on 20th November 2018.

I have met formally with a range of key education stakeholders and my office is currently finalising arrangements for a number of further meetings. A meeting has not yet been confirmed with the person referred to but I expect this meeting to be confirmed shortly.

In relation to engagement with the further education and training sector more broadly, I formally met with Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) on 5th December 2018 as well as having attended a number of events relating to the sector.

Protected Disclosures

197. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when he expects to complete the examination of a protected disclosure (details supplied); the progress made to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2914/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The matters raised by the protected disclosure are still under consideration by my Department.

This process has not yet fully concluded.

My Department will write to the Discloser when its consideration of the protective disclosure has been concluded.

School Accommodation Provision

198. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress made to date in providing permanent accommodation for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2915/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Government is fully committed to supporting diversity of patronage in our education system to provide greater choice for parents.

Tuam ETNS was established by the Department in September 2015 under the Patronage Divesting process, which is a process to provide a new choice of school patronage in a number of areas with stable population.

This school was established as a 4-classroom school in a wing of the former St. Patrick's Secondary School, part of which was refurbished by the Department to allow for Tuam ETNS to be located there on an interim basis.

Discussions are underway in relation to an amalgamation of a number of primary schools in Tuam, which would make a building available for Tuam ETNS as its permanent location once the amalgamation has taken place. My Department envisages that it can facilitate the school expanding to an eight-classroom school once it is in this planned permanent accommodation.

My Department has agreed with the school's patron, Educate Together, that in common with all schools, this school will need to manage its enrolment levels in the context of its available accommodation.

Brexit Issues

199. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the recognition of professional qualifications will continue between Ireland and the United Kingdom in all Brexit scenarios, even in a no-deal scenario; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2916/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Both Ireland and the UK regulate access to a substantial number of professions by requiring professionals to hold relevant qualifications. Prior to joining the EU, there were formal, informal and administrative bilateral mechanisms between UK and Irish regulatory bodies to facilitate the recognition of professional qualifications, which facilitated the movement of persons between both jurisdictions.

Since EU accession, these arrangements have come to be overlain or to some degree replaced by the requirements of EU law. Ireland has approximately 190 such regulated professions, while the UK has approximately 216. Ireland's regulated professions are overseen by 44 Competent Authorities under the auspices of 9 Government Departments. Should the UK leave the EU on the basis of a No Deal scenario, the EU Directive on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (MRPQ) will no longer apply in the UK with effect from 29 March 2019. In the No Deal context, working with officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and other Departments with responsibility for the regulation of professions, my Department is leading work to ensure, in as far as possible, the provision of arrangements with the UK to recognise professional qualifications. As part of this process, my Department is encouraging contacts and dialogue between regulatory bodies in Ireland and the UK to facilitate the continued recognition of qualifications, including the development of protocols for transferring personal data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Should the UK Leave on the basis of an agreed Withdrawal Agreement, including a transition period, the current EU Directives will continue to apply to the UK during that time. The EU and the UK indicated in the Political Declaration setting out the framework of the Future Relationship between the EU and the UK that during negotiations on the Future Relations they should develop appropriate arrangements on those professional qualifications which are necessary to the pursuit of regulated professions and in the Parties' mutual interest.

Finally, it is important to note that persons who have had their professional qualifications recognised under the current EU Directives can continue to practice in either jurisdiction subject, of course, to compliance with all regulations within that profession.

School Admissions

200. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the baptism barrier provision in the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 will be commenced; if

schools can still request the submission of a baptismal cert in respect of a potential pupil in over subscribed schools and in under subscribed schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2924/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018, was signed into law by the President on the 18th July 2018.

This Act is an important piece of legislation which will introduce a more parent-friendly, equitable and consistent approach to how school admissions policy operates for the almost 4,000 primary and post-primary schools in this country and a fair and balanced school admission process for all pupils.

The Act contains a provision, which was commenced on 3rd October 2018 and is operational since that date, amending the Equal Status Act 2000 to prohibit the use of religion as a selection criterion in primary school admissions, with certain protections provided to ensure that a child of a minority religion can access a school providing a religious instruction or religious education programme consistent with his or her religious beliefs.

Junior Cycle Reform

201. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the junior certificate examination is meeting requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2960/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Framework for Junior Cycle presents a dual approach to assessment that supports student learning over the three years of junior cycle and also measures achievement at the end of those three years. This dual approach reduces the focus on one externally assessed examination as a means of assessing students and increases the prominence given to classroom-based assessment and formative assessment.

Implementation of the new Junior Cycle Framework commenced in September 2014 with the introduction of English, for first year students. Subjects are being introduced on a phased basis up to 2019 and are being supported by a comprehensive CPD programme for teachers.

Once each subject specification has been experienced by a cohort of students across the three-year span of their Junior Cycle, the NCCA will conduct an interim review to monitor enactment of the specification in schools.

As part of the Junior Cycle Framework, schools can now include programmes called Level 1 Learning Programmes (L1LPs) and Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) which are designed for students with particular special educational needs.

Schools Building Contractors

202. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding outstanding school building works at the various locations nationally which were held up following the collapse of a company (details supplied) in the UK ; and the degree to which each project is progressing in a satisfactory manner. [2961/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Schools Bundle 5 Public Private Partnership (PPP) programme comprises of five school buildings and one further education college across four sites in Bray, Wexford, Carlow and Kells. Completion of these

projects was delayed due to the liquidation of Carillion Construction Ltd in January 2018 and the examinership and subsequent liquidation of Carillion's sub-contractor, Sammon Contracting Ireland Ltd (SCIL).

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

The replacement contractor is now completing the remaining three buildings, Tyndall College and Carlow Institute of Further Education in Carlow, and Eureka Secondary School in Kells. While there has been a slight slippage in relation to the completion dates originally targeted by the replacement contractor, work is progressing well on all sites. NDFA and the Department continue to track progress very closely. A further meeting will take place in mid-February with all stakeholders to confirm/finalise target dates for completion.

Education and Training Provision

203. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the degree to which he remains satisfied regarding the adequacy of skills available throughout the education system to meet workplace requirements; if a need for improvement in this regard has been examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2962/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): The education and training system at all levels has a number of key strategies in place to ensure we meet existing and future skills demands in the workplace and equip young people with the skills to meet these demands, to enhance the level of human capital in Ireland and provide a solid basis for long-term economic sustainability and rising living standards. These strategies include, in particular, the National Skills Strategy 2025 and the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019, .

According to an OECD 2017 Report, the employment prospects and expected financial benefits from completing tertiary education in Ireland are also higher than in most other European countries, suggesting that the education system provides skills that are relevant to the labour market.

In relation to graduate supply, in 2017 there were a total of 48,931 graduates from the Higher Education system. Of this number, a significant proportion were in key skills areas, 2,765 were in ICT, 5,729 in Engineering Manufacturing and Construction and 4,200 in Science and Maths.

A new ICT Skills Action Plan has been developed by my Department in consultation with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, the National Skills Council and other key stakeholders. A central objective of the Plan is to increase graduate supply in this critical skills area.

I am satisfied that these and other important elements of my Departments strategies, developed in collaboration with key stakeholders, will help ensure that we are well prepared to meet our skills needs on an ongoing basis and to support the long-term success of our economy.

School Accommodation Provision

204. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress in respect of the various primary school projects throughout north County Kildare; the extent

to which local management requirements in each case continue to be met; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2963/19]

205. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress in respect of the various second-level school projects throughout north County Kildare; the extent to which local management requirements in each case continue to be met; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2964/19]

212. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the various school extension, improvement and new build requirements at primary and second level are progressing satisfactorily and in order with requirements as set out by local management in Leixlip, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2971/19]

213. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the various school extension, improvement and new build requirements at primary and second level are progressing satisfactorily and in order with requirements as set out by local management in Celbridge, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2972/19]

214. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the various school extension, improvement and new build requirements at primary and second level are progressing satisfactorily and in order with requirements as set out by local management in Kilcock, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2973/19]

215. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the various school extension, improvement and new build requirements at primary and second level are progressing satisfactorily and in order with requirements as set out by local management in Newtown, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2974/19]

216. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the various school extension, improvement and new build requirements at primary and second level are progressing satisfactorily and in order with requirements as set out by local management in Clane, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2975/19]

217. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the various school extension, improvement and new build requirements at primary and second level are progressing satisfactorily and in order with requirements as set out by local management in Naas, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2976/19]

218. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the various school extension, improvement and new build requirements at primary and second level are progressing satisfactorily and in order with requirements as set out by local management in Sallins, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3045/19]

219. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the various school extension, improvement and new build requirements at primary and second level are progressing satisfactorily and in order with requirements as set out by local management in Prosperous, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3046/19]

220. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent

to which the various school extension, improvement and new build requirements at primary and second level are progressing satisfactorily and in order with requirements as set out by local management in Leixlip, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3047/19]

221. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the various school extension, improvement and new build requirements at primary level are progressing satisfactorily and in order with requirements as set out by local management in Tiermohan, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3048/19]

222. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the various school extension, improvement and new build requirements at primary level are progressing satisfactorily and in order with requirements as set out by local management in Johnstownbridge, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3049/19]

223. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the various school extension, improvement and new build requirements at primary level are progressing satisfactorily and in order with requirements as set out by local management in Broadford, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3050/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 204, 205 and 212 to 223, inclusive, together.

The Deputy will be aware that my Department's Capital Programme continues to address the challenges posed by the significant bulge in pupil enrolments going through our schools. This has seen a significant expansion in the rate of provision of new school places.

The 2019 Primary and Post Primary Infrastructure allocation amounting to €672m will be expended primarily on the delivery of large scale projects and on the Additional Accommodation Scheme. Typically, expenditure levels of between 70% and 80% of the capital allocation available to schools annually is in respect of large scale projects and the Additional Accommodation Scheme. The balance available in 2019 will be expended on site acquisitions, the Summer Works Scheme, the Emergency Works Scheme, furniture and equipment provision and other smaller programmes.

The Capital Programme details the school projects that are being progressed through the architectural planning process, including schools at primary and post primary level in County Kildare. The Capital Programme also provides for devolved funding for additional classrooms, if required, for schools where an immediate enrolment need has been identified or where an additional teacher has been appointed. Details of schools listed on this programme can be found on my Department's website www.education.ie and this information is updated regularly.

The Deputy will also be aware of my announcement in April 2018 regarding the establishment of 42 new schools, including new primary schools in Maynooth, Leixlip and Naas and a new post primary school in Enfield to meet demand in the Kilcock school planning area, over the next four years (2019 to 2022). This announcement followed nationwide demographic exercises carried out by the Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

206. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent

to which adequate primary and second-level special needs school places are available to meet such requirements throughout north County Kildare; if he expects to be able to meet such demand in full in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2965/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Funding for special education provision in 2018 amounted to some €1.75 billion, up 43% since 2011 and equivalent to 18.7% of the gross overall allocation for education and training.

My Department's policy is to provide for the inclusive education of children with special educational needs in mainstream school settings, unless such a placement would not be in the best interests of the child concerned, or the children with whom they will be educated.

The greater proportion of children with special educational needs attend mainstream classes, but some require the environment of a special class or special school. The placement decision is based on a recommendation contained within a professional assessment.

Special school placements are provided for other students with very complex special needs who wouldn't manage in a mainstream school even for part of the week.

The NCSE is responsible, through its network of Special Needs Organisers (SENOs), for the development and delivery and co-ordination of education services to children with Special Educational Needs, including the establishment of special class and special school placements.

Since 2011, the NCSE has increased the number of special classes from 548 in 2011 to 1,459 across the country now.

The NCSE is aware of emerging need from year to year, including in Co Kildare, and where special provision, including special class provision, is required, it is planned and established to meet that need. This process is ongoing.

My Department continues to work with the NCSE to ensure that there is appropriate planning in place to ensure that all children including Children in Co. Kildare who will require special class placements can access such placements in schools within their communities.

There are 4 special schools and 75 special classes attached to mainstream schools in Co. Kildare. Of these, 57 are primary classes and 18 are post primary classes. A total of 160 new special classes have been opened for the 2018/19 school year. Details of all special classes for children with special educational needs are available on www.ncse.ie.

My Department is aware that the establishment of special class provision in some schools and communities can be challenging.

The Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 will assist in addressing this issue in areas where the NCSE is of the opinion that there is insufficient education provision for children with special educational needs.

Section 8 of the Act, which commenced from Monday 3rd December 2018, provides the Minister with a power, after a process of consultation with the NCSE, the board of management and the patron of the school, to compel a school to make additional provision for the education of children with special educational needs.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

207. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent

to which class sizes and pupil-teacher ratios at primary and second level nationally are falling into line with requirements and good practice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2966/19]

208. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the number of primary and second-level teachers in all areas nationally is adequate to meet the demand and good practice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2967/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 207 and 208 together.

Budget 2019 marks the third year of a major reinvestment in the education sector, as we continue to implement the Action Plan for Education, our plan to make Ireland's education and training service the best in Europe by 2026. In 2019, the budget for the Department of Education and Skills will increase by €674 million, a 6.7% increase on last year. In total, the Education budget will have increased by €1.7 billion compared to 2016.

Budget 2019 will see numbers employed in our schools reach the highest ever level. Over 1,300 additional posts in schools will be funded, including more than 370 teaching posts to cater for growth in student population and additional special classes. This builds on the Budget 2018 measure which provided a one point improvement in the staffing schedule in primary schools which brings the position to the most favourable ever seen at primary level.

The 2018/19 school year saw an increase of over 6000 teaching posts in our schools compared to the 2015/16 school year.

The Statistics Section of my Department's website contains extensive data in relation to our schools including pupil teacher ratios and teacher numbers. The latest figures in relation to pupil teacher ratios show an improved ratio of teachers to students from 16:1 to 15.3:1 at primary level and 13.8:1 to 13.1:1 at post primary level when comparing the 2015/16 school year to the 2017/18 school year.

Gaelcholáistí Issues

209. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position in regard to the Gaelcholáiste for north County Kildare; the progress to date in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2968/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Maynooth Community College opened in 2014 with an Irish-medium Aonad and it was stated that should the Aonad demonstrate sufficient viability after four years from its date of establishment, a Gaelcholáiste would be established.

As the Deputy will be aware, Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB) and An Foras Pátrúnachta had been working through the practical arrangements necessary to facilitate the establishment of a new Gaelcholáiste. My Department received correspondence from both of these parties in December 2018 and has recently responded to both parties.

The Department has confirmed that the Gaelcholáiste is to be established from September 2019. KWETB will commence immediately the process of working through the necessary arrangements, including the appointment of a principal, with a view to opening the school for September 2019.

School Patronage

210. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which progress continues to be made in regard to the patronage of primary and second-level schools nationally in general and in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2969/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Programme for Government commits to increasing the number of multi-/non-denominational schools to 400 such schools by 2030. As the Deputy will be aware, my Department has developed the Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process which is a new process to deliver on this commitment through patronage transfer, in line with the choices of local parents and school communities.

There are two Phases to the new process – the Identification Phase and the Implementation Phase.

The Identification Phase is currently underway in 16 areas nationwide. Each of the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) have selected an initial pilot area within their functional area where they consider, based on census data and local knowledge, there is likely to be an oncoming demand for greater diversity of patronage in educational provision. Surveys of parents of pre-school children have been carried out in these areas by the relevant City/County Childcare Committee on behalf of the ETBs. ETBs, having analysed the survey results, draw up comprehensive reports on the position in relation to each of the 16 pilot areas. This forms the basis of discussions with the most prevalent patron/landowner in the area (the Catholic Bishop in most cases) concerning the transfer of patronage of an existing school, or schools, to meet that oncoming demand. The response by the landowner/patron to any identified demand for greater diversity is included in the report prepared by the ETB, for submission to my Department, which intends to publish the final reports.

Following the finalisation of the first round of reports, it is intended that the process would move into the Implementation Phase. This Phase involves consultation with local school communities on accommodating demand for diversity of patronage by transferring patronage of an existing school to a new multi-/non-denominational patron. Draft protocols for the Implementation Phase are at an advanced stage of development.

In relation to Kildare specifically, a town/area in County Kildare has not been identified for survey as Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board has chosen to survey Bray in Co. Wicklow as part of this initial roll-out. A second round of town selections and surveys of pre-school parents will be organised by ETBs when the outcomes of the initial round of pilot surveys have been assessed and any necessary adjustments made in the Schools Reconfiguration process.

The Schools Reconfiguration process, which involves the transfer of live schools, has the potential to significantly increase patronage diversity in our school system.

In addition to the process outlined above, the “early movers” provision of this process enables school communities which have already decided to seek a transfer of patronage (independent of the survey process) to request their existing patron to apply to the Minister for a direct transfer of patronage under section 8 of the Education Act.

Public Private Partnerships

211. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps that can be taken in the future to avoid the situations such as the collapse of a company (details supplied) in the UK with particular reference to its effect on various school building projects here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2970/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Schools Bundle 5 Public Private Partnership (PPP) programme was delayed due to the liquidation of Carillion Construction Ltd in January 2018 and the examinership and subsequent liquidation of Carillion's sub-contractor, Sammon Contracting Ireland Ltd (SCIL).

As the Deputy will be aware, the factors which contributed to the collapse of Carillion have been the subject of extensive review and inquiry in the UK, including a report prepared by the UK parliament, which was published in May 2018. This report examined a number of different issues, which included Carillion's business approach and corporate governance, and also proposed a number of conclusions, lessons and recommendations.

My Department is in the process of undertaking our own lessons learned exercise which will look at a number of different issues relating to Schools Bundle 5, including financial robustness reviews, contract structures, impacts on sub-contractors, and construction monitoring. Once construction is completed on the remaining three schools in the Schools Bundle 5 programme, we will be in a position to finalise this lessons learned report.

Questions Nos. 212 to 223, inclusive, answered with Question No. 204.

Cóiríocht Scoile

224. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pearse Doherty** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cén fáth gur diúltaíodh d' iarratas ar chóiríocht bhreise ó scoil i gcontae Dhún na nGall (sonraí curtha ar fáil); an aithníonn sé go bhfuil géarghá ann le seomra ilfhóinteach a thógáil ar shuíomh na scoile chun freastal ar riachtanais oideachais, oiliúna agus eile de chuid daltaí; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [3051/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Ba mhaith liom a chur in iúl don Teachta Dála go bhfuil seomra ilchuspóireach na scoile in úsáid mar chóiríocht do sheomra ranga príomhshrutha, agus go bhfuil an socrú seo ann le roinnt blianta anuas. Rinne an scoil iarratas ar sheomra ranga breise ansin chun go bhféadfaí an seomra ilchuspóireach a fháil ar ais le haghaidh na húsáide dá raibh sé beartaithe ar dtús.

Mar thoradh ar éilimh éagsúla atá in iomaíocht lena chéile a bheith ar bhuiséad caipitil na Roinne tá ar an Roinn an maoiniú atá ar fáil a chur in ord tosaíochta le haghaidh cóiríocht seomra ranga fíor-riachtanach chun freastal ar éileamh déimeagrafach.

Dá bhrí sin ní raibh ar chumas mo Roinne deontas don gcuspóir sin a chur ar fáil. Scríobh an scoil chuig mo Roinn le déanaí maidir leis an scéal agus tabharfaidh mo Roinn freagra ar litir na scoile go luath.

School Funding

225. **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. [3062/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I can confirm to the Deputy

that the school in question submitted an application for major capital investment. Applications from schools for major capital works must be considered in the context of the demographic challenge facing the education system in the coming years. In order to meet the needs of our growing population of school going children, my Department must establish new schools as well as extending a number of existing schools in areas where demographic growth has been identified. The delivery of these new schools, together with extension projects to meet future demand, will be the main focus of my Department's budget for the coming years. As the school in question is not located in an area of significant demographic growth, my Department is not in a position currently to consider the school's request for funding. The position has been outlined to the school.

I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department's capital investment programme also provides for devolved funding for additional classrooms for existing schools where an immediate enrolment need has been identified.

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

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

School Funding

226. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if essential funding will be awarded to a school (details supplied) in order to complete urgent building works. [3093/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the deputy is aware the extension to the school to which he refers has been devolved to the school authority for delivery.

On 31 January 2018 my department approved a grant to construct a new 80-square metre mainstream classroom with en-suite toilets, another 80-square metre classroom to replace a prefabricated classroom, an assisted user toilet and three resource rooms to replace existing prefabricated units.

On 6 September 2018, the school sent a combined stage 1/2A report to my department for approval prior to making a planning application. The report contained an increased scope of works. A letter was issued to the school authority by my department on 13 December. This letter informed the school that the increased scope of works was not approved and additional funding would not be provided in that context.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

227. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if funding will be awarded to complete an ASD unit at a school (details supplied). [3096/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has completed its assessment of the application for a Special Education Needs (SEN) Base at the school in question. Funding has been approved for the SEN base and the school has been advised accordingly.

Schools Building Projects Status

228. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the timeframe for commencement of school building works at a school (details supplied). [3097/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The project referred to by the Deputy has been devolved for delivery to the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA).

I can inform the Deputy that the NDFA has started preparations for the appointment of a design team for the project. This appointment will be a key first step in the design and construction stages. While at this early stage it is not possible to provide a timeline for completion of the project, the NDFA will be engaging directly with the school authority to keep it informed of progress.

School Enrolments

229. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of children expected to start school in September 2019; and the estimated proportion of children born in 2015 who are assumed to make use of the second year of early childhood care and education, ECCE. [3098/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): According to the Department's projections of first level enrolments, 65,700 children are expected in Junior Infants in the 2019/2020 academic year. Further information on these projections can be found on the Department's website at the following link:

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Reports/Other-Statistical-Reports.html>

The ECCE Scheme is the responsibility of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, and they would be best placed to provide information on the uptake of the scheme.

School Enrolments

230. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the expected fall in national school pupils in County Donegal from current levels in years (details supplied), respectively. [3099/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department is very aware of the importance of small schools to rural communities and particularly the most dispersed and remote communities. To provide such communities with security about the future of their schools, a commitment is contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government not to close any small school without the consent of parents.

I also wish to advise the Deputy that the decision making authority for a school closure

belongs to the Patron of a school, and this is subject to the agreement of the Department. Any proposal to close a school must involve consultation with all of the relevant stakeholders, parents, teachers, students and local communities and follow decisions taken at local level.

I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has not received any correspondence from the patrons of primary schools in County Donegal relating to plans to close schools under their patronage.

Garda Transport Data

231. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of times an on-duty Garda vehicle has been involved in an accident while on duty in each of the years 2011 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2450/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The table, provided by An Garda Síochána, outlines by incident-type, different incidents involving on-duty Garda vehicles in respect of each year during the period 2011 to 2018. The table includes information on ramming incidents and malicious damage, as well as accidents, and serves to illustrate the dangers facing members of An Garda Síochána while using vehicles to carry out the vital duty of protecting the safety of citizens.

Year	Accidents	Ramming	Malicious Damage	Total
2011	543	62	24	629
2012	524	51	25	600
2013	508	64	20	592
2014	515	55	44	614
2015	550	70	40	660
2016	498	82	31	611
2017	568	71	34	673
2018	517	71	16	604
Total	4,223	526	234	4,983

Garda Stations

232. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the planning construction and delivery timeline for the provision of the new Garda station at Caltragh, County Sligo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2466/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, there has been unprecedented investment in An Garda Síochána in recent years, in support of the Government's commitment to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement and provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime.

The resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation for 2019 of €1.76 billion. Very significant capital investment is also being made in An Garda Síochána, including investment of €342 million in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021; and investment of €46 million in the Garda Fleet over the same period.

Considerable capital investment is also being made in the Garda estate.

The Deputy will appreciate that the programme of replacement and refurbishment of Garda accommodation is progressed by the Garda authorities working in close co-operation with the Office of Public Works (OPW), which has responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation.

The Garda Building and Refurbishment Programme 2016-2021 is an ambitious 5-year programme based on agreed Garda priorities, which continues to benefit over 30 locations around the country, underpinned by over €60 million Exchequer funding as well as a major Public Private Partnership (PPP). There has been some good progress on the programme in 2018, as well as in other major projects in relation to the Garda estate, including in particular completion and entry into operational use of 3 new Divisional and Regional Headquarters at Wexford, Galway and Kevin Street Dublin, which collectively required funding of over €100 million. The clear goal of this investment is to address deficiencies in the Garda estate and provide fit-for-purpose facilities for Garda members and staff as well as the public interacting with them.

The Public Private Partnership arrangement included in the Building and Refurbishment Programme is intended to deliver new stations at Clonmel, Macroom and Sligo as well as a new custody suite at the Garda Station at Anglesea Street, Cork.

I am informed by the OPW and the Garda authorities that the OPW has acquired sites for the development of the new stations in Macroom and Caltragh, Sligo. I am further informed that the final outstanding difficulty in relation to completion of transfer of the site at Clonmel from Tipperary County Council to the OPW has now also been resolved and the transfer is now being finalised. On completion, ownership of all three sites will be vested in the OPW.

The development of PPP projects is progressed under the auspices of the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA). My Department is engaging with the NDFA with a view to progressing the matter further. My Department is also engaging with the NDFA in relation to delivery via PPP of a Courts Service project at a site in Hammond Lane, Dublin 7.

It is not possible at this point to provide a timeframe for the completion of these projects, including the new Garda station at Caltragh, Sligo. However I can assure the Deputy that delivery of the new Garda stations at Clonmel, Macroom and Sligo through this PPP arrangement is being pursued as a priority.

Parental Leave

233. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans for the extension of parental leave; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2559/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): It is important to note that the Government has always been, and continues to be, supportive of the principle of Parental Leave. 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 later this year. 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 12 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.

Prison Service Staff

234. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason applicants who were successful for the position of Irish Prison Service, PS, recruit prison officer have been awaiting security clearance since July 2018. [2311/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will understand, prior to making an appointment to the position of recruit prison officer, the Irish Prison Service is obliged to make such inquiries as are deemed necessary to determine the suitability of candidates. Until all stages of the recruitment process have been fully completed, a final determination as to the success of any candidate cannot be made, nor can it be deemed or inferred that such a determination has been made.

Given the level of responsibility in prison officer positions, it is necessary for checks to be carried out by An Garda Síochána on persons considered for this employment. These checks can take time to complete for a variety of reasons, some of which may be outside of the control of the Garda Authorities, depending on the circumstances of the individual case. However, I am assured that every effort is made to expedite this process to the greatest extent possible.

Inspector of Prisons

235. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a list of members of the advisory group to the Office of the Inspector of Prisons will be provided. [2368/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I understand that the Inspector of Prisons is currently considering the establishment of an advisory group, but that this has not been finalised.

Visa Applications

236. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of an appeal for a visa in the case of a person (details supplied); when the appeal is likely to be concluded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2387/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that an appeal was received by the Visa Office in Dublin on 12 December 2018. The Appeals Officer has requested additional information and is waiting for a reply. All documentation submitted with the original application and any additional information submitted will be fully considered.

As with all visa application processes, an appeal is dealt with in the order of date received in the Visa Office. While every effort is made to process appeals as quickly as possible, processing times can vary depending on the number of appeals received, whether investigation is required or not, available resources and the complexity of the case.

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.

Insurance Fraud

237. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons convicted of an offence under section 29(1) of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004 since 2004; the sentence and-or fine imposed in each case; the number of persons convicted of an offence under section 29(2) of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004 since 2004; the sentence and-or fine imposed in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2437/19]

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

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had inquiries made and the Courts Service has advised that statistics are not currently compiled in such a way as to provide information requested by the Deputy with regard to section 29(1) or 29(2) of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004.

The Deputy may be aware that the Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance, published in January 2018 by the Department of Finance, recognised the data challenges in establishing the number of initial complaints and investigations through to the resultant cases of prosecutions and convictions relating to fraud within the personal injuries area and the Report made recommendations to address this matter.

I am informed that while technical issues arose with the introduction of a new "insurance fraud" category on the PULSE system, these issues have now been resolved and the collection of statistics under the new category has commenced. However, as the category was only introduced on the PULSE system on 2 November 2018, it is too soon to produce meaningful statistics in relations to recorded crimes, prosecutions or convictions under this new category.

Garda Deployment

238. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the contingency plans in place to replace the large number of gardaí out of work due to suffering an injury on duty in view of the fact that overtime is no longer being sanctioned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2442/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, the manner in which the resources of the Garda Síochána are deployed is solely a matter for the Garda Commissioner and his management team and I, as Minister, have no direct role in this regard. It is a matter for the Divisional Chief Superintendent to determine the optimum distribution of duties among the personnel available taking account of those unavailable due to illness/incapacity and having regard to the profile of the area and its specific needs.

I am informed by the Commissioner that, as at 18/01/2019, the number of Gardaí out of work due to injury received while on duty was 149, comprising 12 Sergeants and 137 Gardaí.

This amounts to 1% of the total number of Gardaí.

Since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, almost 2,400 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. This accelerated recruitment of Gardaí saw Garda numbers reach just over 14,000 by the end of 2018. The Garda Commissioner has also informed me that it is his intention to recruit a total of 600 trainee Gardaí in 2019 along with a net 600 Garda Staff (civilians). The recruitment of these additional Garda staff will allow the Commissioner to redeploy this year a further 500 fully trained Gardaí from administrative duties to the frontline duties for which they are trained.

I believe that the injection of this large number of experienced officers into the field, along with the new recruits, will not only be really beneficial in terms of protecting communities but will also more than adequately make up for those Garda members who have unfortunately been injured on duty.

An Garda Síochána is committed to supporting all employees for medical or recuperative reasons following injury or a period of illness and will continue, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer, to afford all reasonable accommodations in workplace arrangements following periods of absence and on medical advice. Such accommodations may include adapted patterns of working time and modifications of duties to facilitate reintegration into the workplace.

Furthermore, a total budget of €1.76 billion has been provided to An Garda Síochána in 2019 including up to €95 million available for the provision of overtime, an increase of over €100 million on the 2018 allocation. This substantial investment will provide new and leading edge technology to support our front line Gardaí in carrying out their work and increasing visibility in both rural and urban communities.

This and on-going recruitment will clearly provide the Commissioner with the resources needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí to deliver a visible effective and responsive policing service to communities across all Garda Divisions.

Refugee Data

239. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there are more decisions outstanding from the first round of the Irish refugee protection programme humanitarian admission programme (details supplied); the reason for the high refusal rate for same in view of the fact that there are a total of 530 places available on the programme; and if a second round of applications is open. [2455/19]

240. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there are decisions outstanding from the first round of applications for the refugee protection programme and humanitarian admission programme; and the reason for the perceived extremely high refusal rate (details supplied) in view of the fact that there are a total of 530 places available on the programme and a second round of applications is currently open. [2477/19]

250. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 448 of 15 January 2019, the number of applications received including those deemed incomplete by nationality. [2775/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 239, 240 and 250 together.

The Irish Refugee Protection Programme Humanitarian Admission Programme (IHAP),

which I announced in May 2018, provides a new humanitarian pathway for eligible family members coming from the world's top ten major source countries of refugees based on the UNHCR Annual Global Trends Report. The IHAP is part of the Government's plan to realise the full commitment of 4,000 persons agreed under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme in September 2015.

The IHAP provides for up to 530 vulnerable family members to be admitted under the programme before the end of 2019. The first IHAP window for proposals closed on 30 June 2018 and I recently announced the second window for proposals from 20 December 2018 until 08 February 2019.

Of the 908 proposals received during the first window a significant number from eligible countries were incomplete (694 proposals in respect of 1672 beneficiaries). I have been advised that INIS officials have provided individualised feedback to those whose proposals were incomplete with a view to a new completed proposal being submitted during the current window. In addition, 94 proposals were refused for not meeting the following IHAP criteria:

- the proposer not having the right status - i.e not a refugee or a citizen,
- beneficiary was from a country not covered under IHAP
- was not living in their country of origin or a neighbouring country, or
- was not a family member.

The tables set out the total number of proposals received from eligible and non eligible countries and the numbers of completed proposals granted.

Finally, it should be noted that processing is nearing completion in respect of all proposals received in the first window, with a total of 28 cases which are undergoing final checks. It is anticipated that decisions will issue shortly in those cases.

Proposals from Eligible Countries

Nationality	Proposers	Beneficiaries
Democratic Republic of Congo	368	741
Syria	197	467
Somalia	121	392
Afghanistan	93	259
Sudan	75	212
Eritrea	17	27
South Sudan	8	28
Burundi	5	8
Myanmar	3	3
Central African Republic	0	0
Grand Total	887	2137

Proposals from Non-eligible Countries

Nationality	Proposers	Beneficiaries
Iraq	6	14
Angola	2	5

Nationality	Proposers	Beneficiaries
China	2	2
Ethiopia	2	10
Palestine	2	4
Bangladesh	1	1
Egypt	1	1
Kenya	1	3
Lebanon	1	2
Libya	1	4
Saudi Arabia	1	2
Senegal	1	1
Total	21	49

Completed proposals and Grants from Eligible Countries

	Completed Proposals Received	Completed Proposals Received	Proposals Granted	Proposals Granted
Nationality	Proposers	Beneficiaries	Proposers	Beneficiaries
Democratic Republic of Congo	55	95	21	31
Syria	71	181	28	56
Somalia	26	94	5	12
Afghanistan	33	99	11	22
Sudan	21	27	13	15
Eritrea	3	3	3	3
South Sudan	3	9	-	-
Burundi	1	2	1	2
Myanmar	1	1	-	-
Total	214	511	82	141

Personal Injury Claims

241. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to introduce a legislative cap on general damages that can be sought in personal injury claims (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2517/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The matter raised by the Deputy is the subject of a recommendation made by the Cost of Insurance Working Group in its Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance published in January 2018. As the Deputy will be aware, the Cost of Insurance Working Group, chaired by Minister of State Michael D’Arcy TD, brings together the relevant Departments and Offices involved in undertaking a review of the factors which are influencing the increased cost of insurance. Its objective is to identify immediate and longer term measures which address increasing costs, while bearing in mind the need to maintain a stable insurance sector. I am aware, from my own Department’s active participation in the ongoing work of the Group, that the adverse impact of insurance costs and claims on voluntary and community projects which has been raised by the Deputy is among the Group’s key considerations.

Under Recommendation 5 of the Working Groups January 2018 Report, the Law Reform Commission was requested to undertake a detailed analysis of the possibility of developing constitutionally sound legislation to delimit or cap the amounts of damages which a court may award in respect of some or all categories of personal injuries. As tasked by the Working Group, my Department wrote to the Law Reform Commission to that effect on 9 February 2018.

The Law Reform Commission has now, I understand, included this proposal for consideration as part of its draft Fifth Programme of Law Reform. As part of the process for its adoption, the Government has referred the draft Fifth Programme to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality which is expected to report back shortly. On that basis, it would be anticipated that the Fifth Programme will be finalised soon at which point the timeline for the delivery of its various outputs by the Law Reform Commission, including in relation to the capping of damages, will be determined.

Prison Building Programme

242. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a decision will issue to release moneys for works at Limerick Prison; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2535/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that as a result of a tender competition for a substantial development at Limerick prison a preferred bidder has been identified.

It is anticipated that the Irish Prison Service will be in a position to issue a Letter of Acceptance in the very near future. Capital payments will be released following certification of the work by technical consultants.

Garda Strength

243. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each Garda station in County Tipperary as at 30 December 2018; the number of new recruits assigned to the division since recruitment resumed in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2553/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, the manner in which the resources of the Garda Síochána are deployed is solely a matter for the Garda Commissioner and his management team and I, as Minister, have no direct role in this regard. I am informed by the Commissioner that Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of resources.

Since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, just under 2,400 recruits have attested as members and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide including 800 trainees who passed out from the college during 2018. The Government has increased the budget for An Garda Síochána to €1.76 billion for 2019, which includes provision for the recruitment of up to 800 Gardaí this year. The Commissioner has now informed me that he plans to recruit a total of 600 trainee Gardaí in 2019 and, in addition, it is his intention to recruit a net 600 Garda Civilian Staff. This Garda Staff recruitment will allow the Commissioner to re-deploy a further 500 fully trained Gardaí from administrative duties to frontline policing in 2019.

The Garda Commissioner has confirmed that the Government's commitment to increase the overall strength of An Garda Síochána to 15,000 Garda members will be achieved by the target date of 2021. The Government fully supports the Commissioner's management decision which will ensure that increasing numbers of Gardaí are available for frontline duties in the prevention and detection of criminal activity whether it be in the area of drug offences crime or otherwise in 2019 and beyond.

The Garda strength of the Tipperary Division as of 31 December 2018 as provided by the Garda Commissioner is available on my Department's website at the following link:

Garda strength of the Tipperary Division

The information requested by the Deputy regarding new recruits as provided by the Garda Commissioner, is available on my Department's website at the following link:

New Recruits as provided by the Garda Commissioner

Family Reunification Data

244. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of applications for family reunification made in 2018 by recognised refugees or persons granted subsidiary protection under the policy document on non-EEA family reunification published on 31 December 2013; the number of applications by recognised refugees or persons granted subsidiary protection which were processed in accordance with the policy document in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2600/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The principal manner by which those who have been granted refugee status by the State can seek family reunification is provided for in the International Protection Act 2015. Specifically, sections 56 and 57 provides for reunification where the family member is as defined in section 56(9) of that Act.

In addition, earlier this year I announced a new scheme for family reunification – the Irish Humanitarian Admissions Programme 2 (IHAP). The IHAP is a humanitarian admissions programme which gives persons granted international protection status in the State, and Irish citizens, the opportunity to apply to bring family members who are nationals of one of the top ten major countries of refugees, as listed in the UNHCR Annual Global Trends report, to this State. The first IHAP call for proposals closed on 30th June 2018 and I recently announced a second window for receipt of proposals from 20th December, 2018 until 8th February.

The policy document referred to by the Deputy is a general policy to cover the broad range of persons legally in the State who wishes to apply for their family members to join them. I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that, as the criteria for qualification under the policy does not consider the original basis by which the sponsor came to have permission to be in the State, statistics in the manner requested by the Deputy are not collected in such a way that enables the data requested to be provided.

Courts Service Expenditure

245. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the capital funding allocated between January 2019 and 2024 for the refurbishment of existing courthouses or the construction of new courthouses; the amount of this money which has already been allocated; the process by which courthouses are assessed for investment; and if he will make a statement

on the matter. [2622/19]

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

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had inquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that, at present, the Courts Service has a capital buildings allocation of €4.88m per annum with an extra €10m in funding being provided in 2020. The annual unitary charge payments will also continue in respect of the recently completed Courts Public Private Partnership Bundle, which delivered newly constructed or extended/refurbished courthouses at Drogheda, Letterkenny, Wexford, Limerick, Waterford, Cork and Mullingar (€14.7m per annum) and the Criminal Courts of Justice building (€22.9m per annum).

The Deputy will also be aware that the Government's National Development Plan 2018-2027 includes a number of courthouse projects to be completed during the period of the plan. These projects include:

- A major Family Law and Children's Court Complex on a site adjacent to the Four Courts at Hammond Lane in Dublin;

- Further new or refurbished courthouses in regional cities and county towns where facilities remain substandard (including Galway City, Wicklow Town, Portlaoise, Tralee and Roscommon) and further provincial locations such as Dungloe and Tuam;

- Construction of standard county town type court facilities at a number of locations in County Dublin and also in North Kildare, Bray and Navan;

- A nationwide condition survey of all court buildings in the estate will be undertaken to determine their condition and identify works required in relation to any issues identified and meet ongoing maintenance requirements.

With regard to the Hammond Lane project there continues to be on-going discussions with the Courts Service in regard to a number of issues including aspects of the funding proposal. The project will also require sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform before it can proceed.

The precise allocation and timing of additional funding for the remaining projects to be completed over the entire ten year period of the plan remains to be fully determined. It will be dependent on the outcome of further detailed planning and analysis of costs which will determine prioritisation of projects from a timing and budgetary perspective.

The Courts Service has also informed me that the Courts Service Building Committee, which is a subcommittee of the Courts Service Board, determines which projects are prioritised for capital investment. At present, the Courts Service is prioritising the provision of modern facilities in those remaining regional city and county town locations where new or extended/refurbished courthouses have not been provided in recent times and the current priority locations are Galway City, Wicklow Town, Portlaoise, Tralee and Roscommon.

Immigration Policy

246. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the arrangements he anticipates for the holders of stamp 4 EUFAM permission to remain here under the

European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2015 in the event of a no-deal Brexit when the family member of a stamp holder is a British citizen; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2669/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Officials in the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department are preparing for a variety of scenarios, including the possibility of a no-deal Brexit.

As part of those deliberations, arrangements for current holders of EUFAM permissions already granted under the European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2015 are currently being examined by my officials. While not wishing to pre-empt the outcome, I would anticipate that current holders will generally continue to enjoy residence conditions in the State equivalent to those previously held.

Under Common Travel Area arrangements, which predates Ireland and the United Kingdom's accession to the European Union, British and Irish nationals will continue to enjoy rights, including the right to residency and the right to work in each other's territories.

Departmental Expenditure

247. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will publish the airline costs for his Department for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2696/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Department of Justice and Equality uses the central government air travel contract for commercial air travel. This contract was awarded to Club Travel, following a public procurement exercise carried out by the Office of Government Procurement, and came into effect on 1 August 2017. Costs are kept to a minimum through seeking the most competitive rate available at the time of request and by booking tickets as far in advance as possible.

In 2018, the Department spent €1,257,863 on airline costs.

This included €906,504 by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, the vast majority of which related to air travel for those subject to deportation or removal orders and transfers under the Dublin III Regulation and for accompanying Garda escorts. A further €36,255 was incurred by the Reception and Integration Agency, who have a role in assisting with the return of destitute citizens of certain EU States.

The remaining €315,104 was incurred in respect of employee business-related travel.

Departmental Expenditure

248. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will publish the cost of newspapers in his Department in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2713/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The total spend on newspapers by my Department in 2018 was €53,067. A sustained effort has been made to reduce the spend on newspapers over recent years, this has brought the spend down to the current figure from a total of €80,818 in 2010.

Garda Vetting Applications

249. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps he will take to expedite an application for vetting clearance to enable a person (details supplied) to take up a job appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2756/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that the primary purpose of Garda vetting for employment purposes is to support protection for children and vulnerable adults and that the processing of vetting applications by the Garda National Vetting Bureau is an operational matter for the Garda Authorities and is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012-2016 and other relevant law. My Department has no role in the processing of individual vetting applications.

However, in order to assist the Deputy I have had enquiries made and I am advised by the Garda Authorities that, as of 17 January 2019, records at the Garda National Vetting Bureau indicate that no valid Garda vetting application has been received in respect of the person who is the subject of the Deputy's Question. In the circumstances, I would advise the person concerned to contact the relevant Registered Organisation to ascertain the status of their vetting application.

Question No. 250 answered with Question No. 239.

Visa Applications

251. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 449 of 7 September 2018, if he will report on the additional resources assigned to process visa applications from India (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2780/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have been advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that visa processing times have improved in the New Delhi Visa Office in recent weeks. The Embassy website has been updated to reflect current processing times for each visa category.

As outlined previously, the Policy Document on Non-EEA Family reunification contains a stated business target that visa applications to join family members should be dealt with between 6 to 12 months of the application being made. This business target reflects the detailed and often complex assessment that is required to be carried out in relation to applications for family reunification. The processing time for this type of visa is currently 8 months (the medium of the business target timeframe).

The Deputy can be assured that every effort is made to keep processing times to a minimum. As I have previously indicated, additional staff were allocated to the New Delhi Visa Office to process rising numbers of visa applications in addition to the streamlining of visa processing where possible. I understand this is making a difference and the position continues to be kept under review.

Gambling Sector

252. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parlia-

mentary Question No. 251 of 6 February 2018, the enforcement role An Garda Síochána has in regard to unlicensed gaming activities and the availability of gaming machines in locations in which gaming is prohibited; when the report he requested from the Garda authorities on this matter in February 2018 will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2789/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As set out in, and attached to my response to the Deputy in Parliamentary Question number 70 of 5 July 2018, the following table from the Garda authorities sets out the number of incidents recorded for offences under the Betting Acts 1853/1931, as amended, as well as offences under the Gaming and Lotteries Act, 1956 for the period 2010-2017.

As the Deputy will appreciate, An Garda Síochána is responsible for the investigation of allegations of criminality in relation to unlicensed gaming activities and I, as Minister, have no role in such matters. However, I can assure the Deputy that any reports made to An Garda Síochána alleging possible breaches of gaming law will be fully investigated by Gardaí. Where appropriate, the independent Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), having examined the evidence, will then decide what charges are to be brought forward and for what crime.

Year	Betting Acts	Gaming & Lotteries
2017	3	13
2016	0	14
2015	6	27
2014	15	47
2013	15	61
2012	9	21
2011	6	34
2010	7	96

Statistics provided are operational, provisional and liable to change and are valid to 1st February, 2018

Incidents include the following offences:

- A person operating a betting office without a licence.
- A betting Office open on Easter Sunday.
- A bookmaker makes a bet or engages in a betting transaction with a person under 18 years of age.
- The licensee of a public house is found to have a gaming machine in operation in his pub and therefore commits an offence under the Gaming and Lotteries Act 1956.
- A person is found selling lottery tickets for a charity without ID or authorisation.

The National Lottery is not covered under these Acts.

Garda Expenditure

253. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the average cost to purchase each type of specialist dog (details supplied) used by the Garda dog unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2797/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, in accordance with Section 26 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, as amended, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for carrying on and managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. Further, the allocation of Garda resources is a matter for the Commissioner, in light of the availability of resources and his identified operational demands. As Minister I have no direct role in these matters.

I have been advised by the Garda authorities that the Garda Dog Unit is based at Kilmainham Garda Station, in the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) and has a national remit. I am pleased to confirm that dog units have also been established in the Southern Region based at Togher Garda Station, Cork, and Henry Street Garda Station, Limerick. I understand that facilities for a future regional dog unit have also been included in the Western Region Garda Headquarters, Galway.

I am informed that there are currently 25 dogs attached to the Garda Dog Unit, comprising general purpose (search), drugs and explosive detection dogs. Of these I understand that 20 dogs are currently located in the DMR and 5 are located in the Southern Region.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the cost of purchasing Garda Dogs varies, ranging from approximately €1500 to €3000 in respect of a German Shepherd, and from approximately €1000 to €1500 in respect of a Springer Spaniel and Labrador.

I understand that the duration and cost of training for dogs in the Garda Dog Unit varies depending on what purpose the dog in question will be used for and that training of Garda dogs is provided in house.

Garda Resources

254. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated cost of increasing the funding to the Garda National Technical Bureau by 15%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2798/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, there has been unprecedented investment in An Garda Síochána in recent years, in support of the Government's commitment to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement and provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime.

The resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation for 2019 of €1.76 billion. This represents an increase of over 6% over the initial allocation for 2018.

Very significant capital investment is also being made in An Garda Síochána. This includes investment of €342 million in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021 to enable An Garda Síochána to deliver on reform and deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in delivering professional policing and security services for the community; investment of €46 million in the Garda Fleet over the same period; as well as considerable capital investment in addressing the deficiencies in the Garda estate.

As the Deputy will appreciate, in accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for carrying on and managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. Further, the allocation of Garda resources is a matter for the Commissioner, in light of the availability of resources and his iden-

tified operational demands. As Minister I have no direct role in these matters.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the expenditure for the Garda Technical Bureau Division in 2018 was €6,718,762. Using that expenditure as the basis for the calculation, I am informed that a 15% increase in funding would involve additional funds of approximately €1,007,814 (rounded), for a total of approximately €7,726,576.

Garda Resources

255. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated cost of increasing the funding to the Garda National Protective Services Bureau by 15%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2799/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, there has been unprecedented investment in An Garda Síochána in recent years, in support of the Government's commitment to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement and provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime.

The resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation for 2019 of €1.76 billion. This represents an increase of over 6% over the initial allocation for 2018.

Very significant capital investment is also being made in An Garda Síochána. This includes investment of €342 million in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021 to enable An Garda Síochána to deliver on reform and deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in delivering professional policing and security services for the community; investment of €46 million in the Garda Fleet over the same period; as well as considerable capital investment in addressing the deficiencies in the Garda estate.

As the Deputy will appreciate, in accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for carrying on and managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána, including by arranging for the recruitment and training of members of An Garda Síochána. Further, the allocation of Garda resources is a matter for the Commissioner, in light of the availability of resources and his identified operational demands.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the expenditure for the Garda National Protective Services Bureau in 2018 was € 5,903,718. Using that expenditure as the basis for the calculation, I am informed that a 15% increase in funding would involve additional funds of approximately €885,558 (rounded), for a total of approximately € 6,789,276.

Garda Resources

256. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount of funding allocated to the traffic corps in each of the years 2006 to 2018 and to date in 2019 in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2816/19]

257. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount of funding allocated to An Garda Síochána excluding the traffic corps in each of the years 2006 to 2018 and to date in 2019 in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2817/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 256 and 257 together.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána as well as for decisions in relation to the allocation and management of Garda equipment and resources. As Minister, I have no direct role in these matters.

I have asked the Garda Commissioner for the specific information requested and when it to hand, I will write directly to the Deputy.

Road Traffic Accidents Data

258. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of RTAs in each of the years 2006 to 2018 and to date in 2019 in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2818/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have sought a report from the An Garda Síochána in relation to the statistics requested by the Deputy.

I will contact the Deputy directly on receipt of said report.

Crime Data

259. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of break-ins and burglaries in each of the years 2006 to 2018 and to date in 2019 in County Mayo by location of the report of the break-ins and burglaries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2819/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, the Central Statistics Office (CSO), as the national statistical agency, is responsible for the compilation and publication of recorded crime statistics, and the CSO has established a dedicated unit for this purpose.

However, to be of assistance, I have asked the CSO to forward any information they might have on this subject directly to the Deputy.

Garda Deployment

260. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí employed in the traffic corps in each of the years 2006 to 2018 and to date in 2019 in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2820/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, the manner in which the resources of the Garda Síochána are deployed is solely a matter for the Garda Commissioner and his management team and I, as Minister, have no direct role in this regard.

The information sought by the Deputy is currently being collated and I will write to the Deputy when it is available in the format requested.

Garda Deployment

261. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the need to provide additional staffing resources to the Border region in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2835/19]

262. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the need to provide additional staffing and financial resources to the Border region in 2019, in view of the unique policing needs of a border area and the concerns regarding cross-Border criminal activity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2836/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 261 and 262 together.

Since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, almost 2,400 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. This accelerated recruitment of Gardaí saw Garda numbers reach just over 14,000 by the end of 2018. Furthermore, a total budget of €1.76 billion has been provided to An Garda Síochána in 2019, an increase of over €100 million on the 2018 allocation. This substantial investment will provide new and leading edge technology to support our front line Gardaí in carrying out their work and increasing visibility in both rural and urban communities.

The Garda Commissioner has informed me that it is his intention to recruit a total of 600 trainee Gardaí in 2019 along with a net 600 Garda Staff (civilians). The recruitment of these additional Garda staff will allow the Commissioner to redeploy this year a further 500 fully trained Gardaí from administrative duties to the frontline duties for which they are trained. I believe that the injection of this large number of experienced officers into the field, along with the new recruits, will be really beneficial in terms of protecting communities. This and on-going recruitment will clearly provide the Commissioner with the resources needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí to deliver a visible effective and responsive policing service to communities across all Garda Divisions, including those located alongside or close to the Border.

The Deputy will also be aware that there is close and ongoing cooperation between An Garda Síochána and the PSNI on all aspects of policing, with a particular focus on combatting security threats and cross-border crime. The Garda Commissioner and the Chief Constable of the PSNI, who are responsible for operational policing cooperation, have repeatedly emphasised the scope and the value of the close and high quality cooperation between the two police services in combating crime, protecting community safety and saving lives. The two police services operate a joint Cross-Border Policing Strategy which has as its aims to improve public safety throughout Ireland, to disrupt criminal activity and to enhance the policing capability of both police services on the island.

Parental Leave

263. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on a matter and if he will provide clarification on it (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2851/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): It is important to note that the Government has always been, and continues to be, supportive of the principle of parental leave. In fact, as part of Budget 2019, the Government announced the introduction of a new paid parental leave scheme which will commence later this year. This

new scheme will initially provide two weeks of paid, non-transferable leave per parent, with a view to expanding the scheme and increasing the number of weeks of paid leave for both parents in future years.

During the debate in Dáil Éireann on the Parental Leave (Amendment) Bill 2017, which is a Private Member's Bill, I strongly suggested that the relevant Oireachtas Committee would carry out detailed pre-legislative scrutiny on this Bill. If this had occurred, it would have allowed all stakeholders to scrutinise the proposed legislation and to report on any policy or legal issues which may have to be identified.

As the Government is not the sponsor of a Private Member's Bill, I cannot advise on the progress of the Parental Leave (Amendment) Bill 2017.

Prison Visiting Regulations

264. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the protocols and procedures in place for children in State care to visit parents that are imprisoned in Mountjoy Prison; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2871/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed by my officials in the Irish Prison Service that the Service is committed to prisoners maintaining the relationships they have with their children.

To that end, the former Director General of the Irish Prison Service established the Families and Imprisonment Group, which is chaired by a prison Governor and includes representatives from Tusla, The Childhood Development Initiative, the Probation Service, the Prison Officers Association and representatives from various prisons. The group was tasked in particular to address the needs of children and families as highlighted in the report published by the Irish Penal Reform Trust entitled 'Picking up the Pieces: The rights and needs of children and families affected by imprisonment'.

An important element of addressing these needs is the provision of family friendly visits, and refurbishment of visit spaces.

The Visitor Centre in Mountjoy offers a child centred and supportive environment for guardians and children visiting an imprisoned parent. Mountjoy has designated areas to facilitate family visits which include a family friendly space, round tables/family seating and access to play materials. In addition temporary release for access/visits to children for family occasions is regularly approved in most prisons.

The Irish Prison Service also targets family friendly training to 'front of house' staff, which aims to improve staff awareness of the effects of imprisonment on families and allows staff to appropriately support families and children visiting prisons.

Upon committal to prison all prisoners are provided with a visitor nomination form which they fill out stating the names of the persons they wish to have visit them in prison. Prisoners are then allowed to change two visitors per month on their visitor panel. All adult visitors (over 18) are required to produce photographic ID upon arriving at the prison for a visit in order to gain access. All children (under 18) are recorded numerically on a visit as opposed to by name but must be accompanied by a guardian. All visitors must pass through the security screening area and may also be searched by staff. Information in relation to children visiting prisons is not recorded in the manner which would allow the prison service to extrapolate if a child visiting a prison was under the care of the State at the time of visit.

Finally, I can also inform the Deputy that the Irish Prison Service has enacted the provisions of the Children First Act 2015 in respect of all visit areas. Staff have received mandatory training in Children First and Designated Liaison Persons are located in every prison. There is continual liaison between the Prison Service and Tusla regarding child protection and welfare issues. Where concerns for child welfare arise, the Irish Prison Service report to Tusla, as required under Children First.

Road Traffic Accidents Data

265. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the road traffic fatalities to date for 2019 published by An Garda Síochána to 16 January 2019 are incorrect (details supplied); his views on whether the issues with same are ongoing in view of long-standing controversies in relation to Garda statistics; and when corrected figures will be published by An Garda Síochána. [2895/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): You will appreciate that I, as Minister for Justice and Equality, have no role in relation to the collection of Garda statistical data; however, to be of assistance, I have asked An Garda Síochána for a report on the matter.

I am informed by An Garda Síochána that statistics on road traffic fatalities, published on An Garda Síochána's website, are provisional, operational and subject to change. There are a number of reasons why such statistics can change on a daily basis, for example:

- It may be established during the investigation of a collision that the person died as a result of a medical condition un-related to the collision rather than as a result of the collision. In such cases, the death will not be recorded as a road fatality and the collision may be downgraded from a Fatal Road Traffic Collision.

- In other cases, a Serious Injury Road Traffic Collision can be adjusted upwards to a Fatal Road Traffic Collision where a victim dies within 30 days from the date of the incident.

- There are also cases, where the incident is changed from a Public Road Fatality to a Private Road Fatality, which is reported separately and may not be reflected in published statistics.

I am informed that An Garda Síochána work with all relevant stakeholders in the development of accurate statistics in respect of road traffic fatalities, which are recorded in line with international best practice.

Garda Transport Data

266. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of new marked and unmarked Garda cars, vans and marked motorcycles that were allocated to the roads policing unit in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3017/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that the resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation for 2019 of €1.76 billion. This represents an increase of over 6% over the initial allocation for 2018.

Very significant capital investment is also being made in An Garda Síochána, including investment of €342 million in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021 to enable An Garda Síochána to deliver on reform and deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in deliver-

ing professional policing and security services for the community; and significant investment is also being made to address the deficiencies in the Garda estate.

The Deputy will be aware that the Government's Capital Plan 2016 – 2021 provides €46 million for investment in the Garda fleet, to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose fleet. This is in addition to the investment of almost €30 million in the fleet in the period 2013 to 2015.

As the Deputy will appreciate, decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda vehicles across the various Garda divisions are a matter for the Commissioner in light of his identified operational demands and the availability of resources. As Minister, I have no direct role in that matter.

I understand however that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities, to ensure their optimum use.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that a total of 40 vehicles were allocated for Roads Policing duty in 2018, comprising 5 marked cars, 4 marked motorcycles and 31 marked 4 x 4 vehicles.

Prisoner Transport

267. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the transport fleet budget for the Prison Service in each of the years 2015 to 2018; the amount allocated for same in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3018/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to inform the Deputy that information in relation to both the transport fleet budget and expenditure for the Irish Prison Service for the years 2015 to 2018 is outlined in the table below. The 2019 allocation has yet to be agreed.

Year	FLEET MANAGEMENT (Budget)	FLEET MANAGEMENT (spend)
2015	€1,400,000	€1,576,130
2016	€2,250,000	€3,201,356
2017	€3,150,000	€3,158,084
2018	€2,700,000	€2,790,583

In addition to the purchase of vehicles, expenditure for the fleet covers items such as Maintenance & Repairs, Motor Tax and Insurance, Fuel for Prison Vehicles and Toll Charges/Parking Fees.

Following the award of a contract for services to assist in the development of fleet management systems, a rolling programme commenced in 2016 to replace the existing fleet. While this resulted in additional expenditure in 2016, efficiencies in the purchasing and disposal of vehicles are expected to save money in the longer term.

Garda Transport Provision

268. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if funding has been made available in 2019 for the replacement of aircraft or helicopters in the Garda air support

unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3019/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, there has been unprecedented investment in An Garda Síochána in recent years, in support of the Government's commitment to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement and provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime.

The resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation for 2019 of €1.76 billion. This represents an increase of over 6% over the initial allocation for 2018.

Very significant capital investment is also being made in An Garda Síochána, including investment of €342 million in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021 to enable An Garda Síochána to deliver on reform and deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in delivering professional policing and security services for the community.

Investment of €46 million is also being made in the Garda Fleet over the same period to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose fleet. This is additional to the investment of almost €30 million in the fleet in the period 2013 to 2015.

The Government is also making considerable capital investment in addressing the deficiencies in the Garda estate.

As the Deputy will appreciate, in accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for carrying on and managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. Further, the allocation of Garda resources is a matter for the Commissioner, in light of his identified operational demands.

I understand that the Garda Air Support Unit was established in September 1997 with the delivery of a Pilatus Britten-Norman BN 2T-4S Defender 4000 fixed wing aircraft and a Eurocopter AS355N Ecourel helicopter. In 2001 the Unit acquired a second helicopter - a Eurocopter EC 135 T2. In 2007 the Ecourel helicopter was replaced by a second EC135 T2+.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the question of prioritising the upgrading or replacement of these aircraft is in the first instance for the Commissioner, in the context of the investment being made in An Garda Síochána and his operational priorities. I am informed by the Garda authorities that neither the two helicopters nor the Fixed Wing Aircraft have reached the end of their operational lives and as such, no funding has been provided in the 2019 budget for their replacement.

My Department will of course continue to engage with Garda management on an ongoing basis in relation to current and capital resource needs.

Garda Resources

269. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if funding has been made available in 2019 for the purchase of drones for use by An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3020/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that the resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation for 2019 of €1.76 billion. This represents an increase of over 6% over

the initial allocation for 2018. Funding to An Garda Síochána for 2019 includes provision of €2.868 million for the purchase of specialised operational equipment.

Very significant capital investment is being made in An Garda Síochána, including investment of €342 million in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021 to enable An Garda Síochána to deliver on reform and deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in delivering professional policing and security services for the community; investment of €46 million in the Garda Fleet over the same period; as well as considerable capital investment in addressing the deficiencies in the Garda estate.

These actions are in support of the Government's commitment to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country, to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime.

As the Deputy will appreciate, in accordance with Section 26 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, as amended, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for carrying on and managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. Further, the allocation of Garda resources is a matter for the Commissioner, in light of the availability of resources and his identified operational demands.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that An Garda Síochána do not currently use drones to aid policing. I am further informed that An Garda Síochána has no plans to purchase drones at present, but that a working group within An Garda Síochána continually assesses emerging technology and technological advances, including in relation to drones, with a view to their use in the provision of policing and security services.

Employment Data

270. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the actions taken to date to mitigate the impact of automation on job numbers. [2302/19]

271. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the research conducted to date into the impact of automation on employment; and the projected impact on employment. [2303/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 270 and 271 together.

The Expert Group for Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) published 'Digital Transformation: Assessing the Impact of Digitalisation on Ireland's Workforce' in December 2018. The aim of the study was to assess the impact of digitalisation on job roles and sectors across the economy in Ireland and to highlight the opportunities and challenges that this presents.

The study consisted of a large volume of desk research and the development of a quantitative model. This was complemented by a number of interviews with policymakers, key informants from industry, representative groups and the Regional Skills Fora, in order to gain insights for the report. The report combines all these elements to provide an assessment of the impacts of digitalisation in Ireland over the next five years, to 2023. It is available online from both the EGFSN's website (www.egfsn.ie) and my Department's website (www.dbei.gov.ie).

The report projects strong overall growth for the economy over the next five years. While the report predicts the number of jobs lost to the adoption of digital technologies will increase steadily over the next decade, it expects that the majority of sectors will employ more people

in 2023 than they did in 2018. The report notes that the result of increased digitalisation in the economy will be a slower growth in employment growth, generating a hypothetical loss of 46,000 jobs.

The report further finds that one in three jobs in Ireland are at high risk of being disrupted by the adoption of digital technologies. Much of the disruption, however, will result in changes to job roles and tasks performed by individuals rather than job losses. This means that lifelong learning will become even more of an imperative and the report finds that there will be opportunities for many people to upskill within their current jobs.

The report highlighted how the Government is already acting to address the challenges and mitigate the negative impacts of automation on job numbers.

The report finds that Ireland has the opportunity to place itself at the forefront of digital technologies through ensuring adequate skills provision and capitalising on Ireland's significant ICT sector. It finds that that existing Government policies and initiatives currently in place provide a solid foundation for response to the expected changes from the increased adoption of digital technologies. The following table, as provided in the report, demonstrates the various ways in which the Government is acting to mitigate the impact of automation on job numbers.

Table 1 Current Policies and Initiatives in Place Addressing Five Key Areas of Focus

Key Areas	Policies and Initiatives Addressing Areas
Vision	National Digital Strategy
Collaboration	R&D Technology Centres/Gateways Innovation Partnerships SFI Industry Fellowships
Data	National Data Infrastructure
Technology	Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund Industry 4.0 Strategy
Skills	National Skills Strategy 2025 ICT Action Plan National Digital Strategy for Schools Skills for Growth Initiative Spotlight on Skills Skillnet Ireland Springboard+EXPLORE

In addition to these measures, to ensure Ireland's economy is well positioned to adapt and prosper in the future, the Government is launching a new economic pathway for Ireland – Future Jobs - Preparing Now for Tomorrow's Economy. Future Jobs Ireland aims to drive Ireland's development as a resilient, innovative and globally connected economy, capable of coping with transformational changes ahead posed by automation, artificial intelligence and other forms of technological innovation. Future Jobs is a medium-term framework out to 2025 and the 2019 iteration will be published in the coming weeks.

Small and Medium Enterprises Data

272. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the location of each SME regional innovation and technology cluster; and the amount of funding allocated to each such cluster in 2018 and 2019, by county, in tabular form. [2403/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In Budget 2019 I announced an additional €2.75m to Enterprise Ireland for the creation of new 'Regional Innovation and Technology Clusters' linking the Institutes of Technology with indus-

tries, sectors and skills. This new fund will help to build on existing facilities, expertise and supportive capabilities across the regions. This will support SME productivity and innovation, entrepreneurship and start-ups through inter-institutional collaboration and help to build optimal sectoral clusters to scale and internationalise enterprise across the regions.

Regional Innovation and Technology Clusters will see a further scaling of the capability of the Institutes of Technology (IoTs), in a planned, internationally ambitious way, that creates centres of excellence for both, thereby generating high-levels of entrepreneurship and spin-outs in the regions supporting firm-level innovation, increasing productivity growth, scaling and globally competitive companies. This will support the Government's drive towards transforming the enterprise potential and performance in all regions.

As this is a new initiative to help drive regional development, my Department is working closely with Enterprise Ireland to successfully roll out the initiative in the coming weeks and months.

Science Foundation Ireland Data

273. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the location of each SFI research centre; and the amount of funding allocated to each such centre in 2018 and 2019, by county, in tabular form. [2404/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan): Science Foundation Ireland has an established network of 17 world-leading Research Centres. Representing a commitment of over €455 million from Science Foundation Ireland and an Industry commitment of €244 million, these major funding awards link scientists and engineers in partnerships across 19 research bodies, including all seven universities, and more than 350 companies in Ireland.

In 2018 over €63.2m was allocated to 17 Research Centres by Science Foundation Ireland through each Centre's host Higher Education Institute. In 2019 it is anticipated that over €64.4m in funding will be paid, an increase of over €1.2m on 2018.

As each Research Centre has a number of academic partners, the benefit of this funding is dispersed beyond the geographic location of the host institute.

Details of individual payments to these Research Centres by County is set out in tabular form and includes payments against the core Research Centre award plus additional supplements and Spoke awards. This will account for some of the differences between 2018 payments and 2019 profiled payments in the following table. The Spoke Programme is a vehicle to enable the addition of new industrial and academic partners and projects to SFI Research Centres, so allowing their expansion and development in line with new priorities and opportunities. The Programme will ensure that the Research Centre retains its ability to do cutting edge research and its industrial relevance, and so enhance its sustainability. The Spokes programme also provides a vehicle to link together, in a meaningful and relevant way, different Research Centres.

Research Centre	Host HEI	All Partner HEIs	Counties	2018 Payments €	2019 Profiled Payments €
Advanced Materials and BioEngineering Research Centre (AMBER)	Trinity College Dublin	TCD, RCSI and UCC	Dublin, Cork	€3,613,336	€3,930,364

Research Centre	Host HEI	All Partner HEIs	Counties	2018 Payments €	2019 Profiled Payments €
Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre (APC) - Interfacing Food & Medicine	University College Cork	UCC, CIT and Teagasc	Cork	€5,666,446	€6,028,613
Irish Centre for Fetal and Neonatal Translational Research (INFANT)	University College Cork	UCC and RCSI	Dublin, Cork	€1,744,402	€1,145,154
INSIGHT - Ireland's Big Data and Analytics Research Centre	NUI Galway	NUI Galway, UCD, UCC, DCU, TCD, Tyndall, Maynooth University, RIA	Galway, Dublin, Cork, Kildare	€4,691,783	€5,414,252
I-PIC Irish Photonic Integration Research Centre	Tyndall	Tyndall, UCC, CIT and DCU	Cork, Dublin	€1,998,517	€2,113,202
Marine Renewable Energy Ireland (MAREI) - The SFI Centre for Marine Renewable Energy Research	University College Cork	UCC, CIT, UCD, UL, NUI Galway, Maynooth University	Cork, Dublin, Limerick, Galway, Kildare	€4,152,747	€2,360,665
Synthesis and Solid State Pharmaceutical Centre (SSPC)	University of Limerick	UL, UCD, NIBRT, AIT, TCD, UCC, WIT and NUI Galway	Limerick, Dublin, West Meath, Cork, Waterford, Galway	€4,298,888	€3,110,961
ADAPT: Centre for Digital Content Platform Research	Trinity College Dublin	UCD, DCU, TCD, DIT	Dublin	€7,134,420	€4,337,942
CONNECT: The Centre for Future Networks & Communications	Trinity College Dublin	TCD, CIT, Maynooth University, DIT, Tyndall, UCC, DCU, WIT, UL and UCD	Dublin, Cork, Kildare, Waterford, Limerick	€5,928,206	€8,937,488
CÚRAM – Centre for Research in Medical Devices	NUI Galway	NUI Galway, UCC, UCD, Molecular Medicine Ireland, RCSI, UL and TCD	Galway, Cork, Dublin, Limerick	€5,563,936	€4,822,075
Lero - the Irish Software Research Centre	University of Limerick	UL, DCU, NUI Galway, DKIT, Tralee IT, UCD, TCD, UL, UCC and Maynooth University	Limerick, Dublin, Galway, Dundalk, Kerry, Kildare	€4,890,702	€4,183,476

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Research Centre	Host HEI	All Partner HEIs	Counties	2018 Payments €	2019 Profiled Payments €
iCrag – Irish Centre for Research in Applied Geosciences	University College Dublin	UCD, TCD, Teagasc, NUI Galway, UCC, Maynooth University and DIAS	Cork, Dublin, Cork, Kildare	€4,337,320	€3,388,709
Bioeconomy Research Centre (BEACON)	University College Dublin	UCD, TCD, NUI Galway, UL and Teagasc	Dublin, Galway, Limerick	€1,581,650	€3,493,667
Confirm Centre for Smart Manufacturing	University of Limerick	UL, UCC, NUI Galway, CIT, Tyndall, AIT, LIT, Maynooth University	Limerick, Cork, Galway, West Meath, Kildare	€2,295,765	€5,985,254
I-Form Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre	University College Dublin	UCD, DCU, NUI Galway, TCD, IT Sligo and WIT	Dublin, Galway, Sligo, Waterford	€1,138,277	€2,833,820
VistaMilk Centre (co fund with Dept Agriculture Food and the Marine. DAFM co fund subtracted)	Teagasc, Moorepark	Teagasc, DCU, NUI Galway, WIT, Tyndall, UCD	Dublin, Galway, Waterford, Cork, Dublin	€3,279,265	€1,594,763
FutureNeuro	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland	RCSI, TCD, DCU, NUI Galway and UCD	Dublin, Galway	€911,501	€1,810,993

Science Foundation Ireland

274. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the capital and current funding allocated to Science Foundation Ireland on an annual basis since it was established up to 2018; and the 2019 allocation for same. [2405/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan): The Capital and Current funding allocations from the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation to Science Foundation Ireland for the years 2003 – 2019 is set out in tabular form.

Year	Current	Capital	Revised Estimates Volume allocation€000	Plus sanctioned Deferred Surrender (Capital Carryover) *€000	Supplementary Estimate **€000	Total annual allocation€000
2003	5,114	65,000	70,114			70,114
2004	5,160	108,569	113,729			113,729
2005	10,051	118,200	128,251	3,000		131,251
2006	9,571	139,865	149,436			149,436
2007	10,050	155,722	165,772			165,772
2008	11,330	172,213	183,543	2,226		185,769

Year	Current	Capital	Revised Estimates Volume allocation €000	Plus sanctioned Deferred Surrender (Capital Carryover) *€000	Supplementary Estimate **€000	Total annual allocation €000
2009	10,583	159,941	170,524	5,500		176,024
2010	9,833	150,000	159,833			159,833
2011	14,342	160,800	175,142			175,142
2012	13,669	156,000	169,669			169,669
2013	10,050	145,300	155,350	7,000		162,350
2014	9,300	144,540	153,840	9,000		162,840
2015	9,230	154,000	163,230	3,000	5,000	171,230
2016	9,662	157,000	166,662		27,000	193,662
2017	10,131	162,500	172,631		10,600	183,231
2018	10,815	172,250***	183,065		8,740	191,805
2019	11,565	188,250****	199,815	6,800		206,615

*Capital carryover may be permitted from one financial year to the next and requires the formal approval of the Minister for Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform each year. As is evidenced from the table Science Foundation Ireland's allocations were enhanced in the years 2005, 2008, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2019 with the provision of capital carryover amounts from unspent capital moneys arising elsewhere in the Department's Vote.

**From 2015 to 2018 additional capital monies were also provided to Science Foundation Ireland by the Houses of the Oireachtas through the approved Supplementary Estimates process.

*** The 2018 Capital allocation includes €5.5m in dedicated funding for a PhD/Research Masters scheme. This programme is administered by Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and will fund postgraduate enrolments in disciplines under their remit.

**** The 2019 Capital allocation includes €15.5m in dedicated funding for PhD/Research Masters enrolment through the new Centres for Research Training. This programme is administered by Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and will fund postgraduate enrolments in disciplines under their remit.

Action Plan for Jobs

275. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 557 of 7 September 2018, if the study referenced in relation to Action 28 was completed by the end of 2018; and if not, when it will be completed. [2409/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Action 28 of the Action Plan for Jobs 2018 called for the identification of 'relevant policy issues for cohorts with low participation rates based on analysis of patterns of labour market participation'. This action was fulfilled in H2 of 2018 under the guidance of an interdepartmental steering group.

My Department understands that increasing participation rates for different cohorts has the potential to address the growing need for skills and talent. The analysis undertaken for Action

28 focussed on three cohorts: females aged 25-55, people aged over 55, and people aged under 55 with a disability. In focusing on these cohorts, the analysis identified issues for further examination.

The results of the detailed analysis of Action 28 cannot be published due to CSO stipulations around sample size and data confidentiality. However, the analysis will be a key input into Future Jobs Ireland, which will be published shortly.

North-South Implementation Bodies

276. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the status of the process to fill the position of chief executive of InterTradeIreland; and when the position was last held. [2410/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The former CEO of InterTradeIreland (ITI), Mr Thomas Hunter McGowan, resigned on 16 October 2017. Due to the absence of the Northern Ireland Executive, it has not been possible for ITI to appoint a new CEO, as appointments to North-South bodies at this level require the approval of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC).

In the interim, Mr Aidan Gough, Director of Strategy and Policy within the body, has been appointed as Designated Officer, assuming full accounting responsibilities, with the agreement of my Department and its counterpart in Northern Ireland, the Department for the Economy. Once the NSMC has reconvened, I understand that the intention is that ITI will move swiftly to appoint a new CEO.

Departmental Agencies Funding

277. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the extra funding secured in 2019 for each of the State agencies under the remit of her Department for the recruitment of extra Brexit related staff; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2497/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department's gross allocation for 2019 is €952.2m. This represents an increase of €79.2m (+9.1%) on our 2018 allocation of €871m and includes a record Capital budget increase of €65m (+11.7%) and an additional €14.2m (+4.5%) in Current funding.

The additional current funding secured in Budget includes an additional €8m package to support our Brexit Response and to expand the Global Footprint of our Agencies. Specifically, Budget 2019 will increase the current funding of the Department's Agencies as follows:

- Enterprise Ireland	+€3.0m
- IDA Ireland	+€2.0m
- Health & Safety Authority	+€482k
- National Standards Authority of Ireland	+€400k
- Competition & Consumer Protection Commission	+€360k

The increased current allocations secured in Budget 2019 follow on from specific Brexit

focused increases secured by my Department in both Budgets 2017 and 2018. The additional funding has enabled the Department's Agencies to continue to increase their staffing resources as well as fund related promotional and regulatory activities.

Aside from the additional current funding being provided in Budget 2019, additional capital funding has also been provided to the Department's Enterprise Agencies, including IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices, Science Foundation Ireland etc to enable them to continue their preparations in Getting Business Brexit Ready.

The increased allocations secured by my Department in the last three Budgets clearly demonstrates my commitment to providing our Agencies with the necessary resources to enable them to continue to support businesses in their efforts to grow and provide employment while safeguarding against global challenges including Brexit.

Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement Funding

278. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the funding allocation to the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement in 2018 and 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2498/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The funding allocation for the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE) in respect of 2018 and 2019 is set out in the following table.

Year	2018	2019
Funding allocation	€5.057m	€6.057m

The distribution of the funding allocations across my Department's Vote, including that of the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement, is determined through the annual Revised Estimates Volume (REV) process.

State Aid

279. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she has applied to the EU for exemptions under EU state aid rules to allow State investment in Rosslare Europort; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2589/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Investment in Rosslare Europort is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport.

However, in relation to State Aid, my Department and its agencies are providing extensive supports, schemes and advice to ensure that businesses are prepared for Brexit. Officials from my Department are part of the Technical Working Group on State aid which also comprises representatives from DG Competition, Enterprise Ireland and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The objective of the Group is to scope and design schemes to support enterprises impacted by Brexit in line with State aid rules.

Departmental Expenditure

280. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she will publish the airline costs for her Department for 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2685/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The total airline costs incurred by my Department in 2018 were €310,558.06.

Expenditure on all official travel by staff of my Department, including expenditure on flights, is governed by the Department's Travel and Subsistence Policy. The Policy encompasses the various Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's Regulations/Circulars in this area.

Departmental Expenditure

281. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she will publish the cost of newspapers in her Department in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2702/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The total expenditure on newspapers by my Department in 2018 was €17,096.32.

Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement Staff

282. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the estimated full year cost of recruiting an extra two full-time digital forensic specialists and two extra enforcement lawyers for the Office of Director of Corporate Enforcement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2801/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Details of the estimated full year cost of recruiting additional staff in the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE) as requested by the Deputy are set out in tabular format.

Grade	Current Salary Cost*	Employer PRSI	Total Cost (x2)
Digital Forensic Specialist	€66,495	€6,649.50	€146,289
Enforcement Lawyer	€85,823	€8,582.30	€188,692.60

*based on the starting point of the relevant payscale

These figures do not account for the proposed pay adjustment under the Lansdowne Road Agreement due October 2019 (1.75%). The estimated cost including employer PRSI for the adjustment is €640.22 and €944.08 respectively.

The Deputy should note that, following his appointment in the latter half of 2012, the Director of the ODCE carried out a review of the ODCE's then skills mix and operational capacity. That review, inter alia, identified certain skill deficiencies, as a consequence of which sanction was sought, and subsequently obtained, to recruit a number of additional professional staff to address the identified need.

Further to that process, the Department, through the Public Appointments Service, recruited a suitably qualified and experienced Digital Forensics Specialist and two Enforcement Lawyers to the ODCE. In addition, seven qualified and experienced forensic accountants and two Enforcement Portfolio Managers were recruited for assignment to the ODCE.

Currently, within the ODCE, there are no vacancies in these senior-level positions named by the Deputy, and in the context of workforce planning, the skills sets, competencies, roles and responsibilities associated with all senior-level positions are continuously reviewed by the Director to better reflect the organisation's current and future resource needs.

IDA Ireland Data

283. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of site visits conducted by the IDA in counties Kildare and Laois in each of the past five years; and the number of these visits that were to locations in the two county towns and other areas of the counties, respectively, in tabular form. [2886/19]

284. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA visits over the past 12 months; and if she is satisfied with the level of foreign direct investment in County Kildare. [2887/19]

285. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA premises in County Kildare; the status of same; and if they are occupied. [2888/19]

286. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA premises in County Laois; the status of same; and if they are occupied. [2889/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 283 to 286, inclusive, together.

My Department and its agencies are working towards ambitious targets to ensure that employment and investment are distributed as evenly as possible across the country.

There are 29 IDA supported client companies in County Kildare, which collectively employ 8,838 people - representing an increase of 4.5% over the previous year. The County has a strong contingent of overseas firms in the Technology, Financial Services and Pharmaceuticals sectors. IDA clients such as Intel, Pfizer, and Procter and Gamble are all located in Kildare and continue to perform well.

The IDA regularly engages with key stakeholders on the ground in Kildare and Laois, including with local authorities, public bodies, the education sector and companies from both its own client base but also from the indigenous sector. The Agency also owns sites in both counties that are actively marketed to its clients through its network of offices in Ireland and overseas. I am hopeful that this ongoing work by the IDA will lead to more investment and job creation for the wider area in due course.

Data on IDA Ireland site visits is collated on a county-by-county basis only. Information on visits to particular locations - such as to individual sites or towns - is not available for reasons of client confidentiality and commercial sensitivity.

Table A outlines the status of IDA properties in Kildare and Laois and current occupants. Table B sets out the number of IDA site visits to each county of Ireland from 2013 to Q3 2018. Figures for Q4 2018 will become available later this month.

Table A: IDA marketable land in Counties Kildare and Laois

Questions - Written Answers

County	Town	Business Park / Site Name	Total Size (c.ha)	Total Size acre	Available (c.ha)	Available (c.acre)	Occupants
Kildare	New-bridge	New-bridge Business Park	16.8	41.5	2.9	7.2	Proctor and Gamble, Barlo Packaging Ltd, Curragh-Tintawn Ltd, Lily O'Briens, Comerford Brothers Ltd
Laois	Portlaoise	IDA Portlaoise Business & Technology Park, Dublin Road	18.0	44.5	9.6	23.7	OPW, Aubren, Internal Results

Table B: IDA Ireland site visits by county 2013-Q3 2018

County	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Q1 2018	Q2 2018	Q3 2018
Dublin	180	205	242	284	327	69	72	68
Kildare	1	1	7	8	10	4	0	1
Meath	1	2	7	8	3	1	3	1
Wicklow	1	4	7	5	2	0	1	0
Laois	2	0	4	6	4	4	2	1
Longford	0	0	2	6	7	0	0	2
Offaly	1	1	8	4	5	0	1	3
Westmeath	9	12	28	36	42	3	9	6
Clare	5	9	12	18	22	4	3	2
Limerick	23	22	40	49	42	8	7	10
Tipperary	4	3	12	8	8	1	1	2
Cavan	2	1	0	2	2	0	1	0
Louth	4	10	20	24	22	6	6	3
Monaghan	1	0	2	2	1	0	1	0
Donegal	7	6	5	7	2	0	3	3
Leitrim	1	2	8	8	5	2	3	0

County	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Q1 2018	Q2 2018	Q3 2018
Sligo	10	7	15	20	18	5	3	4
Carlow	1	2	1	9	8	1	2	0
Kilkenny	3	4	10	10	6	0	2	1
Waterford	14	11	31	17	11	5	9	5
Wexford	2	1	4	7	3	0	1	2
Cork	31	30	48	49	51	10	14	21
Kerry	1	3	6	3	9	0	5	3
Galway	15	19	41	42	62	10	20	12
Mayo	3	4	3	5	7	2	2	3
Roscom- mon	4	0	2	1	3	0	1	1
Total	326	359	565	638	682	135	172	154

Work Permits Appeals

287. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding an appeal by a person (details supplied) lodged in respect of a stamp 4 application support letter; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2913/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Employment Permits Section of my Department informs me that on 10 July 2018, the named individual was refused a Stamp 4 Support Letter because the individual had not been in continuous employment in the State on a Critical Skills Employment Permit for the required minimum period of 21 months before the expiration of their employment permit. Due to the individual's commencement date of employment in the State, it was not possible for them to reach the required 21 month period without applying for a second Critical Skills Employment Permit.

As a new Critical Skills Employment Permit was required to reach the 21 month period my officials expedited a new application which had been submitted, allowing the individual to reach the required 21 month period across the two permits. This new permit was granted on 26th July 2018.

A new request for a Stamp 4 Support Letter is now required. My Department has not received a new request for a Stamp 4 Support Letter from the named individual. It is open to this person to submit such a request. Any such request will be expedited by my officials.

Regional Development Initiatives

288. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the efforts being made to promote Mullingar, County Westmeath as an attractive centre for regional development and in particular for IDA led investment in the context of trying to achieve the target of increased employment opportunities outside of the cities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [3103/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Since becoming Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, I have made regional development my top priority. Indeed, enterprise development and job creation in the regions of Ireland is a

key policy priority of this Government.

We want to have a situation where all regions are enabled to realise their potential as contributors to economic recovery and growth, and thereby reduce regional disparities.

For the State as a whole, since the launch of the Regional Action Plan for Jobs (Q1 2015 to Q3 2018) there has been an increase of 258,800 people in employment, with 163,500 of these located in the regions outside Co. Dublin – that's 3 out of every 5 jobs created.

In the year from Q3 2017 – Q3 2018, just over half (51%) of the jobs created were outside of Co. Dublin.

The Midlands has seen good progress, with employment in the region increasing by 17.6% from Q1 2015 to Q3 2018. There are 19,100 more people in employment in the region from Q1 2015, the start of the Regional Action Plan for Jobs process, to Q3 2018.

CSO figures show that the unemployment rate in the Midlands Region is currently at 7.1% (Q3 2018), which is higher than the State average of 6% and continued focus is therefore required on regional enterprise development and job creation in the Midlands.

My Department's €60 million Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) administered by Enterprise Ireland is aimed at accelerating economic recovery in all regions of the country by delivering on the potential of local and regional enterprise strengths. To date the Fund has supported 42 support significant collaborative and innovative regional initiatives around the country to build on specific industry sectoral strengths and improve enterprise capability, thereby driving job creation.

Under the REDF first call, I was very pleased to announce that Irish Manufacturing Research CLG based in Mullingar, were approved over €2 million in funding to support the development of this important asset for the manufacturing sector in the region. A further two projects for the Midlands received an allocation under the second call, totalling just over €650,000; namely Mountmellick Development Association and Offaly Innovation and Design Centre (Birr).

The Government remains committed to achieving an overall jobs uplift of between 10 and 15 percent in each region by 2020 and to bring and/or maintain unemployment levels in each region to within at least one percentage point of the State average.

That is why in April 2018, I asked the RAPJ Implementation Committees, including in the Midlands, to refresh and refocus their plans to ensure their relevance and impact out to 2020, especially in the face of current challenges, including Brexit. This work is ongoing and I expect to launch the refreshed Regional Enterprise Plan for the Midlands next month. The Regional Enterprise Plan will continue to add value to the core mandates of the enterprise agencies by bringing together regional stakeholders to work collaboratively on projects to support enterprise development.

The Enterprise Agencies continue to work to contribute to employment and economic growth throughout all regions.

Enterprise Ireland's strategy for 2017-2020 aims to create a further 60,000 jobs, while sustaining existing ones, which will make an important contribution to jobs and economic growth across all regions.

IDA Ireland is also committed to playing its part in the economic development of Ireland's Regions. IDA meanwhile will continue to target a minimum increase in investment of 30% to 40% in each region outside Dublin to 2019.

The IDA regularly engages with key stakeholders on the ground in County Westmeath, including with local authorities, public bodies, the education sector and companies from both its own client base but also from the indigenous sector.

There are now 42 IDA supported companies based in the Midlands, employing 5,720 people in 2018. This employment figure represents a 14% increase on 2017. The Midlands Region was the highest performing Region in terms of FDI employment growth in Ireland during 2018. The Region has been successful over a number of years in mobilising inward foreign direct investment (FDI), with employment levels in IDA client companies increasing every year since 2011. County Westmeath specifically has performed well with 3,466 people employed in 2018 in FDI companies, an increase of 16.5% over the 2017 figures.

Across the Region, IDA Ireland has a portfolio of Business & Technology Parks available to support IDA and EI client companies. These flagship Business Parks in key locations, including Mullingar, have been designed and landscaped to a high standard and are occupied by many high end manufacturing and international services clients with capacity to facilitate and accommodate new international investment. IDA also works closely with the private sector to encourage and market appropriate and cost-effective building and property solutions suitable for FDI clients.

The region has an impressive range of companies across all industry sectors, with particular strengths in Life Sciences, Technology, Global Business Services, International Financial Services and Engineering. Significant ‘new name’ investments in recent years in both services and manufacturing include Aerie Pharmaceutical, Neueda Technologies (both based in Athlone), SkOUT Secure Intelligence in Portlaoise and Red Seal Cups in Longford. The largest new name project has been Centre Parc, which is a €233m development in Ballymahon, Co. Longford that will see 1,000 people employed when fully operational in 2019.

Expansions of scale from the existing client base over recent years included projects from Ericsson and NPD in Athlone, Abbott in Longford and Avery Denison in Longford. The existing FDI base of companies enjoy strong collaborative links with the Athlone Institute of Technology and the presence of a third level Institute of scale has been key to the development of the Region.

The availability of appropriate property solutions continues to be a strategic asset supporting the winning of FDI. To support the delivery of IDA’s current strategy Winning FDI 2015-2019, a €150m property investment plan was announced in February 2015. This investment focus is on the building of Advance Building Solutions (ABS), infrastructure investment in a number of Utility Intensive Strategic site solutions and the upgrade of Business and Technology Parks within IDA’s national portfolio. IDA’s property investment programme for the Midlands Region included the construction of an Advance Building Solution (ABS) in the Athlone Business & Technology Park, which facilitated Aerie Pharmaceutical in establishing a new ophthalmic production facility and the creation of 50 high jobs.

IDA’s focus over the coming two years and beyond is to build on the strengths and competencies of the Midlands Region with a particular focus on high value manufacturing, services and research and development opportunities across a number of established clusters in Life Sciences, Technology, and Global Business Services. Emerging technology trends have and will continue to create new opportunities across the region in areas such as data analytics, smart manufacturing, cybersecurity and new approaches to working such as home working and hub working.

IDA Ireland will continue to work closely with existing clients to retain and strengthen their presence through continued company transformation as well as pursuing new areas of oppor-

tunity for clients companies. IDA will continue to work closely with Enterprise Ireland and its indigenous base of companies to identify synergies, enhance clusters, participate in site visits and maximise benefits for the Region.

Enhanced collaboration will be needed to align the efforts of all stakeholders and service providers to ensure that the Midlands Region continues to meet the needs of overseas companies. The delivery of necessary infrastructure and property solutions, fostering the continued development and growth of a skilled workforce and the continued development of the place-making of the Region are pre-requisites to winning continued FDI investment. Such collaboration can act as a catalyst to attracting new companies and talent to the Midlands.

The Midlands Region is very well positioned to continue to attract new FDI investment and grow employment in existing companies and IDA Ireland will continue to collaborate with all stakeholders and parties in the Region to achieve this objective under the refreshed Regional Enterprise Plan.

Enterprise Ireland Data

289. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of Enterprise Ireland clients in counties Longford and Westmeath in each of the years 2016 to 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [3104/19]

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

On the 9th of January 2019, Enterprise Ireland (EI) announced its 2018 end of year results. 215,207 people are now employed in companies supported by the agency and this is the highest total employment in the 20 year history of the agency. Almost two thirds (61%) of the new jobs created were outside of Dublin with all regions recording increases in employment. 64% of total employment by Enterprise Ireland supported companies is now outside of Dublin.

In County Longford there are 46 companies supported by Enterprise Ireland while in County Westmeath there are 91 EI clients. The breakdown of these EI supported companies over the last three years is set out in the table below.

Clients	2016	2017	2018
Co. Longford	49	50	46
Co. Westmeath	99	114	91

I continue to work closely with Enterprise Ireland to support sustainable regional enterprise development and to ensure that the benefits of our economic growth are felt in every region.

IDA Ireland Data

290. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA visits to counties Westmeath and Longford in each of the years 2016 to 2018; the level of IDA-supported jobs in counties Longford and Westmeath on 31 December 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [3105/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department and its agencies are working towards ambitious targets to ensure that employment

and investment are distributed as evenly as possible across the country. I am pleased to say that significant progress is being made with 58% of all IDA employment now outside of Dublin. This represents the highest number of people employed by IDA clients outside of Dublin in the history of the organization. 2018 saw more IDA jobs added in the regions than at any time over the past 17 years.

Counties Westmeath and Longford are both marketed by the IDA as part of the wider Midlands region. There are now 42 multinational companies based in the Midlands, employing 5,720 people. Last year the region reported the highest level of percentage growth in net new foreign direct investment (FDI) jobs nationally, with an increase of 13% in employment by IDA client companies.

County Longford itself saw a 20% increase in IDA client-supported job creation in 2018, with 900 people currently employed in overseas firms. County Westmeath also performed well over that same period with 3,466 people now employed in IDA client firms, an increase of 16% over the 2017 figures.

With regards to site visits, IDA Ireland continues to highlight the benefits of expanding or locating in all counties to its client base. It is important to remember, however, that the final decision as to where to invest always rests with the company concerned.

The tables below outline the number of IDA jobs in Counties Longford and Westmeath from 2016 to 2018 and the number of site visits by IDA client companies from 2016 until the third quarter of 2018. Figures for Q4 2018 will be available later this month.

Table A: Employment in IDA Ireland companies in Longford and Westmeath 2016-2018

County	2016	2017	2018
Westmeath	2,749	2,973	3,466
Longford	783	745	900

Table B: IDA Ireland site visits to Longford and Westmeath 2016-Q3 2018

County	2016	2017	Q1 2018	Q2 2018	Q3 2018
Westmeath	36	42	3	9	6
Longford	6	7	0	0	2

Brexit Supports

291. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of applicants that have applied for support pursuant to the various Brexit schemes; the amounts expended on each scheme to date, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [3106/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department and its agencies are working to provide extensive supports, schemes and advice to ensure that businesses are prepared for Brexit. These measures aim to assist businesses in identifying key risk areas and the practical preparatory actions to be taken over the coming weeks.

In addition to the direct supports outlined in the table below, my Department and I have been very active in the 'Getting Ireland Brexit Ready' public information campaign. This campaign includes workshop events throughout the country aimed primarily at business and people most impacted by Brexit. Officials from my Department and agencies also participated in the Getting

Ireland Brexit Ready events, which included Enterprise Ireland, IDA, the LEOs, NSAI and the HSA.

Further to the below, increased funding has been allocated to Brexit-related support from my Department and its agencies as part of Budget 2019. An additional €5 million capital funding has been allocated to the Local Enterprise Offices, an increase of 22%, and a further €1 million allocated to Intertrade Ireland to help SMEs prepare for the particular North-South challenges associated with Brexit. Additional resources have also been distributed across Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland and the Health and Safety Authority.

The Future Growth Loan Scheme was announced in Budget 2019. This scheme is jointly funded by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Loans of €50,000 to €3m will be available, with loans of under €500,000 being provided on an unsecured basis. The scheme will be available to eligible Irish businesses, including those in the primary agriculture and seafood sectors, to support strategic, long-term investment in a post-Brexit environment. The SBCI has issued an “Open Call” for financial institutions to apply by 11 February 2019 for designation as a lending partner under the Scheme. It is expected that this Scheme will be operational in early 2019.

While many businesses have taken preparedness actions, a number have yet to do so. It is vital that businesses prepare themselves for Brexit impacts and take actions to mitigate. Firms that do business with the UK, whether buying goods or exporting products, should examine their supply chains to determine their vulnerabilities and take appropriate action.

Scheme	Uptake (18.01)	Expenditure on Scheme (18.01)
Brexit Loan Scheme	375 applications received, 336 approved by SBCI, 65 Loans progressed to sanction at bank level to a value of €14.94 million.	€23 million Exchequer Funding (€14 million from my DBEI and €9 million from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.
Enterprise Ireland Brexit Scorecard - online platform for Irish companies to self-assess their exposure to Brexit	3,902 Brexit Scorecards have been completed. 681 LEO clients have completed the scorecard.	2017 Expenditure: €25,568 2018 Expenditure: €11,261 Total Expenditure: €36,829
Enterprise Ireland Be Prepared Grant	155 Be Prepared Grants have been approved	2017 Expenditure: €10,000 2018 Expenditure: €178,871 2019 Expenditure to date: €12,623 Total Expenditure: €201,494
Enterprise Ireland Market Discovery Fund - A support to EI clients to research new markets	209 projects have been approved under this initiative	Market Discovery fund was launched in 2018 2018 Expenditure: €227,743 2019 Expenditure to date: €108,914 Total Expenditure: €336,657

Scheme	Uptake (18.01)	Expenditure on Scheme (18.01)
Enterprise Ireland Agile Innovation Fund - Gives rapid fast-track access to innovation funding	39 Agile Innovation projects have been approved	Agile Innovation Fund was launched in 2018 2018 Expenditure: €385,2642019 Expenditure to date: €51,892Total Expenditure: €437,156
Enterprise Ireland Brexit Advisory Clinics	11 Brexit Advisory Clinics have been run with approx. 915 in attendance	2017 Expenditure: €55,7972018 Expenditure: €166,6982019 Expenditure to date: €1,722Total Expenditure: €224,217
Enterprise Ireland Brexit “Act On Programme” – A support funding the engagement of a consultant to devise report with recommendations to help clients address weaknesses and improve resilience	165 “Act on” Plans have been completed	2018 Expenditure: €330,000
Enterprise Ireland Strategic Consultancy Grant – A grant to assist EI clients to hire a strategic consultant for a set period	1,049 Strategic Consultancy Grants have been approved	2016 Expenditure: €278,1372017 Expenditure: €482,6172018 Expenditure: €456,1982019 Expenditure to date: €61,764Total Expenditure: €1,278,716
Enterprise Ireland Brexit-exposed companies that have completed sustainable growth plans	706	N/A These growth plans are part of the Client Engagement Model
Local Enterprise Office Technical Assistance Grant for Micro Export - an incentive for LEO clients to explore and develop new market opportunities	419 clients were approved assistance under the Technical Assistance Grant	€365,774
Local Enterprise Office LEAN for Micro - The LEO Lean4Micro offer was developed in collaboration between the EI Lean department and the LEOs to tailor the EI Lean offer for LEO micro enterprise clients	221 LEO clients have participated in the programme	€518,411

Scheme	Uptake (18.01)	Expenditure on Scheme (18.01)
Local Enterprise Office Mentoring	471 mentoring participants solely focused on Brexit	No specific amount is allocated to Brexit mentoring specifically, it is part of the overall Measure 2 allocation. Similarly, the amount spent is not categorised in the LEO financial reports. LEO schemes are demand driven.
Local Enterprise Office Brexit Seminars/Events	3,996 Participants at the Brexit Information events	
InterTradeIreland Brexit Advisory Service	4,175 SMEs have directly engaged with the Brexit Advisory Service in 2018	Approx. €1,260,586
InterTradeIreland Brexit Start to Plan Vouchers	There have been 811 applications, with 657 approved and 25 still pending assessment.	Approx. €422,592
Pilot Online Retail Scheme administered by Enterprise Ireland	Applications are currently being assessed by Enterprise Ireland and the successful applicants will be announced in Q1 2019. There will also be a second call in 2019	Total fund of €1.25m. The first call opened on 24 October and closed on the 5 December.

Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries

292. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health the location in which persons who grew up in mother and baby homes can access the counselling services made available by his Department. [2360/19]

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 and Social Care Professionals Regulation

293. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that play therapists are unregulated; the measures he is taking to address the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2927/19]

294. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Health the procedures in place should a person wish to make a formal complaint against a play therapist; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2928/19]

449. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Health if play therapists are regulated by the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2930/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 293, 294 and 449 together.

There is at present no system of statutory regulation for play therapists in Ireland.

CORU is Ireland's multi-profession health regulator. It was established under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005. CORU is responsible for the regulation of the 17 professions designated by the Act.

Section 4 of the Act provides that, following a consultation process and with the approval of the Houses of the Oireachtas, I, as Minister for Health, may make regulations designating a health or social care profession not already contained in the Act. My primary consideration in the regulation of other professions is the protection of the public and in this regard I have asked CORU to facilitate a risk assessment of the principal health and social care professionals seeking regulation. This risk assessment will include play therapists. I expect the assessment to be completed by mid 2019 and it will then inform the decisions I make regarding the future regulation of any further professions.

It should be noted, however, that while play therapists are not currently subject to professional statutory regulation, they are subject to a range of legislation and regulation, similar to other service providers, including consumer legislation, competition, contract and criminal law. It is open to persons to contact a solicitor should they wish to pursue these avenues.

Cross-Border Health Services Provision

295. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health his plans in relation to the cross-border directive after Brexit; if EU citizens will still be in a position to receive treatment in the UK; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2305/19]

296. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health his plans for Irish citizens to continue to receive treatment in Northern Ireland or England after Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2306/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 295 and 296 together.

As part of a whole of Government response to Brexit, the Department of Health is working to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated set of preparations to ensure continuity of health services post-Brexit. This work involves the Department and the HSE and other agencies in engaging in intensive Brexit preparedness and contingency planning.

A key consideration will be to ensure that insofar as possible there is minimum disruption to health services and that essential services are maintained on a cross-Border, all-island and Ireland-UK basis. Work is currently ongoing in relation to this matter.

National Children's Hospital Expenditure

297. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if he will publish the list of delayed capital projects due to the overspend on the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2309/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive is currently

developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The requirements of the new children's hospital and other health capital projects, currently at various stages of development, are being considered as part of this process.

Hospital Appointments Status

298. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect to receive an appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2312/19]

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.

Vaccination Programme

299. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his plans to roll out the meningitis B vaccine on a catch-up basis for those children who missed out on the vaccine by virtue of their age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2315/19]

348. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to implement a catch-up vaccination programme for all children in relation to the meningitis B strain in view of recent cases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2436/19]

360. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if consideration has been given to advising the HSE to introduce a catch-up programme for children up to 18 years of age for the meningitis B vaccine; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2456/19]

397. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health if the decision not to undertake a catch-up programme of meningitis B vaccinations for children who had not received it prior to the roll-out of the vaccination scheme will be reconsidered in view of the recent spate of deaths from meningitis B; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2566/19]

398. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of a catch-up programme of meningitis B vaccinations for children that had not received it prior to the roll out of the vaccination scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2567/19]

425. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health the information or assistance provided to parents of newborn children regarding vaccines, in particular the meningitis vaccine; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2787/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 299, 348, 360, 397, 398 and 425 together.

The National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) is an independent committee of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland which is comprised of experts in a number of specialties, including infectious diseases, paediatrics, and public health, which makes recommendations to my Department on vaccination policy in Ireland. Its recommendations are based on the prevalence of the relevant disease in Ireland and international best practice in relation to immunisation. NIAC continues to revise recommendations so as to allow for the introduction of new vaccines in Ireland and to keep abreast of changes in the patterns of disease.

On foot of a recommendation by NIAC, the Primary Childhood Immunisation Schedule was amended in 2016 to include the introduction of the Meningitis B vaccine for all babies born on or after 1 October 2016. This change to the immunisation schedule took effect from 1 December 2016. The first dose of the vaccine is administered to children when they reach two months of age; a second dose is administered at four months and a third and final dose at twelve months. Meningitis B disease is most common in babies under 1 year of age and the scheduling of the administration of the vaccine under the immunisation programme as recommended by NIAC takes this into account.

All vaccines administered through the Primary Childhood Immunisation Schedule are provided free of charge. Ireland is the second country in Europe to make the Men B vaccine available free of charge as part of its national immunisation programme.

There are no plans to introduce a catch-up programme for the Men B vaccine to older children. Those who have a medical card are eligible to have the vaccine administered by their GP free of charge. However, the purchase of the vaccine is not covered by the medical card scheme.

In Ireland, the following meningitis vaccines are provided to children born on or after 1 October 2016 as part of the Primary Childhood Immunisation Schedule:

- 2 months – 6-in-1, pneumococcal vaccine (PCV) and Men B;
- 4 months – 6-in-1 and Men B (Meningococcal B);
- 6 months – 6-in-1, PCV and Men C (Meningococcal C);
- 12 months – Men B;
- 13 months – Hib/Men C and PCV.

Note that the 6-in-1 vaccine contains Hib (*Haemophilus influenzae* b).

Adolescents are also given a Men C booster vaccine in the first year of secondary school against meningitis as part of the School Immunisation Programme.

As of Friday 18 January 2019, seventeen cases of meningococcal disease have been notified to the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC). This compares to 15 cases for same time period last year. Three deaths are associated with the seventeen cases. It is important to note that, although three of the seventeen notified cases are related to Meningitis B, none of the 3 deaths have been attributed to this strain of the disease.

300. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the waiting time for child and adolescent mental health services for Dublin 9; when a child (details supplied) can be given an appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2316/19]

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

Home Help Service Appeals

301. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if additional home help hours will be provided to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2318/19]

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

Hospital Appointments Status

302. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect to receive an appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2321/19]

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

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

Dental Services Staff

303. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health when an orthodontist will be appointed to a health centre (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2323/19]

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.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Coverage

304. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health if autoimmune hepatitis is covered under the long-term illness scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2324/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The LTI Scheme was established under Section 59(3) of the Health Act 1970 (as amended). The conditions covered by the LTI are: acute leukaemia; mental handicap; cerebral palsy; mental illness (in a person under 16); cystic fibrosis; multiple sclerosis; diabetes insipidus; muscular dystrophies; diabetes mellitus; parkinsonism; epilepsy; phenylketonuria; haemophilia; spina bifida; hydrocephalus; and conditions arising from the use of Thalidomide. Under the LTI Scheme, patients receive drugs, medicines, and medical and surgical appliances directly related to the treatment of their illness, free of charge.

There are no plans to extend the list of conditions covered by the Scheme at this time. However, I wish to inform the Deputy that it is proposed that the LTI Scheme would be included as part of a review of the basis for existing hospital and medication charges, to be carried out under commitments given in the Sláintecare Implementation Strategy.

Psychological Assessments Waiting Times

305. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Health the number of children waiting to see a psychologist as part of the early intervention assessment in counties Sligo and Leitrim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2333/19]

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.

Transport Support Scheme

306. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the status of the health (transport support) Bill. [2334/19]

307. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the status of the transport support payment for disabled persons; when it will be made available in view of the fact that the motorised transport grant for persons with disabilities ceased in 2013; and his views on whether the cessation of this scheme has had a large impact on persons with a disability. [2335/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 306 and 307 together.

The Deputy will be familiar with the background to the closure of both the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant schemes in February 2013.

My colleague, the Minister for Health and I brought a Memorandum to Government in May 2018 on proposals for a new Transport Support Payment Scheme in May 2018. Following con-

sideration of the matter, it was decided to withdraw the Memorandum from the Cabinet Agenda at the time. I intend to revert to Government in due course with revised proposals to reflect the discussions at that Cabinet meeting and further discussions between myself and Minister Harris on the best way to progress the Transport Scheme.

With regard to the Motorised Transport Grant, this scheme operated as a means-tested grant to assist persons with severe disabilities with the purchase or adaptation of a car, where that car was essential to retain employment. Prior to the closure of the scheme in 2013, approximately 300 people per annum qualified for a Motorised Transport Grant, which was payable once in any three-year period. The maximum grant payable was €5,020. Following closure of the scheme, no further Motorised Transport Grants have been payable.

It is important to note that the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers scheme operated by the Revenue Commissioners, remains in place. This scheme provides VRT and VAT relief, an exemption from road tax and a fuel grant to drivers and passengers with a disability, who qualify under the relevant criteria set out in governing regulations made by the Minister for Finance. Specifically adapted vehicles driven by persons with a disability are also exempt from payment of tolls on national roads and toll bridges. Transport Infrastructure Ireland has responsibility for this particular scheme.

There are improvements in access to a range of transport support schemes available to persons with disabilities in the State and on-going work is being carried out by Government Departments, agencies and transport providers to further improve access to public transport services. Under the National Disability Inclusion Strategy, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport has responsibility for the continued development of accessibility and availability of public transport for people with a disability.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

308. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of appeals made to pricing and contract terms negotiated between the NTPF and proprietors of registered nursing homes in relation to the provision of long-term residential care services to nursing home support scheme residents in each of the years 2011 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the number of appeals upheld and rejected, respectively, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2346/19]

309. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the mechanism and various parameters used to determine and calculate the maximum price paid to proprietors of registered nursing facilities in return for the provision of long-term residential care services to nursing homes support scheme residents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2347/19]

310. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of written submissions received as part of the most recent review of the nursing home support scheme; the number of submissions received from the proprietors of registered nursing facilities; when the next review of the scheme will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2348/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 308 to 310, inclusive, together.

The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) has been designated by the Minister for Health pursuant to Section 40 of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act as a body authorised to negotiate with proprietors of registered nursing homes to reach agreement in relation to the maximum price(s) that will be charged for the provision of long-term residential care services

to Nursing Homes Support Scheme residents. As part of this function, the NTPF enters into “Approved Nursing Home Agreements” with registered private and voluntary nursing homes to record the maximum price(s) that have been negotiated. The NTPF are independent in its functions and the Department of Health plays no role in these negotiations.

The NTPF take the following guidelines into account in negotiating prices; (a) costs reasonably and prudently incurred by the nursing home and evidence of value for money, (b) price(s) previously charged, (c) local market price and (d) budgetary constraints and the obligation of the State to use available resources in the most beneficial, effective and efficient manner to improve, promote and protect the health and welfare of the public.

In relation to the Number of reviews (appeals) carried out with regard to price negotiations the below table details the number of appeals made to the NTPF from 2010 to date. I can confirm that no appeal was rejected.

Year	No. of Reviews
2010	1
2011	13
2012	5
2013	8
2014	2
2015	3
2016	3
2017	2
2018	1
2019	0
Total	37

The Report of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS) Review published in 2015 identified a number of issues for more detailed consideration, including a review of the pricing mechanism used by the NTPF, with a view to:

- Ensuring value for money and economy, with the lowest possible administrative costs for clients and the State and administrative burden for providers;
- Increasing the transparency of the pricing mechanism so that existing and potential investors can make as informed decisions as possible; and
- Ensuring that there is adequate residential capacity for those residents with more complex needs.

A Steering Group was established to oversee and manage the pricing review. The Steering Group is chaired by the NTPF and includes representatives from the Department of Health and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER). As part of its work on the review the NTPF sought various inputs including external expertise and stakeholder engagement to inform the review. These inputs are being considered in detail.

In relation to the number of submissions received during the pricing review, I can confirm that one submission was received. However, the external experts commissioned by the NTPF to provide expert input to the Review undertook a stakeholder engagement exercise as part of their work. In this regard, there were twenty separate engagements with relevant parties, including four individual nursing homes.

The NTPF are now close to completing the report and aim to discuss the latest draft of the report and next steps early this year. Once complete the report of the review will then be submitted to the Department of Health.

Medicinal Products Data

311. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health the quantity of each of the drugs (details supplied) that were manufactured and imported here and exported in each of the years 2011 to the most recent year for which data is available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2351/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department does not collate the information requested by the Deputy.

Prescriptions Data

312. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent on prescriptions of specific drugs (details supplied); the number of persons prescribed SSRIs and SNRIs according to the latest data available; the details of which medical professionals are prescribing same, for example, general practitioners, psychiatrists and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2352/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the pricing and reimbursement of medicines; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Drug Rehabilitation Clinics

313. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether it is sustainable to charge persons that attend a drug service (details supplied) for prescriptions received at the centre; his views on whether the policy mitigates against persons that have no money to achieve drug rehabilitation; and his plans to change the policy. [2356/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): Budget 2019 provided for a significant increase in health funding which will assist families with the cost of doctor visits and medicines.

Homeless people in receipt of a medical card can access GP services and get prescribed drugs and medicines. However, as with all holders of a medical card, they are obliged to pay a prescription charge of €2 per item, up to a maximum of €20 per month. These charges can represent a greater financial burden for homeless people in emergency accommodation or who are sleeping rough.

The Department of Health, in conjunction with the HSE, is developing administrative measures that would allow this cohort of the homeless population to be supplied with prescribed drugs and medicines without having to pay the prescription charge.

I welcome the measures to reduce the costs of GP services and drugs for vulnerable groups. I believe it is unfair that homeless people must pay prescription charges and welcome the inten-

tion to end these charges in the coming months.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

314. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the procedure in cases in which a person under the fair deal scheme and a medical card holder requires transport from a nursing home to their local general hospital for appointments and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2361/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS), commonly referred to as A Fair Deal, is a system of financial support for people who require long-term residential care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their means while the State pays the balance of the cost.

The NHSS covers the cost of the standard components of long-term residential care which are:

- Nursing and personal care appropriate to the level of care needs of the person;
- Bed and board;
- Basic aids and appliances necessary to assist a person with the activities of daily living; and
- Laundry service.

A person's eligibility for other schemes, such as the medical card scheme or the drugs payment scheme, is unaffected by participation in the NHSS or residence in a nursing home. In determining the services covered by the NHSS it was considered very important that the care recipient and the taxpayer would be protected and would not end up paying for the same services twice. For this reason, medications and aids that are already prescribed for individuals under an existing scheme are not included in the services covered by the NHSS, as this would involve effectively paying twice for the same service.

It is important to state that residents of nursing homes should enjoy the same levels of support and access to services as when they lived in their own homes. It is of course acknowledged that the reason they require 24 hour levels of support is due to their level of dependency, which in turn will require inevitably access to clinical services including hospital and other outpatient appointments in the community. The HSE provides for a level of Intermediate Care Vehicles, which are used predominantly for non-emergency transport between acute hospitals for admission and discharge purposes. They would be reserved for those who would need specific support in transport and other than that normal transport arrangements apply. These arrangements (e.g. wheelchair taxi) are normally funded by the individual.

Although the NHSS covers core living expenses, residents can still incur some costs in a nursing home. In recognition of this, anyone in receipt of financial support under the NHSS retains at least 20% of their income. The minimum amount that is retained is the equivalent of 20% of the State Pension (Non-Contributory).

Hospitals Building Programme

315. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if the €9 million for a replace-

ment 50 bed unit at the Sacred Heart Hospital, County Roscommon, has been ring-fenced; if the design team has been approved; if the project is still included in the HSE capital plan 2017 to 2021; the status of the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2362/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Following the publication of the Health Service Executive's National Service Plan for 2019, the Health Service Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The HSE Capital Plan for 2019 will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 having regard to the available capital funding, the number of large national capital projects currently underway and the relevant priority of each project.

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 the appointment of a design team to this capital project at the Sacred Heart Hospital Roscommon.

Cancer Screening Programmes

316. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 380 of 18 December 2018, if he is satisfied with the response of the HSE that it has no records of winning tender proposals being destroyed (details supplied); his views on whether this statement is in contradiction with paragraph 7.3.1 of the Scoping Inquiry into the Cervical-Check Screening Programme published in September 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2364/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The information requested by the Deputy is currently being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Medical Card Administration

317. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health the reason the medical card of a person (details supplied) was recently revoked; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2366/19]

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.

Mental Health Services Provision

318. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE will be requested to include a day care centre for persons with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia in the development of the new facility which will replace existing hospitals in County Kerry (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2377/19]

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

Medical Card Eligibility

319. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his plans to increase the

qualifying income threshold for persons over 70 years of age for a medical card in view of the fact that recent increases in the State pension have resulted in the income of some holders going above the qualifying threshold; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2386/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Alteration of Criteria for Eligibility) (No. 2) Act 2013, when a person attains the age of 70, the medical card income limits are €500 gross income per week for a single person and €900 gross income per week for a couple. Any revision of these medical card income thresholds requires primary legislation.

Persons aged 70 or older, who are assessed as ineligible under the gross income thresholds, may also have their eligibility assessed under the means-tested medical card scheme if they so wish, for example in the event that they face particularly high expenses, e.g. nursing home or medication costs. This scheme is open to all persons, irrespective of their age and assessment is based on net income and assessable outgoing expenses. The general scheme, although having lower income thresholds, provides for income disregards and relevant outgoings to be taken into account in the assessment process.

Furthermore, persons, including those aged over 70 years, may be deemed eligible for a medical card on a discretionary basis, if they are judged to face undue hardship in arranging GP services as a result of medical or social circumstances. In addition, from August 2015, all persons aged 70 or older qualify for a GP Visit Card, regardless of income.

Budget 2019 provided for increases in a number of social welfare payments which are intended to come into effect in March 2019. It would be the Government's intention that people's ability to qualify for a medical card would not be adversely affected by this increase. I have asked the HSE to monitor the situation and to advise me if it considers that changes in the rates of social welfare payments may affect people's ability to qualify for a medical card.

There are no proposals at present to amend the current income limits for the granting of eligibility for medical cards for persons aged 70 and over. However, it should be noted that the gross income limits are reviewed annually and considered in the context of the budget.

Hospital Services

320. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the number and the length of time persons are awaiting a DEXA scan in Naas Hospital in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2390/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the length of time persons are waiting on a DEXA scan in Naas Hospital, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Services

321. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the reason services have been suspended in Naas Hospital for DEXA scans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2391/19]

322. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if the suspension of DEXA scanning services at Naas Hospital will be reversed; his plans for the service in Naas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2392/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 321 and 322 together.

As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly, as soon as possible.

Hospital Waiting Lists

323. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of a procedure for a person (details supplied). [2393/19]

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.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Data

324. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of referrals to CAMHS made between January and December 2018; the number of referrals accepted by CAMHS in the same period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2396/19]

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

Hospital Services

325. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if the delivery of the second cath lab at University Hospital Waterford will be delayed in view of the significant increase in costs of the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2397/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I remain committed to the provision of a second cath lab in University Hospital Waterford. It is intended that the cost of progressing the project to design, planning and construction stages will be considered in the context of the HSE's Capital Plan for 2019, which is currently being finalised.

A National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services is currently underway. The aim of this Review is to achieve optimal patient outcomes at population level with particular emphasis

on the safety, quality and sustainability of the services that patients receive by establishing the need for an optimal configuration of a national adult cardiac service. As set out in the National Development Plan 2018-2027, investment in cardiac cath labs and other cardiac services infrastructure nationally will be informed by the outcome of the National Review, which is expected to be complete by June 2019.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

326. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if the rare diseases technology review committee plan to review a drug (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2398/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the pricing and reimbursement of medicines; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

327. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision a new MRI scanner at the Midlands Regional Hospital, Mullingar. [2401/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

Ambulance Service Data

328. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of ambulances covering all of the major towns in County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2402/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Hospital Overcrowding

329. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons recorded on trolleys at Mayo University Hospital for each month of 2016, 2017 and 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2415/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I acknowledge the distress overcrowded EDs cause to patients, their families, and frontline staff working in very challenging working conditions in hospitals throughout the country. Hospitals are increasingly operating at or above capacity, with year-round demand pressures that are further challenged over the winter months.

We are in a very busy period for our health services, with many sites reporting significant numbers of patient attendances. Hospitals are also reporting a significant increase in the numbers of patients presenting with respiratory and flu-like illness.

Key actions are underway as part of the Winter Plan to support hospitals during this period of peak demand. These include the opening of additional beds, the use of private hospital capacity, frailty intervention teams in EDs, additional homecare packages and transitional care beds, and additional diagnostics in hospitals and for GPs.

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

Hospitals Data

330. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in attendance at Mayo University Hospital emergency department in each of the years 2014 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2416/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I acknowledge the distress overcrowded EDs cause to patients, their families, and frontline staff working in very challenging working conditions in hospitals throughout the country. Hospitals are increasingly operating at or above capacity, with year-round demand pressures that are further challenged over the winter months.

We are in a very busy period for our health services, with many sites reporting significant numbers of patient attendances. Hospitals are also reporting a significant increase in the numbers of patients presenting with respiratory and flu-like illness.

Key actions are underway as part of the Winter Plan to support hospitals during this period of peak demand. These include the opening of additional beds, the use of private hospital capacity, frailty intervention teams in EDs, additional homecare packages and transitional care beds, and additional diagnostics in hospitals and for GPs.

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

Hospital Facilities

331. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the status of the promised modular unit at Mayo University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2417/19]

338. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health his plans for Mayo University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2424/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 331 and 338 together.

As Minister for Health, I recognise that hospitals are increasingly operating at or above capacity, with year-round demand pressures that are further challenged over the winter months. It is against this background that the Health Service Capacity Review 2018 recommended an increase in acute hospitals beds of over 2,600 by 2031 to support the projected increase in demand for services in the years ahead.

Increasing capacity is a priority for the Government in line with the recommendations of the Health Service Capacity Review. In this context, an additional 240 beds have been opened over the past 12 months and the HSE's National Service Plan provides for a comprehensive capacity programme for 2019. The main elements of the programme are:

- the opening of 78 new beds by the end of the first quarter of 2019;
- the opening of an additional 75 acute beds and 70 community beds during 2019, as part of the Winter Plan;
- preparation of 202 beds this year, to be operational in the first quarter of 2020, including beds in Mayo University Hospital.

The HSE is currently also developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The requirements of Mayo University Hospital and other health capital projects at various stages of development are being considered as part of this process.

Hospital Appointments Administration

332. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of elective surgery cancellations at Mayo University Hospital and Galway University Hospital, respectively in 2018; the reason for the cancellations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2418/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

333. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the wait time for outpatient appointments at Mayo University Hospital and Galway University Hospital, respectively, as of January 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2419/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving access to hospital treatment is a key priority for government.

Budget 2019 announced a funding increase from €55 million to €75 million to the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) to provide treatment for patients.

My Department is working closely with the NTPF and the HSE to finalise a Scheduled Care Access Plan for inpatients/day case and outpatients for 2019. In this regard, the NTPF and the HSE will continue to work closely with Hospital Groups, inviting proposals to improve access for patients waiting for either Inpatient/Daycase or Outpatient procedures.

Waiting list figures are published by the NTPF on their website www.ntpf.ie.

The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the attached document and shows waiting list figures for December 2018 published by the NTPF. There are 39,353 patients on the Galway University Hospital Outpatient waiting list. Of these, just over 62% (24,570) are waiting 9 months or less. There are 8,656 patients on the Mayo University Hospital outpatient waiting list. Of these, 54% (4,669) are waiting 9 months or less.

Hospital name	Mayo General Hospital
Specialty	(All)
WL Status	(All)

Column Labels

0-3Months	3-6Months	6-9Months	9-12Months	12-15Months	15-18Months
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2680	1022	967	671	489	419
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table contd.

18-21Months	21-24Months	24-36Months	36-48Months	48+Months	Grand Total
348	364	1016	536	144	8656

Hospital name	Galway University Hospital
Specialty	(All)
WL Status	(All)

Column Labels

0-3Months	3-6Months	6-9Months	9-12Months	12-15Months	15-18Months
12968	6827	4775	3364	2872	2198

table contd.

18-21Months	21-24Months	24-36Months	36-48Months	48+Months	Grand Total
1902	1312	2611	453	71	39353

Hospital Waiting Lists

334. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons under 18 years of age waiting for an inpatient or an outpatient appointment at Mayo University Hospital and Galway University Hospital, respectively, in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2420/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving access to hospital treatment is a key priority for government. Budget 2019 announced a funding increase from €55 million to €75 million to the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) to provide treatment for patients.

My Department is working closely with the NTPF and the HSE to finalise a Scheduled Care Access Plan for inpatients/day case and outpatients for 2019. In this regard, the NTPF and the HSE will continue to work closely with Hospital Groups, inviting proposals to improve access for patients waiting for either Inpatient/Daycase or Outpatient procedures.

The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the tables.

Hospital name	Mayo General Hospital
Specialty	(All)
WL Status	(All)

Column Labels

0-3Months	3-6Months	6-9Months	9-12Months	12-15Months	15-18Months
2680	1022	967	671	489	419

table contd.

18-21Months	21-24Months	24-36Months	36-48Months	48+Months	Grand Total
348	364	1016	536	144	8656

Hospital name	Galway University Hospital
Specialty	(All)

WL Status	(All)
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Column Labels

0-3Months	3-6Months	6-9Months	9-12Months	12-15Months	15-18Months
12968	6827	4775	3364	2872	2198

table contd.

18-21Months	21-24Months	24-36Months	36-48Months	48+Months	Grand Total
1902	1312	2611	453	71	39353

Psychological Services Waiting Lists

335. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of children waiting for a child psychologist appointment in County Mayo; the wait time for this appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2421/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Primary Care Services Provision

336. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons refused a primary care certificate in County Mayo in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2422/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Staff Data

337. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of job vacancies at Mayo University Hospital by department and job title; the length of time these positions have been vacant in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2423/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Question No. 338 answered with Question No. 331.

Mental Health Services Provision

339. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if the delivery of the national forensic mental health service will be delayed in view of the significant increase in costs of the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2426/19]

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

possible

Cancer Screening Programmes

340. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the details of the State's financial liabilities arising out of compensation in relation to the CervicalCheck controversy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2427/19]

341. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if a compensation tribunal will be established immediately in order that women terminally ill with cervical cancer can have their claims processed as quickly as possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2428/19]

344. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) has commenced preparatory work on the establishment of the CervicalCheck tribunal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2431/19]

345. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health when the legislation to establish the CervicalCheck tribunal will be published; when the tribunal will be operational in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2432/19]

346. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if working premises have been secured for the proposed CervicalCheck tribunal; the details of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2433/19]

347. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the terms of reference for the independent statutory tribunal to deal with claims arising from the CervicalCheck controversy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2434/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 340, 341 and 344 to 347, inclusive, together.

On 18 December 2018, the Government agreed to establish an independent statutory tribunal, chaired by Ms Justice Mary Irvine, to deal with claims arising from CervicalCheck. The Tribunal will be established based on the recommendations set out by Mr Justice Charles Meenan in his recent report on an alternative system for dealing with cases arising from CervicalCheck.

The establishment of the Tribunal is an urgent priority for the Government and my Department is currently preparing the necessary legislative proposals to expedite this.

Cancer Screening Programmes

342. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if women who find their cervical smear tests were misread and have now been diagnosed with cancer can avail of the care package being provided to the 221 women whose smears were audited by CervicalCheck; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2429/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In response to the particular circumstances arising from the non-disclosure of the results of clinical audit, the Government decided on 11 May 2018 to put in place a comprehensive package of support measures for women (and their families) who have been identified as having been diagnosed with cervical cancer since 2008,

for whom cytology review recommendations following clinical audit differed from the original test, and for any other women so identified by the clinical review to be undertaken by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG).

The provision of supports to women and families is continuing, and the HSE reports that the number of supports being provided continues to increase on a weekly basis in response to requests. Arrangements are in place to reimburse, on receipt of claims, a range of costs that the women and their families may incur, including travel costs, childcare costs and medical appointment costs among others. In addition, measures have been put in place to ensure that retrospective costs are reimbursed, while an automatic review system is in place to simplify and streamline the claims process to ensure prompt payment of all items covered by the Government decision. To date, just over €1.18m has been reimbursed in respect of various health and social care costs, almost €910,000 of which relates to retrospective payments. In addition, some 693 medical cards have been issued as part of the supports package, while women are also being supported in accessing certain drugs, the costs of which are also being met by the HSE.

Cancer Screening Programmes

343. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the waiting time for cervical smear test results; the number of women waiting for a repeat smear test following his commitment to provide same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2430/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In May 2018, I asked CervicalCheck to make the necessary arrangements to provide that any woman who had had a CervicalCheck smear test, and whose GP considered that they should have a further test, to access such a further test without charge. This decision was made in good faith to address the considerable fears of the many anxious women in Ireland as a result of significant media coverage of the issues that emerged in late April.

In the months since then, there has been a significant increase in the volume of women presenting for smear tests. This includes women who have availed of the out of cycle tests, but also a greater number of women presenting for scheduled screening.

This increased level of engagement with the programme is very welcome. However, the increased demand has undoubtedly put immense pressure on lab capacity and the HSE has advised that, currently, results of smear tests may take up to 22 weeks from the time of the test. Although many results are returned in less time, some may take longer.

The HSE has been working actively with the labs to manage this issue and to improve turnaround times for smear tests. The HSE reports that laboratories have agreed to undertake additional recruitment, provide for overtime and manage annual leave in an effort to minimise the backlog. In addition, the HSE is aiming to source additional screening capacity, which would improve the turnaround time of results. However, sourcing capacity and resources is a global challenge as countries start to move to primary HPV screening, which vastly reduces the requirement for cytology screening staff.

The HSE is currently developing a capacity plan to take account of available capacity and expected demand, with the aim of bringing the programme into stabilisation this year. This is a priority concern for my Department and the HSE.

In relation to the number of women awaiting the results of a repeat smear test, I have asked the HSE to provide this information directly to the Deputy.

Questions Nos. 344 to 347, inclusive, answered with Question No. 340.

Question No. 348 answered with Question No. 299.

Hospital Appointments Administration

349. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for surgery for a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [2440/19]

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

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

Hospital Appointments Administration

350. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health the surgery date for a person (details supplied); if the surgery will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2443/19]

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.

Emergency Departments Data

351. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of times a full ca-

capacity protocol was invoked in each of the years 2011 to 2018, by hospital in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2444/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE National Escalation Framework consists of a tiered and incremental suite of actions to be adapted and implemented in hospitals with an ED during times when such hospitals are challenged in matching capacity and demand for acute inpatient care.

The full capacity protocol is the last escalation step in the HSE National Escalation Framework and is activated to alleviate pressure on the Emergency Department.

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

Emergency Departments Data

352. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the emergency department waiting times greater than 24 hours for persons over 75 years of age in 2018; if the targets were met; if not, the number of persons over 75 years of age that have had a wait of more than 24 hours in an emergency department in 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2445/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I acknowledge the distress overcrowded EDs cause to patients, their families, and frontline staff working in very challenging working conditions in hospitals throughout the country. Hospitals are increasingly operating at or above capacity, with year-round demand pressures that are further challenged over the winter months.

We are in a very busy period for our health services, with many sites reporting significant numbers of patient attendances. Hospitals are also reporting a significant increase in the numbers of patients presenting with respiratory and flu-like illness.

Key actions are underway as part of the Winter Plan to support hospitals during this period of peak demand. These include the opening of additional beds, the use of private hospital capacity, frailty intervention teams in EDs, additional homecare packages and transitional care beds, and additional diagnostics in hospitals and for GPs.

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

Health Services Data

353. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent by the HSE on taxis in each of the years 2011 to 2018, in tabular form; and the reason for using taxis, for example, patient transfer, transfer of paper files between hospitals and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2446/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Ambulance Service Data

354. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent on private ambulances by each hospital in each of the years 2011 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2447/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Ambulance Service Data

355. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of times an on duty private ambulance has been involved in an accident while on duty in each of the years 2011 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2448/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Ambulance Service Data

356. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of times an on duty ambulance, rapid response vehicle or intermediate care vehicle has been involved in an accident while on duty in each of the years 2011 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2449/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Consultancy Contracts Expenditure

357. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent by the HSE and his Department on external consultancies in each of the years 2011 to 2018, in tabular form; the name of the company; the service provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2451/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Department's total expenditure on external consultants for the years requested since 2011 is as set out at the following link:

[[/debates%20authoring/webattachments.nsf/0/F480C7DC5B7568FE8025838A0068B221/\\$File/PQ%202451-19.docx?openelement](/debates%20authoring/webattachments.nsf/0/F480C7DC5B7568FE8025838A0068B221/$File/PQ%202451-19.docx?openelement)]=Table].

It is the policy in my Department only to engage the services of external consultants where highly specialised skills are not available within the Department and, in particular, when such an approach is felt to be more appropriate and cost-effective.

The tables outline the total amount spent on external consultants from 2011 to 2018. While some contracts are negotiated on the basis of a daily and hourly rate, others are paid a fee on the basis of reaching a number of milestones during the process and in some case producing a report.

I have asked the HSE to issue a separate reply.

Health Services Data

358. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of times surgeries have been cancelled in each of the years 2011 to 2018, in tabular form; the reason for the cancellation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2452/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Medical Card Eligibility

359. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) who would be eligible for a medical card under EU regulations as a cross border worker has to have their application assessed under a household means test; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2453/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under EU Regulation 883/2004, a frontier/cross border worker working and paying social insurance in another EU/EEA country, who meets the criteria, is eligible for a medical card if they are ordinarily resident in Ireland. If the frontier worker is applying for a medical card in their own right a means assessment is not required. However if the frontier worker's spouse is employed or self employed in Ireland, they and their dependants come under Irish legislation, i.e. they are subject to a means test where both their income and the income of the frontier worker is assessed.

As the question in relation to the specific medical card application form is a service matter, I have also asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

Question No. 360 answered with Question No. 299.

HSE Agency Staff Expenditure

361. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the spend on agency staff in the health service in each of the years 2010 to 2018, by occupation, hospital and community healthcare organisation in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2457/19]

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

Hospital Beds Data

362. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the investment in bed capacity in the short, medium and long-term as outlined in the Sláintecare report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2458/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Hospitals are increasingly operating at or above capacity, with year-round demand pressures that are further challenged over the winter months. It is against this background that the Health Service Capacity Review 2018 recommended an increase in acute hospitals beds of over 2,600 by 2031 to support the projected increase in demand for services in the years ahead.

The National Development Plan (NDP), published last year as part of the Project Ireland 2040 policy initiative, provides €10.9 billion to invest in infrastructure, equipment and additional service capacity for the public health sector over the next 10 years in line with the implementation of Sláintecare.

Health capital investments over the coming decade will support existing Government priority projects and commitments, facilitate the shift to new models of care and enable the roll-out of new additional capacity, guided by the implementation of Sláintecare.

The developments that this capital investment will enable include:

- 2,600 additional acute hospital beds;
- 4,500 additional long and short-term beds;
- Elective only hospitals in Cork, Dublin and Galway;
- significant investment in modern e-health and ICT infrastructure;
- Additional Primary Care facilities with greater access to diagnostics;
- Additional facilities for mental health services and for people with disabilities.

Health capital projects and programmes currently underway will continue and these major priority projects will require the bulk of the notified capital allocation over the initial period of the Plan to 2022.

Increasing capacity is a priority for the Government in line with the recommendations of the Health Service Capacity Review. In this context, an additional 240 beds have been opened over the past 12 months and the HSE's National Service Plan provides for a comprehensive capacity programme for 2019. The main elements of the this programme include:

- the opening of 78 new beds by the end of the first quarter of 2019;
- the opening of an additional 75 acute beds and 70 community beds during 2019, as part of the Winter Plan;
- preparation of 202 beds this year, to be operational in the first quarter of 2020.

It is important to recognise that the NDP and implementing Sláintecare are long-term plans. Many capital proposals are at an early stage and, as with all capital development proposals, will require further appraisal, planning, design and tender before a firm timeline or funding required can be established.

The Health Service Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The requirements for bed capacity and other health capital projects, currently at various stages of development, are being considered as part of this process.

Primary Care Centres Provision

363. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 1819 of 24 July 2018, the location which is being developed in Dundalk as a primary care centre; when the conversion process will be completed; when the primary care centre will be operational; and the full range of services which will be delivered from this centre. [2460/19]

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

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

364. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Health if the case of a person (details supplied) in County Sligo will be examined; if additional staff will be assigned to the diabetic services in SUH in order that the person concerned and others in similar circumstances will receive the necessary training in order to access a device; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2463/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

365. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal can expect to receive a date for a procedure at Letterkenny University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2468/19]

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

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

Hospital Overcrowding

366. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of operations cancelled in 2018 due to overcrowding by hospital. [2469/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the number of operations cancelled in 2018 due to overcrowding by hospital, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospitals Data

367. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of operations cancelled

due to staff shortages by hospital. [2470/19]

370. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of procedures cancelled due to unavailability of an ICU bed post-operatively by hospital. [2473/19]

371. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of procedures cancelled due to unavailability of high dependency beds post-operatively by hospital. [2474/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 367, 370 and 371 together.

In relation to the particular queries raised, as they concern service matters, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

National Treatment Purchase Fund Data

368. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of surgical procedures from public waiting lists undertaken in the private sector under the National Treatment Purchase Fund by hospital. [2471/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The 2019 Scheduled Care Access Plan is currently being finalised by my Department and will set out HSE activity levels to reduce waiting lists across specialties and improve access. The Access Plan will also set out activity levels for the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) who, following an increase in funding in Budget 2019 to €75 million, will supply additionality to HSE activity by arranging both insourced and outsourced appointments and treatments to reduce waiting times experienced by patients.

The Access Plan is being developed to ensure an appropriate balance between high volume activities and offering treatment to complex long waiting patients. The NTPF will do this by inviting public hospitals to seek solutions for very long waiters either in the private sector or through insourcing. The NTPF will provide funding to the solutions proposed if appropriate.

The NTPF advise that in 2018 they arranged 10,847 surgical procedures and 2637 GI scopes in private hospitals. In 2017 the NTPF arranged 3,636 surgical procedures and 864 GI scopes in private hospitals. Officials in my Department are further collating the information and I will provide the Deputy with a breakdown by hospital as soon as the information becomes available.

National Treatment Purchase Fund Data

369. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of surgical procedures from public waiting lists undertaken in other jurisdictions, by hospital. [2472/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The National Treatment Purchase Fund advise that in 2018 56 procedures were carried out in other jurisdictions. All 56 procedures were carried out in 3FiveTwo Belfast.

Questions Nos. 370 and 371 answered with Question No. 367.

Mental Health Services Report

372. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 290 of 25 September 2018, if the findings of the review will be published in full as soon as possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2478/19]

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

373. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2479/19]

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.

Hospital Appointments Status

374. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2481/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible

Respite Care Services Provision

375. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if a matter with regard to a person (details supplied) will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2484/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

376. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of special footwear for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2487/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been re-

ferred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Nursing Staff Data

377. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the number of psychiatric nurses that were provided employment contracts in 2018; the number recruited; the type of contract provided in each area in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2494/19]

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

Health Services Staff Data

378. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of full-time physiotherapists working in CHO area 9 in each of the years 2016 to 2018; if this number will be further increased in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2499/19]

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

National Office for Suicide Prevention

379. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the budget allocation for the national office for suicide prevention in each of the years 2017, 2018 and 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2500/19]

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

Hospital Appointments Status

380. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2504/19]

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

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Deaths

381. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if there was a maternal death in a hospital (details supplied) on 25 December 2018; and if the hospital has reported this death to the Coroner. [2505/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly, as soon as possible.

Assisted Human Reproduction Services Provision

382. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health when couples here will be considered for IVF treatment free of charge; the way in which this will be administered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2506/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In October 2017, the Government approved the drafting of a Bill on assisted human reproduction (AHR) and associated areas of research, based on the published General Scheme. The process of drafting this Bill will be completed in conjunction with the Office of the Attorney General. In addition, the Joint Committee on Health is currently conducting a review of the General Scheme of the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill 2017 as part of the pre-legislative scrutiny process, which began in January of last year. The review is on-going and the Committee intends to publish its report early this year. However, it is not possible at this time to give a definitive timeline for the completion of the draft Bill and its subsequent passage through the Houses of the Oireachtas.

In order to support the commencement of the legislation, officials in my Department are working with the HSE to develop a model of care for infertility to ensure the provision of safe, effective and accessible services through the public health system as part of the full range of services available in obstetrics and gynaecology.

The Government has approved a €1 million fund for use in relation to providing public AHR treatment during 2019. Officials in my Department are currently examining options in relation to the operation and administration of this fund, which includes determining the access criteria that will apply. Once I have had the opportunity to review and approve these proposals, there will be an announcement regarding the commencement of this fund for 2019.

It should also be noted that, currently, patients who access IVF treatment privately may claim tax relief on the costs involved under the tax relief for medical expenses scheme. In addition, a defined list of fertility medicines needed for fertility treatment is covered under the High Tech Scheme administered by the HSE. Medicines covered by the High Tech Scheme must be prescribed by a consultant/specialist and approved by the HSE 'High Tech Liaison Officers'. The cost of the medicines is then covered, as appropriate, under the Medical Card or Drugs Payment Scheme.

Hospital Appointments Status

383. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called for a canaloplasty operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[2509/19]

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.

Audiology Services Provision

384. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the reason there are no audiology services in the new primary care centres in Bantry, County Cork, and Tralee, County Kerry, in view of the fact that in the past year six new audiology rooms have been provided in County Cork while County Kerry has none; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2511/19]

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.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

385. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health when the G5 transmitter for type 1 diabetics will be approved; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that it is over nine months since the tender was issued and approval is still pending; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2518/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

386. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the progress made to secure a permanent second consultant breast surgeon at Letterkenny University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2519/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The requirements of the Symptomatic Breast Disease clinic in Letterkenny University Hospital continue to be assessed with a view to ensuring that arrangements are in place to meet the present and future needs of the service.

I advise that a second breast surgeon post on a locum basis is currently assigned to Letterkenny University Hospital.

Maternity Services Provision

387. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when the bespoke maternity theatre at Letterkenny University Hospital will be commissioned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2520/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Stroke Care

388. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the improvements made to address deficits previously identified in dedicated acute stroke care services at Letterkenny University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2521/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Services

389. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when all beds housed within the short-stay ward at Letterkenny University Hospital will be operational; the number of additional personnel that have been allocated to the service and unit for 2019; the job titles of posts that have been allocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2522/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As Minister for Health, I recognise that hospitals are increasingly operating at or above capacity, with year-round demand pressures that are further challenged over the winter months. It is against this background that the Health Service Capacity Review 2018 recommended an increase in acute hospitals beds of over 2,600 by 2031 to support the projected increase in demand for services in the years ahead.

Increasing capacity is therefore a priority for the Government. Over the past 12 months, an additional 240 beds have been opened.

A Capacity Programme for 2019 has been agreed which provides for the following increases to capacity, as set out in the National Service Plan 2019

- 78 additional beds are planned for Quarter 1 of 2019, including the 40 bed modular build in South Tipperary General Hospital and the 30-bed ward in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda;

- 75 acute beds and 70 community beds to come on stream in 2019, as part of the Winter Plan 2018/19, including 5 additional beds in Letterkenny University Hospital due for opening in quarter 1 2019;

- preparation of 202 beds, of which 16 are critical care, by quarter 4 2019 with a view to bringing this extra capacity into operation in the first quarter of 2020, including additional beds in Letterkenny University Hospital.

In relation to the Deputy's query on when the beds will be operational, the number of additional personnel and the job titles of posts that have been allocated for 2019, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to reply to the Deputy directly.

Abortion Services Provision

390. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if a policy on the correct disposal of foetal remains following a termination of pregnancy is being developed nationally; if so, when such a policy will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2523/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to a service issue, it has been referred to the HSE for answer.

General Medical Services Scheme Payments

391. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health if a medical card patient has to pay to have a blood test with their general practitioner (details supplied); if not, the procedures in place to allow them not to make the payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2534/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the terms of the current GMS contract, GPs are required to provide eligible patients with 'all proper and necessary treatment of a kind usually undertaken by a general practitioner and not requiring special skill or experience of a degree or kind which general practitioners cannot reasonably be expected to possess.' There is no provision under the GMS GP contract for persons who hold a medical card or GP visit card to be charged for routine phlebotomy services provided by their GP which are required to either assist in the diagnosis of illness or the treatment of a condition.

The HSE has advised GPs that where a blood test forms part of the investigation or necessary treatment of a patient's symptoms or conditions, this should be free of charge for patients who hold a medical card or GP visit card. Notwithstanding this, I am aware that some GPs are charging GMS patients for phlebotomy services in some circumstances.

This is a matter of concern for me as it has long been the position, under successive Governments, that no user charges should apply to GP services provided to GMS and GP visit card patients. If a patient who holds a medical card or GP visit card believes he or she has been incorrectly charged for routine phlebotomy services by his or her GP, then that patient should report the matter to their HSE Local Health Office.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Eligibility

392. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health the reason a long-term illness card was removed in the case of a person (details supplied). [2552/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the particular issue raised relates to an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Care of the Elderly

393. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health his plans to extend the number of day care centres for dementia patients in view of the projected increase of the number of persons that will present with dementia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2556/19]

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

Hospital Appointments Status

394. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [2560/19]

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

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

Hospital Appointments Status

395. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) is waiting on an appointment; the reason appointments have been cancelled so often in the past; if the person will be seen as soon as possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2561/19]

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.

Health Services Provision

396. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health the reason a mother and baby group provided in a centre (details supplied) was ended; if this was due to a lack of financial resources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2562/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Questions Nos. 397 and 398 answered with Question No. 299.

Gender Recognition

399. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health the policy that acknowledges the need to meet the physical and psychological needs of transgender persons; the supports being offered; and the long-term resources being identified in policy terms to bring about such supports. [2568/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): Transgender-specific guidelines have been developed by WPATH (World Professional Association for Transgender Health) and the Endocrine Society (who updated their guidelines in 2017). These guidelines were devised by experts in transgender healthcare, along with members of the International Transgender, Transsexual and LGBT community.

A proposed model of care for transgender children, adolescents and adults was submitted by the HSE Quality Improvement Division to the HSE Divisions of Primary Care, Mental Health and Acute Hospital programme. The model was developed in consultation with key treating clinicians, planners, policy makers, advocates and service users.

The guidelines recommend a comprehensive multidisciplinary psychosocial assessment prior to commencement of hormone therapy by endocrinology services. The assessment focuses on more than just assessment for the possible diagnosis of Gender Dysphoria. The guidelines highlight several criteria which must be met prior to referral for hormonal intervention. It is important that co-morbid conditions are identified and addressed, and that people access the supports that they need to manage co-morbid difficulties, which can impact on response to medical transition (including hormone treatment).

International best practice involves an assessment by a multi-disciplinary team and shared decision making in the best interests of the individual. Both WPATH and the Endocrine Society Guidelines 2017 specify the assessment must be carried out by a mental health professional (s) with experience in transgender healthcare and possess specific skills. Endocrinologists and General Practitioners (GPs) do not possess these skills, and require access to the multidisciplinary team as described. GPs would only see a small number of gender variant individuals during their lifetime in clinical practice, and would not be in a position to build up the requisite skill set outlined in WPATH and Endocrine Society Guidelines or have the time resource to conduct a comprehensive evaluation.

Informed consent is essential, whereby benefits and risks of hormone treatment and surgery

are discussed with individuals seeking these interventions. Although regret rates are low, it can happen and can also lead to high levels of psychological distress. Healthcare providers work with people to try to prevent negative outcomes. The emerging evidence on good outcomes following medical and/or surgical transitioning is based on use of multi-disciplinary psychosocial assessment, fulfilment of criteria for hormones and on-going psychological support throughout the process. It is important that psychological support is available to individuals before, during and after transitioning.

Prescription of hormone blockers and cross-sex hormones for transgender people is relatively new. Significant side effects can occur with cross sex hormones including irreversible physical changes and infertility. There is a lack of long-term research on outcomes. For these reasons the decision to prescribe should only be made by specialists (i.e. Endocrinologists) in consultation with other professionals involved in the assessment process. Shared decision-making is in accordance with best practice internationally. Prescriptions can then be supported by local GPs with specialist guidance.

The Best Practice approach as outlined above is endorsed in the Service Development Model as developed by the Quality Improvement Division of the HSE in 2017, in collaboration with TENI. This model is providing the framework for the development of National Gender Clinics and MDTs for children and adults, funded by the Acute Hospitals and Mental Health Divisions of the HSE. Recruitment commenced to develop these national teams in 2018.

The new posts includes one consultant endocrinologist (adult services), one consultant endocrinologist (paediatric services), one social worker (adult services), one speech and language therapist (adult services), one senior psychologist (adult services), one senior psychologist (paediatric services), one clinical nurse specialist (Paediatric services), two administrative support officers (adult and paediatric services). This investment is a concerted measure by the HSE to address the waiting times and immediate service needs of children, adolescents and adults in transition.

The HSE is committed to building mental health, acute hospital and primary care services for transgender children, adolescents and adults in accordance with international best practice.

Abortion Services Provision

400. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health when he plans to bring forward legislation for safety or exclusion zones around hospitals and primary care centres which provide terminations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2578/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): It is my intention to introduce legislation to ensure safe access to premises in which termination of pregnancy services may be provided. The purpose of the legislation would be to allow patients, service providers, healthcare staff and members of the public to enter such premises without fear of intimidation or harassment.

While it was originally intended to provide for such safe access in the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Bill 2018, a number of legal issues were identified during the drafting process. In order to allow full consideration of these issues, Government approved the drafting of a separate piece of legislation on safe access to health services.

Officials in my Department will work with the Office of the Attorney General on this legislation.

Health Services Provision

401. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether the decision by a medical service (details supplied) to increase its charge for children's consultations to €70 is acceptable; the person or body that sets the charge for the service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2605/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the GMS scheme, the HSE contracts with GPs to provide services to provide services to medical card and GP visit card holders. The GP contract stipulates that GPs must make suitable arrangements to enable contact to be made with them, or a locum/deputy, for urgent cases outside normal practice hours. Many GPs choose to participate in GP out of hours cooperatives to meet this contractual obligation.

GPs are reimbursed by the HSE for out of hours consultations they provide to medical card or GP visit card holders. There is no provision under the GMS contract for medical card GP visit card holders to be charged for out of hours consultations provided by their GP or an out of hours provider acting on behalf of their GP.

People who do not hold a medical card or GP visit card access GP services on a private basis, including GP out of hours services. I have no role in relation to the fees charged by individual GPs or GP out of hours service providers for private consultations, as these are a matter of private contract between the clinicians and their patients.

Medical Card Applications

402. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an application by a person (details supplied) for a medical card will be expedited. [2607/19]

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

Maternity Services

403. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the staffing levels of midwives in HSE maternity units and maternity hospitals; and the number by which these staff numbers fall short of or exceed the birth rate plus metric. [2608/19]

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

Services for People with Disabilities

404. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of day places available for training young persons with a disability in each of the years 2015 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2616/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and

plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

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

HSE Planning

405. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health when the HSE will publish its operational plans for 2019 for each sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2617/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service related issue, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the question raised by the Deputy.

Brexit Issues

406. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to address fears of shortages arising for key heart, cancer and other medicines following alleged stockpiling of medicines in the UK in view of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2620/19]

407. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the action he is taking to source alternative supplies of essential medicines produced in or supplied from the UK in view of reports of stockpiling of medicines in the UK in view of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2621/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 406 and 407 together.

As part of the whole of Government response to Brexit, my Department is working on a comprehensive and coordinated set of actions to ensure, as far as is possible, continuity of supply of medicines in a disorderly Brexit.

Significant work has already been undertaken by the Department, the HSE, and the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA), together with industry, to ensure that risks to the continuity of supply are mitigated to the greatest possible extent.

There are established multi-stakeholder procedures in place to anticipate and manage medicine shortages and these will be utilised should the need arise as a result of Brexit. In 2018, the HPRA developed and launched a multi-stakeholder Medicines Shortages Framework to mitigate the impact of medicine shortages when they occur, and this framework is used to successfully manage an average of 45 shortage notifications a month. The health system is therefore well placed to anticipate and respond to any additional shortages, should they arise because of Brexit.

There is no need for hospitals, pharmacists or patients to order extra quantities of medicines ahead of Brexit. To do so could, in itself, disrupt existing stock levels and hamper the supply of medicines for other patients.

Both the HPRA and HSE have requested that medicines manufacturers and suppliers high-

light any issues regarding the availability of specific products associated with Brexit - to date no major issues have been identified through this process.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

408. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if he is satisfied with the number of psychiatric nurses recruited in County Kerry in 2018; if he is further satisfied that only temporary contracts were offered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2631/19]

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

Nursing Staff Contracts

409. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the reason the contracts offered to graduate nurses in County Kerry in 2018 were temporary contracts in view of his commitment to recruit and retain nurses; the reason permanent contracts were not offered to these nurses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2632/19]

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

Hospital Consultant Contracts

410. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 600 of 15 January 2019, if further details will be provided in relation to the breakdown of the payments made to consultants as part of the balance of €131 million; the name of these consultants; if their services are still being retained; if so, the capacity in which they are being retained; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2645/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is an operational matter, I have asked the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board to respond to you directly, as soon as possible.

Medicinal Products Supply

411. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the reason there is a shortage in supply of a medicine (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2666/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Department of Health is aware of a temporary shortage of Hydrocortone (hydrocortisone) 10mg tablets in Ireland. The marketing authorisation holder has notified the medicines regulator, the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA), that the shortage of this medicine is due to manufacturing delays. Supply of the Irish authorised product is expected to resume in February 2019. A letter has been circulated to healthcare professionals to advise them of the situation.

In the interim, the Irish market is being supplied on a temporary basis with hydrocortisone 10mg tablets from other markets to meet the needs of Irish patients until supply of the Irish au-

thorised medicine resumes. These medicines are being supplied as exempt medicinal products and can be ordered by pharmacists through Irish wholesalers.

If a member of the public has any concerns regarding their treatment with this or any other medication, they should discuss this directly with their doctor or pharmacist.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

412. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) in County Donegal is on the routine or urgent waiting list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2667/19]

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

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

Hospital Appointments Status

413. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal can expect to receive an appointment to be seen by a consultant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2668/19]

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.

Industrial Disputes

414. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to act on his preference for negotiation as a dispute resolution regarding the threatened paramedic dispute in relation the withdrawal of labour on 22 January 2019; and his further plans to intervene. [2673/19]

415. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the HSE has not responded to the requests by an organisation (details supplied) to meet to discuss contingency plans in order to agree appropriate emergency ambulance cover on the day of the threatened industrial dispute; and the action he has taken to ensure both sides meet to discuss such a plan. [2674/19]

442. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Health if he will engage in discussions with an organisation (details supplied) on the matter of the planned industrial action in the National Ambulance Service on 22 January 2019. [2893/19]

443. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to contingency plans for the industrial action of members of an organisation (details supplied) on 22 January 2019. [2894/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 414, 415, 442 and 443 together.

SIPTU is recognised by the HSE and has negotiating rights for frontline ambulance grades employed by the Executive. As a result, the HSE deducts subscriptions at source for those ambulance staff that are members of that union. However, the National Ambulance Service Representative Association (NASRA) is not recognised by the HSE and, therefore, does not have negotiating rights.

Whilst individuals have a right to membership of any trade union, if they choose to join an association which is not recognised by their employer, such membership is not facilitated by their employer. This means that the HSE does not facilitate deduction of union subscriptions for this particular Association.

In order to mitigate the risk of any potential disruption to service, I have been advised by the HSE that the National Ambulance Service have robust contingency arrangements in place to respond to the industrial action. This involves ensuring the availability of the Irish Defence Forces to provide crewed ambulances on the day of the strike.

It is regrettable that the Psychiatric Nurses Association has taken this action. Whilst negotiation is usually a preferred course of action, in this instance it is not possible for the HSE to engage with the PNA as it is an organisation with no negotiating rights in respect of frontline ambulance personnel.

Pharmacy Regulations

416. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will address concerns expressed by pharmacists with respect to the introduction of the false medicines directive and associated statutory instruments (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2675/19]

438. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that many pharmacists are concerned in relation to the draft legislation which proposes that the responsibility for implementing the falsified medicines directive will transfer from the pharmacy owner as per the EU directive to the dispensing pharmacists; and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [2869/19]

467. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if he is seeking a corporate transfer of responsibility for the provisions of the falsified medicines directive from the pharmacy owner or proprietor and onto the pharmacists and employees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3078/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 416, 438 and 467 together.

The Safety Features Delegated Regulation (EU 2016/16) provides that from February 2019, most prescription medicines and a very small number of non-prescription medicines will have to carry 'safety features' on their outer packaging. These safety features take the form of an anti-tamper device (e.g. foil seal, breakable cap) and a set of unique identifiers embedded in a 2D barcode on the pack.

The Delegated Regulation was finalised and published in 2016. The intervening 3 year transition period allowed time for all concerned parties to prepare well in advance of the legislation coming into full effect on 09 February 2019. Details of the requirements of the Delegated Regulation have been widely communicated to all sectors throughout this 3 year transition period.

The Delegated Regulation is directly applicable across all EU Member States. However, a Statutory Instrument is being prepared to ensure that the Irish legislative system is consistent with the requirements of the new Regulation.

A copy of the draft Instrument was recently circulated as part of a targeted consultation process. The consultation process provides a mechanism for stakeholders and interested parties to express concerns and to make submissions. The Department is considering all points submitted in the consultation, including the query on responsibility raised in this Parliamentary Question, prior to finalising the Statutory Instrument.

Orthodontic Services Provision

417. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of braces for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2677/19]

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.

Organ Donation

418. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Health his plans to include a change in legislation to provide for the presumption of opt-in in relation to organ donation; if same will receive consideration in the upcoming human tissue (transplantation, post-mortem, anatomical examination and public display) Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2679/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The General Scheme of a Human Tissue (Transplantation, Post-Mortem, Anatomical Examination and Public Display) Bill is being finalised at present and will be submitted to Government shortly.

The General Scheme will include provisions for a soft opt-out system of consent for deceased organ donation and an opt-out register.

If an individual registers their wish to opt-out of organ donation, their next-of-kin will not be approached to discuss organ donation following their death. If an individual is not on the register, it will be presumed that she/he had no objection to donating their organs. However, it is proposed that the next-of-kin will always be consulted prior to removing any organ. If the next-of-kin objects to the organ donation, the donation will not proceed.

Departmental Expenditure

419. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if he will publish the airline costs for his Department for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2694/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In 2018 the Department of Health spent a total of €134,766.99 on 541 flights.

It is the policy of my Department to seek best value for money in terms of flight costs. Those travelling are consistently reminded to make arrangements as early as possible to secure the best available price. All travel is booked at economy/standard class unless there are specific circumstances requiring a different class of travel.

Departmental Expenditure

420. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if he will publish the cost of newspapers in his Department in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2711/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The cost of newspapers in 2018 (January to November) was €19,919.94.

This included the following:

- Delivery of hardcopies of newspapers to 9 offices.
- Receipt of a total of 53 titles.
- 18 Irish Times Digital Subscriptions.
- 7 Financial Times Digital Subscriptions.

Health Services Provision

421. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health if therapy in the case of a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2746/19]

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

Mental Health Services Provision

422. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health the status of progress in relation to the provision of a Jigsaw project for County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on

the matter. [2779/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The HSE recently completed a review of Jigsaw services nationally. This was across a number of headings including Financial, Clinical and Governance, and other matters. A meeting took place earlier this month between the HSE and Jigsaw, to help identify and prioritise future areas of need nationally.

Some of the significant new funding provided by Government for the key mental health care programme this year will be used to enhance Jigsaw services. The Executive is considering in detail decisions around possible new Jigsaw sites over 2019-20, in light of the recently agreed HSE Service.

Plan 2019, and the Jigsaw Evaluation. I will shortly hold further discussions with the Executive on detailed implementation of various aspects of the HSE Service Plan. I fully appreciate, from previous discussions with the Executive, with local representatives, and from visiting Tipperary the case being made in this instance. However, this will have to be considered in light of prioritising service needs overall, in line with resources available. The Deputy can rest assured that I will continue to keep this matter under close review.

Hospital Services

423. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health if the already approved capital funding for the construction of a second cath lab at University Hospital Waterford will be affected by the escalating construction costs of the new national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2781/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I remain committed to the provision of a second cath lab in University Hospital Waterford. It is intended that the cost of progressing the project to design, planning and construction stages will be considered in the context of the HSE's Capital Plan for 2019, which is currently being finalised.

A National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services is currently underway. The aim of this Review is to achieve optimal patient outcomes at population level with particular emphasis on the safety, quality and sustainability of the services that patients receive by establishing the need for an optimal configuration of a national adult cardiac service. As set out in the National Development Plan 2018-2027, investment in cardiac cath labs and other cardiac services infrastructure nationally will be informed by the outcome of the National Review, which is expected to be complete by June 2019.

National Children's Hospital Expenditure

424. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the date in August 2018 on which his Department was informed of the cost overruns for the construction of the national children's hospital; the person or body that informed his Department; the format that is, phone call, meeting, email and so on of the communication; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2786/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Department of Health was advised on 24 August 2018 of developments in relation to on-going negotiations between the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board (NPDHB) and main contractor regarding the Guar-

teed Maximum Price (GMP) for the completion of the construction of the hospital leading to a potential increase in construction costs. On 27 August 2018 a briefing note was submitted to me advising that there was still work to be done and a process to be concluded to reach a final figure.

Question No. 425 answered with Question No. 299.

Neuro-Rehabilitation Services Provision

426. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of a community neurorehabilitation team; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2800/19]

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

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

Services for People with Disabilities

427. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to open an aftercare service for vulnerable profoundly deaf persons that depend on Irish Sign Language as their communication in order that they can be cared for in a signing environment. [2806/19]

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

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

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

428. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health when the HSE plans to introduce the dexcom G5 CGM transmitter for patients with type 1 diabetes here; if the HSE has carried out research into the dexcom G6 CGM transmitter and its benefits; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2807/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and

direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services

429. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health if services at a location (details supplied) in County Galway will continue to operate from these premises; if patients from the town and surrounding areas will be seen in the town; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2830/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for it to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Mental Health Services

430. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health if the mental health service in Glenamaddy, County Galway operating at a location (details supplied) will continue to operate from these premises; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2831/19]

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

Medical Conditions

431. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if parental alienation syndrome is recognised by the HSE and other statutory health and social care bodies and agencies; if not, his plans to have the syndrome recognised; the clinical and other pathways available to those affected by the condition in order to avail of appropriate supports and treatments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2837/19]

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

Pharmaceutical Sector

432. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2842/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI) is the pharmacy regulator in Ireland and is responsible for regulating pharmacists and pharmacies in the public interest. Several of the PSI's functions under the Pharmacy Act 2007 relate to education, including promoting and ensuring the highest standards in education and training for the qualification to practise as a pharmacist, and make sure that relevant experience is gained in the course of that pharmacy education and training.

In 2010 the PSI commissioned a review of the five year programme of education and training for the pharmacist qualification in Ireland. One of the recommendations included the introduction of an integrated 5-year Masters level programme of education and training for pharma-

cists in line with international best practice, to replace the previous 4 year Bachelor plus 1 year in-service practical training programme.

A National Forum was established to advise and assist the Council of the PSI in its oversight of the development and ongoing delivery of the new fully integrated programme of pharmacy education, training and assessment. The National Forum for Pharmacy Education and Accreditation Interim Report of November 2013 noted that it was an essential component of the integrated degree that the student remain a student for the full five years of study. Under the previous model, students became employees during their final year.

Since September 2015, students commencing their pharmacy education undertake a PSI-accredited five-year fully integrated Master's degree programme in pharmacy, with the first cohort awarded this MPharm degree graduating in 2020. This programme is operated by the schools of pharmacy in three universities in Ireland (Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork and Royal College of Surgeons Ireland).

This newer pharmacy programme provides for both the academic and practical experience that is required by students to qualify to practise as a pharmacist in Ireland. Students qualify after 5 years with a Masters in Pharmacy and are eligible to apply for registration as a pharmacist with the PSI.

The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (Education and Training) (Integrated Course) Rules 2014 (S.I. No. 377 of 2014) is the legislation which underpins the new 5 year MPharm educational programme. It includes the programme recognition and accreditation requirements, and details about the in-service training placements for students.

Part of the PSI's accreditation process involves visits to the universities operating the MPharm programme, which includes meeting with representative students at each School of Pharmacy. The accreditation teams assess the programme of training and education various standards, including one related to students and the supports available to students.

The PSI has stated that it will continue to engage with the academic institutions that deliver the MPharm programme and their role is to ensure the quality of the MPharm programme and high standards in education and training for the qualification to practise as a pharmacist.

Brexit Issues

433. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the number of infants who have used clinical milk supplies from Northern Ireland and the UK over the past five years; the contingency plan for access to milk bank supplies from the UK and Northern Ireland in the event of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2847/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As the question relates to service matters, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Departmental Correspondence

434. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health when a letter of exceptional need will be provided to a person (details supplied) who requires it to pursue medical studies in the United States of America. [2849/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Letter of Exceptional Need issued on

Thursday 17 January 2019.

Healthcare Infrastructure Provision

435. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the status of plans regarding a community hospital (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2850/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly in relation to this matter.

Primary Care Centres

436. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Health when the primary healthcare facility at a location (details supplied) will be opened; the services which will be provided in this centre; the persons who can attend this facility; the opening hours of the centre; the services which will be provided to the elderly, young children and those suffering with addiction problems; the cost of construction of the facility; the number to be employed in the centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2864/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the HSE has responsibility for the provision, along with the maintenance and operation of Primary Care Centres and other Primary Care facilities, the Executive has been asked to reply directly to the Deputy.

Brexit Issues

437. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if there will be changes to the situation by which the HSE sends young children to the UK for certain treatments, such as eating disorders and psychiatric conditions, in view of the uncertainty in relation to Brexit; if this will cause delays in receiving treatment in the UK; and if children will have to be sent to other EU countries. [2867/19]

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.

Question No. 438 answered with Question No. 416.

Brexit Issues

439. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health if he has prepared plans to counteract delays to insulin delivery from Denmark should the UK landbridge be closed in the event that a no-deal Brexit occurs at the March 2019 deadline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2879/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As part of the whole of Government response to Brexit, my Department is working on a comprehensive and coordinated set of actions to ensure, as far as is possible, continuity of supply of medicines in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

Significant work has already been undertaken by the Department, the HSE, and the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA), together with industry, to ensure that risks to the continuity of supply are mitigated to the greatest possible extent.

Both the HPRA and HSE have requested that medicines manufacturers and suppliers highlight any issues regarding the availability of specific products associated with Brexit - to date, no major issues have been identified through this process.

The HSE and HPRA are contacting the suppliers of certain products, such as medicines subject to cold storage, to ensure that contingency plans are in place for Brexit. The agencies are also working with the Revenue Commissioners to ensure that any delays at customs are minimised. In any event, the existing distribution system for medicines already holds sufficient stocks to help absorb any short-term supply delays.

The Government's Contingency Action Plan for a no-deal Brexit outlines the wider approach to landbridge issues that may arise as a result of a no-deal Brexit.

Home Help Service

440. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health his plans to ensure that the home help co-ordinator based in a centre (details supplied) will be replaced as soon as possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2881/19]

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

Medicinal Products Availability

441. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health the reason Versatis has been removed from the approved drug list; and if cost was the main factor in the decision. [2892/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Medicines play a vital role in improving the health of Irish patients. Securing access to existing and new and innovative medicines is a key health service objective. However, the challenge is to do this in a safe and sustainable manner. Treatment must be appropriate and proportionate and clinical decision-making, such as prescribing, should be based on both patient needs and sound medical evidence.

Lidocaine 5% medicated plasters are licensed for localised relief of post-shingles pain in adults. This is the patch's only licensed use in Ireland. It has been reimbursed in the community drug schemes since 2010.

Clinical concern arose as usage increased significantly, to the point where more plasters were being used in Ireland than in the entire UK National Health Service. In such situations, it is important and appropriate for clinicians to review usage and, in 2016, the HSE Medicines Management Programme (MMP) reviewed the use of the plasters. The review estimated that only 5-10% of prescribing was for the licensed indication.

From September 2017, following the clinical review, the HSE introduced a new reimbursement approval system for the patches, to support appropriate use and patient care. Under these arrangements, the patient's GP or consultant applies to the MMP for reimbursement approval on behalf of the patient. If an application is refused, the clinician may submit an appeal to the

MMP, making a clear clinical case for the patient. Information for patients and practitioners is on the HSE MMP website at: hse.ie/yourmedicines.

The outcome of an application or an appeal for reimbursement of lidocaine patches is a matter between the MMP and the treating clinician. The Deputy will appreciate that, as Minister for Health, I cannot intervene in individual cases.

The decision to introduce a new reimbursement approval process for a particular treatment is a matter for the HSE. However, I fully support the objectives of the HSE Medicines Management Programme.

Question No. 442 and 443 answered with Question No. 414.

Health Services

444. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the status of a shared diabetes centre of excellence between Letterkenny University Hospital and Sligo University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2904/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Psychological Services

445. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the access persons with type 1 diabetes attending Letterkenny University Hospital have to psychology services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2905/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Staff Data

446. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the staffing details of a team in a hospital (details supplied); if the members of the team are permanent posts; if there are vacancies on the team; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2909/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Services

447. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health the status of the new diabetes centre at Sligo University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2912/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Staff Recruitment

448. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a diabetic dietician in Sligo University Hospital; his plans to appoint an additional diabetic dietician for the purpose of ensuring the Berger programme is operating for all who require it without further delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2922/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Question No. 449 answered with Question No. 293.

National Children's Hospital

450. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the dates and times of meetings he and-or his officials had with the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board since its inception; the persons who attended each meeting; if the minutes of each meeting will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2932/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): A comprehensive review of the governance structures for the Children's Hospital Project and Programme was undertaken in 2017 by the Department and the HSE, in collaboration with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, in the context of embarking on a new phase of the project. Revised governance structures, including the establishment of a Children's Hospital Project and Programme Steering Group and a Children's Hospital Project and Programme Board, were approved by Government in April 2017. These were implemented in recognition of, and to reflect, the need to prepare well in advance of completion of the facilities for integration of the clinical and non-clinical services of the three children's hospitals, preparation for the opening of the Outpatient and Urgent Care centres and the need to manage dependencies across the various components of the project which will support the operation of the new hospital.

The CHP&P Board is chaired by the Secretary General of the Department of Health (DoH) and comprising the Director General (DG) of the HSE, Assistant Secretary of the Acute Hospital Policy Division in the DoH, and the HSE Deputy Director General Strategy (DDG). The Board has met at least every quarter since its establishment in September 2017 and monitors the progress of the CHP&P against the agreed parameters of the programme in relation to timeline, scope and funding. The CHP&P Steering Group is chaired by the HSE Deputy Director General - Strategy and includes members at HSE National Director and DoH Assistant Secretary level. The Steering Group had its first meeting in May 2017 and continues to meet on a monthly basis.

The CEOs of CHI and the Project Director of the NPHDB and CHI are members of the CHP&P Steering Group and also attend CHP&P Board meetings. The Steering Group reports to the CHP&P Board and the Chair of the CHP&P Steering Group presents a report to the CHP&P Board meetings setting out any issues that need to be considered or decided at CHP&P Board level.

Hospital Staff Data

451. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the number of assaults resulting in injury to staff that took place in the period January 2018 to December 2018 in University Hospital Kerry. [2936/19]

452. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the number of University Hospital Kerry staff out sick as a result of injuries sustained at work from January 2018 to December 2018. [2937/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 451 and 452 together.

I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on this matter.

Hospital Staff

453. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health his views in regard to security staff in University Hospital Kerry (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2938/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Medical Aids and Appliances Applications

454. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if the correct wheelchair will be issued to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2939/19]

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.

Cancer Screening Programmes

455. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the reason for ongoing delays with cervical smear results; the actions taken to combat these delays (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3055/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In May 2018, I asked CervicalCheck to make the necessary arrangements to provide that any woman who had had a CervicalCheck smear test, and whose GP considered that they should have a further test, to access such a further test without charge. This decision was made in good faith to address the considerable fears of the many anxious women in Ireland as a result of significant media coverage of the issues that emerged in late April.

In the months since then, there has been a significant increase in the volume of women presenting for smear tests. This includes women who have availed of the out of cycle tests, but also a greater number of women presenting for scheduled screening.

This increased level of engagement with the programme is very welcome. However, the increased demand has undoubtedly put immense pressure on lab capacity and the HSE has advised that, currently, results of smear tests may take up to 22 weeks from the time of the test. Although many results are returned in less time, some may take longer.

The HSE has been working actively with the labs to manage this issue and to improve turnaround times for smear tests. The HSE reports that laboratories have agreed to undertake

additional recruitment, provide for overtime and manage annual leave in an effort to minimise the backlog. In addition, the HSE is aiming to source additional screening capacity, which would improve the turnaround time of results. However, sourcing capacity and resources is a global challenge as countries start to move to primary HPV screening, which vastly reduces the requirement for cytology screening staff.

The HSE is currently developing a capacity plan to take account of available capacity and expected demand, with the aim of bringing the programme into stabilisation this year. This is a priority concern for my Department and the HSE.

Capital Expenditure Programme

456. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the additional amount the national children's hospital will cost in 2019; if a request has been submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for additional funding for the hospital; if this funding will be forthcoming in the current capital envelope for 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3066/19]

457. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €473,000 capital allocation in administration, that is, the expenditure report for 2019 for Vote 38 of budget 2019, by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3067/19]

458. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €14,527,000 capital allocation in grants in respect of building and equipment, including information and communication technology, that is, Vote 38 of the budget 2019 expenditure report for 2019, by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3068/19]

459. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €564,461,000 capital allocation in building, equipping and furnishing of health facilities, that is, Vote 38 of the budget 2019 expenditure report for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3069/19]

460. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €2,539,000 capital allocation in building, equipping and furnishing of health facilities part-funded by the national lottery, that is, Vote 38 of the Budget 2019 expenditure report by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3070/19]

461. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €85 million capital allocation in information services and related services for health agencies, that is, Vote 38 of the budget 2019 expenditure report for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3071/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 456 to 461, inclusive, together.

The total capital funding for the public Health Services announced in Budget 2019 and published in the Estimates for Public Services 2019 is €667m, an increase of €174m (35%) over the capital funding provided in Budget 2018. - €567m (€564.461m + €2.539m) is available to the

Health Service Executive for building, equipping and furnishing of health facilities,

- €85m for HSE Information Communication Technology and implementing the eHealth Strategy,

- €14.527m for the smaller directly funded agencies under the aegis of my Department, including €10m for HRB research,

- €0.473m for Information Communication Technology within my Department.

Following the publication of the Health Service Executive's National Service Plan for 2019, the Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The HSE Capital Plan for 2019 will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 having regard to the available capital funding, the number of large national capital projects currently underway and the relevant priority of each project.

The requirements of the new children's hospital and other health capital projects, currently at various stages of development, are being considered as part of this process.

Capital Expenditure Programme

462. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €250,000 capital allocation in other HSE services, that is, Vote 38 of the budget 2019 expenditure report for 2019 by specific project; the projects that will be commenced in 2019; the projects that will be completed in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3072/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The €250,000 capital allocation referred to by the Deputy relates to Dormant Account funding. The 2019 action plan for Dormant Account Funding has yet to be finalised so at this stage it is not possible to identify those specific projects that will be funded.

Vaccination Programme Data

463. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the vaccination rates for all vaccinations provided free of charge to children in each of the years 2008 to 2018, by local health office in tabular form. [3073/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the information relating to vaccination rates is not readily available within my Department, the PQ has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Closures

464. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health his plans for the site of Our Lady's Children's Hospital; if the hospital will remain in use within the public health system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3074/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As of 1 January 2019, Children's Health Ireland (CHI) governs the provision of paediatric services in Dublin at the Crumlin, Temple Street and Tallaght sites and will open services in Connolly hospital in the middle of 2019. Under the legislation establishing CHI, the boards of Crumlin and Temple Street hospitals voluntarily

transferred their assets and liabilities to the new entity. As such, the Crumlin hospital campus has transferred to Children's Health Ireland. On completion of the new children's hospital on the campus of St James's and the two paediatric outpatient urgent care centres at Connolly and Tallaght Hospitals, paediatric services will no longer be provided at the Children's and Temple Street sites.

The HSE entered into Memoranda of Understanding with Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin and Temple Street Children's University Hospital to ensure that the State's investment to date in the hospitals is protected when the paediatric services are transferred to the new children's hospital. Future uses for the Crumlin site has not yet been determined.

Maternity Services Provision

465. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the proposed maternity hospital to be co-located at the St. James's Hospital site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3075/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The model of stand-alone maternity hospitals is not the norm internationally. In line with the National Maternity Strategy, Government policy is to co-locate all remaining maternity hospitals with adult acute hospitals in order to provide optimal clinical outcomes. Co-location of maternity services with adult services provides mothers with access to a full range of medical and support services should the need arise. The ready availability of these services helps ensure the delivery of an optimum, safe service, particularly for high risk mothers and babies.

The National Maternity Strategy reaffirms the commitment to the provision of maternity services on the St James's Campus. I am confident that the tri-location of adult, children's and maternity services at St James's will create a centre of healthcare excellence for patients of all ages.

The project to relocate the Coombe Women & Infants University Hospital to the St James's site is at an early stage and has yet to progress to planning and design phases. Construction of the new children's hospital is currently underway on the St James's site and construction of the new maternity hospital will not commence until after the new children's hospital is completed. I can confirm, however, that the new children's hospital design has incorporated the required operational links with both the maternity and adult hospitals, and that a site for the proposed maternity hospital is identified in the St James's Campus Master Plan.

Electronic Cigarettes

466. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the most up-to-date evidence and advice regarding e-cigarettes; when this will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3076/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Department of Health is aware of, and actively monitoring, publications by authoritative bodies internationally on the use of e-cigarettes as a smoking cessation tool. Analysis of emerging research on all products, and the findings of Healthy Ireland 2018 in relation to e-cigarette usage in Ireland, will continue to inform decisions around any future additional regulation in this area.

My Department requested HIQA to undertake a Health Technology Assessment ('HTA') of

the clinical and cost effectiveness of pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical smoking cessation products and services. The HTA was published in 2017.

In relation to e-cigarettes and vaping, although the HTA found that results for e-cigarettes are promising, there is currently a lack of evidence to recommend their use as a smoking cessation aid and at present no e-cigarette product is licensed as a medicinal product in Ireland. The safety of e-cigarettes is an evolving area of research; while potentially safer than smoking, evidence on its long-term safety has yet to be established.

Question No. 467 answered with Question No. 416.

Medicinal Products Availability

468. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 426 of 18 December 2018, the position regarding the shortage of the drug; the status of the availability of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3079/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Department of Health is aware of a temporary shortage of Hydrocortone (hydrocortisone) 10mg tablets in Ireland. The marketing authorisation holder has notified the medicines regulator, the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA), that the shortage of this medicine is due to manufacturing delays. Supply of the Irish authorised product is expected to resume in February 2019. A letter has been circulated to healthcare professionals to advise them of the situation.

In the interim, the Irish market is being supplied on a temporary basis with hydrocortisone 10mg tablets from other markets to meet the needs of Irish patients until supply of the Irish authorised medicine resumes. These medicines are being supplied as exempt medicinal products and can be ordered by pharmacists through Irish wholesalers.

If a member of the public has any concerns regarding their treatment with this or any other medication, they should discuss this directly with their doctor or pharmacist.

Paediatric Services

469. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost to date and to completion, respectively, of the children's satellite hospital unit at Connolly Hospital Blanchardstown; when it is planned to be open and operational; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3094/19]

470. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost to date and to completion, respectively of the children's satellite hospital unit at Tallaght Hospital; when it is planned to be open and operational; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3095/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 469 and 470 together.

Works at Connolly are on target for practical completion of the building in the Spring with the opening scheduled for July 2019. Works at Tallaght are underway with a target handover date of July 2020. The estimated construction and fit out costs for the two OPD Urgent Care Centres at Tallaght and Connolly are €53.4m (ex VAT).

With regards to your queries in relation to regarding the estimated costs to date and the

costs for completion of each centre, I have asked the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board to respond to you directly.

Vaccination Programme

471. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address matters (details supplied) in relation to the HPV vaccine; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3107/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) is responsible for monitoring the safety and quality of all medicines including vaccines that are licensed in Ireland. The HPRA and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) continually monitor adverse events to vaccination. HPV is one of the most closely studied and monitored medicinal products.

All medicines, including vaccines are subject to on-going review and evaluation of all available data from a range of sources, including systematic scientific literature review, to consider any impact that their data may have on the overall assessment of the benefits and risks of a medicinal product. Taking into account the totality of the available information, the benefits of the HPV vaccines continue to outweigh their risks. The safety of these vaccines continues to be monitored at EU level through the EMA and its expert committees, which includes representatives from member state competent authorities such as the HPRA.

The initial authorisation of Gardasil was supported by the results from the study known as Future II. This study concluded that in young women who had not been previously infected with HPV-16 or HPV-18, those in the vaccine group had a significantly lower occurrence of high-grade cervical intraepithelial neoplasia related to HPV-16 or HPV-18 than did those in the placebo group.

Subsequently the results from Future III updated the product information for Gardasil in relation to the vaccination of women up to 45 years old.

The trials for Future II or Future III were not conducted in Ireland and therefore the HPRA did not have access to the original clinical trial submissions, however, the results of the studies are publically available at www.ema.europa.eu/documents/scientific-discussion/gardasil-epar-scientific-discussion_en.pdf.

In both the Future II and Future III studies participants were randomised to either a vaccine group or placebo group. The currently licensed quadrivalent Gardasil product contains 0.225 mg amorphous aluminium hydroxyphosphate sulfate per 0.5 ml dose. Placebo product used in the control arms of the referenced studies contained the same amount of aluminium-containing adjuvant. The use of the aluminium-containing adjuvant in the placebo group is stated in the study documents referenced above.

A placebo arm is an important aspect of many clinical studies and supports the evaluation of the true overall effect of the experimental drug under study. There is a strong rationale for using a placebo in large pivotal studies as it is widely considered to be the most rigorous method of evaluating the efficacy of treatment or prevention interventions. The only difference in composition between the placebo and vaccine in the above-mentioned Gardasil trials was the absence of active substances (HPV virus type proteins) in the placebo. This allows the effects observed in the clinical study to be attributed to the vaccine product.

General Practitioner Services

472. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the way in which a person (details supplied) can access their local general practitioner; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3108/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I understand the person concerned does not hold a medical card or GP visit card and is having difficulty finding a GP.

People who do not hold a medical card or GP visit card access GP services on a private basis. GPs are private contractors and it is a matter for each individual GP to decide whether to accept additional private patients. In some instances GP practices have a full list of patients and cannot take on new patients. If this happens, patients should contact other GP practices in their area.

While I have no role in relation to such matters, I would expect clinicians to consider the importance of patients having access to a GP service close to home when deciding whether or not to accept private patients.

Land Transfers

473. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the case of a folio (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2319/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department, has been actively engaged in efforts to resolve the complex conveyancing issues concerned in this case which centred on establishing ownership of a piece of land bordering Castletownbere Fishery Harbour Centre.

With further legal oversight my officials have re-engaged with Cork County Council to definitively establish who can deal with the transfer of the property in question. Maps have been prepared and will be the subject of legal correspondence.

My officials are progressing the matter through the appropriate channels, however as with all legal property matters of this nature, resolution may take some time.

GLAS Issues

474. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 485 of 18 December 2018, the length of time a person (details supplied) must keep the sheep under the GLAS 2 scheme. [2363/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The above named person was accepted into GLAS 2 with a start date of 1 January 2016 and is fully up to date with payments.

As the GLAS contract of the person named contains the commonage action, Commonage Management Plans (CMP) were developed, in consultation with shareholders, for each of the five commonages claimed by the appointed Commonage advisor. These plans set out defined stocking levels, a grazing regime and other activities for GLAS participants farming the commonages. Under the CMPs in question the person named is required to graze the commonages

for a six month period annually from 1 April to 30 September. It is open to the person named to contact the Commonage Advisor if clarification is required in relation to any aspects of the Commonage Management Plan.

Afforestation Programme

475. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the annual planting targets per hectare for all categories in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019 of the forestry programme 2014 to 2020; the number of hectares planted in each year to date for these categories; and the number of hectares planted out of each annual target set on a percentage basis in tabular form. [2369/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): While overall targets are set for planting programme as a whole, only Native Woodland, Agroforestry, and Forestry for fibre have specific planting targets and there are no specific targets for the other Grant and Premium Categories (GPC) 1 to 8 inclusive. The relevant data is provided below in tabular form as requested.

Planting Programme

Scheme	2015 target	2015 Actual	% of target planted	2016 target	2016 Actual	% of target planted
Afforestation, ha	6,000	6,293	105%	6,660	6,500	98%
of which afforestation (GPC 1- 8)	5,440	6,159	113%	5,990	6,340	106%
of which NWS establishment (GPC 9&10)	450	134	30%	450	159	35%
of which Agro-forestry (GPC 11)	10	0	0%	20	1	3%
of which energy and fibre (GPC 12)	100	0	0%	200	0	0%

table contd.

Scheme	2017 target	2017 Actual	% of target planted	2018 Target	2018 Actual	% of target planted	2019 Target
Afforestation, ha	7,140	5,536	78%	7,205	4025	56%	8,115

of which afforestation (GPC 1- 8)	6,165	5,261	85%	6,215	3,649	59%	6,615
of which NWS establishment (GPC 9&10)	450	270	60%	450	374	83%	450
of which Agro-forestry (GPC 11)	25	5	20%	40	1	2%	50
of which energy and fibre (GPC 12)	500	0	0%	500	1	0%	1,000

Forestry Data

476. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the percentage of agricultural land in each county that has been planted with forestry to date, in tabular form. [2370/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I refer the Deputy to his question raised last October, (41679/18 – Dáil Question No 153), in which he requested the same data.

The area of land afforested in each county is indicated in the table below, which is taken from the third NFI. The area of forest is estimated to be 770,020 ha or 11% of the total land area of Ireland (NFI 2017).

County	% Area
Carlow	9.4
Cavan	9.3
Clare	17.2
Cork	12.1
Donegal	11.4
Dublin	6.5
Galway	9.9
Kerry	12.1
Kildare	6.1
Kilkenny	9.6
Laois	15.4
Leitrim	18.9
Limerick	10.4
Longford	8.4

County	% Area
Louth	2.9
Mayo	9.2
Meath	5.7
Monaghan	4.6
Offaly	14.7
Roscommon	11.1
Sligo	11.4
Tipperary	11.8
Waterford	14.7
Westmeath	8.2
Wexford	6.2
Wicklow	17.9

Afforestation Programme

477. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the regulatory provisions in place with respect to forestry planting; the setback distances from both dwelling houses and associated buildings, respectively; if changes to set back distances are being considered; and the process involved to adjust such provisions. [2371/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Forestry Act 2014, which was commenced on 24th May 2017, along with the Forestry Regulations 2017 (SI No 191/2017) are the regulatory provisions in place with regard to forestry operations. In tandem with this, there are a number of guidelines and standards, which detail the technical requirements of forestry plantations. These are readily available on my Department's website.

Setback distances from dwelling houses are laid down in the Forestry Standards Manual and are 60 metres or 30 metres with the written consent of the dwelling owner. There are no plans to adjust these provisions.

Forestry Data

478. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of broadleaf forestry planting as a percentage of total planting in 2018. [2372/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): A specific condition of State Aid approval for the Forestry Programme 2014 -2020 is to aim for annual planting of 30% broadleaves. Following the Mid-term Review of the Forestry Programme I introduced increased grant and premium rates for native woodlands, agro-forestry and forestry for fibre Grant and Premium Categories in early 2018 aiming at increasing the annual broadleaf planting rates. I am pleased to note that the increased rates in the broadleaf categories have already provided results, with broadleaves comprising 27% of trees planted in 2018, compared to 21% in 2017. It is our full intention to drive this figure higher in 2019 based on the increased grants and premia offered above.

Dairy Sector

479. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if trade missions are planned in 2019 in order to secure new markets for dairy products; and if so, the details of such missions. [2373/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The pursuit and development of new markets for Irish agri-food exports is an ongoing and central component of the strategic development of the agri-food sector, as evidenced by its placement at the centre of Food Wise 2025, the industry's strategy for development over the coming decade. Food Wise 2025 outlines the huge potential for growth in agri-food exports to new and emerging markets, particularly in Asia, Africa, the Americas and the Gulf region. This is where our efforts will be focused for the foreseeable future, particularly given the need to diversify our markets and to reduce our exposure to the UK market in particular following Brexit.

Trade Missions play an important role in market development, and I have been very active on this front in recent years as we strive to gain, and then develop, a presence in as many global markets as possible. I have led very successful missions to the Gulf Region, the US, Mexico, Japan and Korea in 2017, and to the US, Canada, China, Indonesia and Malaysia in 2018. These missions included participants from across the agri-food sector and featured extensive trade contacts as well as high-level political discussions.

The destinations for trade missions for 2019 are currently under consideration and I expect to be in a position to announce them shortly.

TAMS Appeals

480. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a TAMS appeal process will be expedited for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2376/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The application in question was in relation to investments under the Young Farmer Capital Investment Scheme of TAMS II.

This application was the subject of an on-farm inspection. It is a requirement that the payments claimed be verified as part of such an inspection. In this case an issue arose in relation to non-compliance with the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme resulting in the withholding of the Young Farmer 20% top up payment.

The applicant was advised of the position in a letter from the Department dated 23 October 2018 and requested a review of this decision. An appeal was submitted to the Agriculture Appeals Office and it is understood that an oral hearing was requested and will be arranged shortly.

Rural Development Programme

481. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the expenditure incurred in each of the years 2014 to 2018 for each measure under the Rural Development Programme 2014 to 2020 (details supplied), in tabular form; the original budget allocations made for each of the years in the 2014 to 2020 period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2380/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is set out below.

Table 1. DAFM Expenditure by Measure Level 2014-2017 and provisional for 2018

-	Expenditure 2014	Expenditure 2015	Expenditure 2016	Expenditure 2017	Expenditure 2018 provisional
Measure 1 - Knowledge transfer and information actions	48,881	9,667	8,668,524	19,531,480	29,136,302
Measure 2 - Advisory services, farm management and farm relief services	0	0	288,053	643,996	283,657
Measure 4 - Investments in physical assets	4,616,074	14,774,478	10,094,541	32,258,179	67,528,093
Measure 7 - Basic services and village renewal in rural areas	0	0	725,488	752,358	835,685
Measure 10 - Agri-environment-climate	170,820,857	132,805,931	183,601,526	251,501,887	278,113,018
Measure 11 - Organic farming	0	1,844,024	5,145,977	6,530,788	9,811,311
M12 Natura 2000 and Water Framework Directive payments	25,729,388	11,550,542	4,380,542	2,084,117	795,113
Measure 13 - Payments to areas facing natural or other specific constraints	195,655,247	206,525,119	206,470,513	205,303,634	228,616,740
Measure 14 - Animal Welfare Scheme	0	0	0	15,850,949	17,649,626
Measure 16 - Co-operation	0	79,717	333,717	1,331,405	3,536,248

-	Expenditure 2014	Expenditure 2015	Expenditure 2016	Expenditure 2017	Expenditure 2018 provisional
Measure 19 - Support for LEADER local development					
Measure 20 - Technical Assistance	0	65,182	902,151	1,383,207	1,361,368
M97 Early Retirement	0	0	4,248,250	2,430,121	808,357

Table 1 does not include information for Measure 19 - Support for LEADER local development as this is not operated by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine.

Table 2. Financial Allocations for RDP 2014–2020 by Measure

-	Total Allocation 2014-2020
Measure 1 - Knowledge transfer and information actions	125,800,000
Measure 2 - Advisory services, farm management and farm relief services	8,300,000
Measure 4 - Investments in physical assets	425,000,000
Measure 7 - Basic services and village renewal in rural areas	6,000,000
Measure 10 - Agri-environment-climate	1,531,005,630
Measure 11 - Organic farming	56,000,000
M12 Natura 2000 and Water Framework Directive payments	73,250,000
Measure 13 - Payments to areas facing natural or other specific constraints	1,370,000,000
Measure 14 – Animal Welfare Scheme	100,000,000
Measure 16 - Co-operation	62,000,000
Measure 19 - Support for LEADER local development	250,000,000
Measure 20 - Technical Assistance	8,145,000
M97 Early Retirement	9,207,547

While the RDP Regulation provides for a structure according to measures and sub-measures, the annual breakdown is made at aggregate level and is not formally subdivided down to measure/sub-measure level or scheme level. Essentially, any unspent EAFRD funds in a year are carried forward to subsequent years.

Rural Development Programme

482. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the expenditure incurred in each of the years 2014 to 2018 under each scheme under the Rural Development Programme 2014 to 2020 (details supplied), in tabular form; the budget

allocations for each scheme in each of the years 2014 to 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2381/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the tables.

Table 1. DAFM Expenditure by Scheme 2014-2017 and provisional for 2018

-	Expenditure 2014	Expenditure 2015	Expenditure 2016	Expenditure 2017	Expenditure 2018 provisional
Beef Data and Genomics Programme	0	28,989,048	59,272,461	45,811,279	46,156,692
Rural Environment Protection Scheme	133,622,090	25,121,052	1,952,872	56,905	5,819
Agri-Environment Option Scheme	60,773,433	79,801,168	32,118,964	16,198,514	7,444,847
Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme	0	11,452,500	100,922,200	195,651,754	231,978,144
Knowledge Transfer Scheme	0	0	0	13,783,625	21,665,185
Locally led Environmental Schemes	0	0	228,380	1,792,238	4,158,882
Organic Farming Schemes	4,381,000	7,969,133	8,053,390	8,234,664	10,519,034
Land mobility	0	0	4,248,250	2,430,121	808,357
Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme	0	7,607,854	7,806,640	31,295,788	66,751,235
Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme	195,655,247	206,525,119	206,527,774	205,298,367	228,616,740
Collaborative Farming	0	79,717	333,717	440,878	180,674
Technical Assistance		74,851	902,151	1,388,127	1,361,368

-	Expenditure 2014	Expenditure 2015	Expenditure 2016	Expenditure 2017	Expenditure 2018 provisional
Advisory Services	0	0	301,481	529,239	280,962
Animal Welfare scheme for Sheep	0	0	0	15,850,949	17,649,626
Traditional Farm Building Scheme	0	0	725,488	752,358	835,685
Food Producer Scheme	0	0	0	0	0
Continuous Professional Development	0	0	0	114,757	2,695
European Innovation Programme	0	0	0	75,275	198,124

Table 1 does not include information for the Horticulture Scheme as this is not part of the RDP 2014 – 2020.

Table 2. Voted Allocations for RDP Schemes 2014 – 2020 by Scheme.

-	Allocation 2014	Allocation 2015	Allocation 2016	Allocation 2017	Allocation 2018	Allocation 2019
Beef Data and Genomics Programme	23,000,000	35,000,000	52,000,000	49,000,000	49,500,000	46,500,000
Rural Environment Protection Scheme	123,000,000	53,550,000	2,194,000	310,000	106,900	20,575
Agri-Environment Option Scheme	61,000,000	71,000,000	40,850,000	10,940,000	5,893,100	477,830
Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme	0	20,000,000	139,500,000	228,500,000	226,000,000	202,888,805
Knowledge Transfer Scheme	0	0	0	22,821,000	23,000,000	25,000,000
Locally led Environmental Schemes	0	0	1,200,000	6,000,000	11,320,000	11,515,230

Questions - Written Answers

-	Allocation 2014	Allocation 2015	Allocation 2016	Allocation 2017	Allocation 2018	Allocation 2019
Organic Farming Schemes	0	6,000,000	10,000,000	10,500,000	10,500,000	10,999,185
Land mobility	10,010,000	7,394,000	4,602,000	2,611,000	1,210,000	191,000
Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme	17,200,000	30,500,000	35,800,000	49,965,280	69,965,280	69,969,580
Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme	195,000,000	207,000,000	202,000,000	206,500,000	227,000,000	250,000,000
Collaborative Farming	0	0	899,000	500,000	492,375	350,000
Technical Assistance	1,425,000	100,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,350,000	1,470,000
Advisory Services	0	450,000	0	993,220	981,000	967,270
Animal Welfare scheme for Sheep	0	0	0	17,000,000	20,000,000	18,000,000
Traditional Farm Building Scheme	0	0	0	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,250,000
Food Producer Scheme	0	0	988,800	100,000	1,249,380	2,000,000
Continuous Professional Development	0	0	0	200,000	300,000	50,000
European Innovation Programme	0	0	0	700,000	950,000	920,000

The above are the total allocations for the schemes. In a few cases small parts of the allocation for schemes are not co-funded. The allocations for 2020 will be determined as part of the 2020 estimates process.

Industrial Disputes

483. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps being taken to resolve the industrial dispute between an organisation (details supplied) and his Department; and the status of mediation talks to date. [2382/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department has recently concluded an agreement relating to current issues of dispute between our-

selves and the named organisation for the provision of new arrangements for the delivery of meat inspection services.

The proposed agreement will be balloted upon by members of this organisation over the course of the next three weeks, to conclude no later than 1 February 2019.

The said organisation is to recommend acceptance of the agreement to their members. In the interim, meat inspections will continue in accordance with current operational arrangements.

Veterinary Inspection Service Staff

484. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of temporary veterinary inspectors employed in each of the years 2012 to 2018. [2383/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department engages Temporary Veterinary Inspectors (TVIs) for the purpose of providing meat inspection services at meat plants and a small number of portal duties throughout the country. TVIs are engaged as and when required to assist permanent Veterinary staff and are selected from panels for duties at some point during the year in question.

The numbers engaged for the periods in question are listed in the table below:

Year	TVIs
2012	651
2013	620
2014	624
2015	610
2016	606
2017	608
2018	606

Common Agricultural Policy Negotiations

485. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if Ireland's CAP strategic plan is being drafted and designed for the period after 2020 based on the European Commission's draft budget proposals as published under the draft multi-annual financial framework 2021 to 2027; and the consultation he is planning with farming organisations regarding same. [2384/19]

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.

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 together 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 new regulations for the CAP 2021-27 were launched on Friday 1 June 2018 by Commissioner Hogan. The existing four CAP Regulations (1305/2013, 1306/2013, 1307/2013 and 1308/2013) are being replaced by three new Regulations. The Direct Payments Regulation (1307/2013) and the Rural Development Regulation (1305/2013) are being consolidated in one Regulation which establishes rules on the CAP strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States. 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.

The proposals, as drafted, involve significant changes, including in relation to governance, the distribution of direct payments among farmers and the increasing environmental conditionality attaching to such payments. There will be some additional discretion for Member States in configuring the measures available, within parameters laid down in Council Regulations. Risk management measures, and measures to support young farmers and new entrants will be mandatory, and there will be a significant emphasis on education and technology adoption. At least 5% of rural development funds will be ring fenced for the LEADER Programme.

The current proposals require Member States to submit their draft CAP Strategic Plan to the Commission for approval before the deadline of 1 January 2020. My Department is working towards this deadline. The process of developing the draft CSP will be a complex process, involving a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) analysis, a needs assessment, scheme design, ex ante evaluation including a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment. A central element of this process will be on-going and substantive stakeholder and public consultation which will include the farm organisations.

The new CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) will be a key support in enhancing the competitiveness of the agri-food sector, achieving more sustainable management of natural resources and ensuring a more balanced development of rural areas.

Agriculture Scheme Data

486. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the fodder schemes introduced in 2018; the number of applications for each fodder scheme by county; the eligible and ineligible applicants, respectively; the number of eligible applicants who were granted funding; and the value of successful applications granted funding by county, in tabular form. [2385/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In response to ongoing pressures on fodder on foot of weather conditions, my Department introduced a series of four Fodder support Measures during 2018 – The Fodder Import Support Measure, The Fodder Import Support Measure Autumn 2018, The Fodder Transport Support Measure and the Fodder Production Incentive Measure for Tillage Farmers 2018.

The Fodder Import Support Measure and the Fodder Import Support Measure Autumn 2018 were designed to facilitate the importation of fodder by approved Co-ops and hauliers and paid a contribution at a set rate towards the cost of transportation. A total of 27 Co-Ops applied under the Fodder Import Support Measure of which some 20 were due for payment having actually imported fodder in compliance with the set criteria. The total amount payable to the

Co-ops is €991,697.

Some 18 Co-ops and hauliers have applied under the Fodder Import Support Autumn 2018. In order to optimise the use of the funds available and to ensure funds were available to importers, interim payments totalling €457,610.65 were made to 6 importers during December 2018. Remaining payments under this measure will be paid further to the submission of relevant documentation by the remaining importers.

The details in relation to applicant numbers, and payments under the Fodder Transport Support Measure which are paid direct to individual applicants, are as follows -

Fodder Transport Support Measure

Fodder Transport	-	-	-	-
County	Number of Applicants	Eligible	Ineligible	Amount Paid to eligible applications
Cavan	19	19	0	€30,971.04
Clare	51	41	10	€19,932.00
Cork	211	45	166	€11,081.00
Donegal	52	51	1	€47,352.00
Galway	28	20	8	€19,074.00
Kerry	47	22	25	€3,211.00
Kildare	2	1	1	€217.76
Kilkenny	1	1	0	€480.00
Leitrim	20	11	9	€17,640.00
Limerick	14	4	10	€3,584.00
Longford	2	1	1	€252.64
Louth	2	2	0	€462.24
Mayo	19	14	5	€7,261.00
Meath	3	3	0	€680.00
Monaghan	2	2	0	€2,364.00
Offaly	4	4	0	€1,234.88
Roscommon	31	6	25	€3,104.00
Sligo	16	14	2	€7,196.00
Tipperary	82	34	48	€9,987.66
Waterford	1	0	1	0
Westmeath	2	2	0	€447.04
Total	609	297	312	€186,532.26

Fodder Production Incentive Measure for Tillage Farmers 2018

The Fodder Production Incentive Measure for Tillage Farmers provides an incentive of €155 per hectare for tillage growers who grow a temporary crop of short rotation grasses for fodder production over the winter months and €100 per hectare for those growing catch crops such as fodder rape, turnips etc.

The first tranche of payments issued in December 2018 to applicants with catch crops. A total of 848 applicants received just over €826,000. Payments to those with grasses cannot commence until after 1 February.

The total number of applications per county and the numbers paid to date are set out below.

County	Number of Applicants	Paid Applicants to Date	Amount Paid to Date
Carlow	139	106	€106,859.00
Clare	1	1	€1,580.00
Cork	244	120	€101,946.69
Donegal	5	2	€2,855.00
Dublin	12	4	€4,315.00
Galway	18	13	€11,411.00
Kerry	30	9	€8,662.00
Kildare	73	38	€44,039.00
Kilkenny	138	56	€46,869.00
Laois	150	70	€57,375.00
Limerick	14	2	€1,292.00
Longford	3	0	€0.00
Louth	77	29	€30,853.00
Meath	67	23	€26,653.00
Monaghan	1	0	€0.00
Offaly	67	37	€27,437.00
Roscommon	8	5	€3,079.00
Tipperary	147	77	€72,482.00
Waterford	59	30	€34,764.00
Westmeath	18	6	€5,995.00
Wexford	380	189	€208,409.00
Wicklow	63	31	€29,933.00
Total	1714	848	€826,808.69

Harbours and Piers Funding

487. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if extra funding will be provided for additional berthing space at Howth Harbour; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2495/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department owns, operates and maintains six designated State-owned Fishery Harbour Centres, located at Castletownbere, Dingle, Dunmore East, Howth, Killybegs and Ros an Mhíl under statute. In addition, my Department also has responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of North Harbour at Cape Clear, as well as the maintenance of a small number of specific piers, lights and beacons throughout Ireland, in accordance with the 1902 ex-congested Districts Board piers, lights and Beacons Act.

I am happy to advise the Deputy that between the years 2010 to 2018, as part of my Department's Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme, in excess of €10 million has been invested in maintenance, development and upgrading works at Howth Fishery Harbour Centre.

The provision of additional berthing space on the Middle Pier in Howth has been under consideration by the Department and some preparatory work has been carried out. Additional

berthing space would, in addition to relieving vessel congestion issues, enable greater segregation between the activities of fishing vessels and the marine tourism and leisure activities which are mainly concentrated on the West Pier. This segregation is desirable from both operational and health & safety points of view.

As is the case for all developments in the six Fishery Harbour Centres, any decision with regard to initiating a project to provide additional berthing space in Howth will only be considered on the basis of available exchequer funding and competing national priorities

No final decisions have been made on the full suite of projects to be undertaken as part of the 2019 Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme, however I expect to make an announcement on this matter shortly.

Departmental Correspondence

488. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 413 of 11 December 2018, if he will provide a copy of the letter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2557/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): A copy of the requested letter has been forwarded to the Deputy's office.

Live Exports

489. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for at least two unscheduled stoppages of a vessel (details supplied). [2582/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department applies strong oversight in respect of the welfare of animals being exported. This includes a comprehensive legislative framework relating to the transport of animals by sea (The Carriage of Livestock by Sea Regulations 2016 (S.I. 356 of 2016)) and veterinary inspection of animals prior to loading. Irish legislative standards for sea transport are recognised by the EU Commission as being amongst the most effective and stringent legislation in force as regards transport by sea.

I am informed that the MV Sarah made a stop at the Spanish port of Ceuta to take on fuel and that the vessel also made a brief stop off the coast of Algeria to permit a needed change of engineering personnel.

Live Exports

490. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on whether allowing the continued exportation of farm animals to non-EU countries, in which animal welfare standards do not conform to those found here or the rest of the EU and in which they may be subject to inhumane treatment and slaughter, is compliant with the aim of his Department for Ireland being recognised for its high animal welfare standards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2583/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department has a strong commitment towards improving animal welfare standards worldwide. It con-

tinues to work closely with other EU Member States and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), with a view to improving animal welfare practices.

Ireland has proved its on-going commitment to animal welfare through additional OIE multi-annual financial assistance to support its activities in order to enhance animal welfare worldwide. This additional support to the value of €75, 000 per annum over the period 2017-20 is focused on OIE initiatives in the area of slaughter in the regions of Eastern Europe, Middle East and North Africa and in the area of “whole journey scenarios” by land and/or sea involving inter-regional journeys.

Ports Facilities

491. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to develop an alternative cold storage inspection facility at Rosslare Europort in view of the fact there is only one cold storage inspection facility in the country, located in Dublin Port; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2599/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As part of on-going planning for Brexit, my Department has been working with other government departments, including the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, in assessing the infrastructure requirements at ports that are currently in receipt of consignments of products, plants and animals from the UK. Such consignments will require SPS checks to be carried out at a designated border control post, following the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union. In the event that a transition period is agreed between the UK and the EU as part of a withdrawal agreement, these checks will not apply until the end of the transition period.

Rosslare has been identified as a port where SPS checks will need to be carried out and as such it will be required to have a designated border control post (BCP) in compliance with EU rules. Work is underway, in conjunction with the Office of Public Works (OPW), to identify a suitable site for the construction of a BCP at Rosslare Port. The BCP will be part of a multi-agency central compound. My Department will continue to liaise with the OPW and the other State Bodies who will be sharing this facility, with a view to ensuring that the design meets all legislative requirements, works as efficiently and effectively as possible and maximizes value for money, in particular through the sharing of facilities where this is provided for by the legislation.

Basic Payment Scheme Data

492. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the average basic payment scheme entitlement value nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2637/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The national average value of entitlements can be calculated for any year based on the entitlement position at that time and varies slightly from year to year based on a number of factors including:

- new allocations of entitlements from the National Reserve;
- reversion of unused entitlements to the National Reserve;
- reversion of unduly allocated entitlements to the National Reserve.

The current average value of BPS entitlements in 2019 is €184.87 per Hectare excluding the Greening Payment. The Greening Payment is now an additional 44% or approximately €81.34 extra per Hectare giving a figure of €266.21 for the national average including greening.

Basic Payment Scheme Data

493. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of basic payments scheme entrants in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2638/19]

494. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of basic payment scheme entrants in County Donegal who receive less than the national average entitlement payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2639/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 493 and 494 together.

To date, the number of eligible applications received for Donegal under the 2018 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) is 8,167.

As of Friday 18th January, the national average BPS payment for 2018 was €9,523 and there are 6,488 Donegal applicants that received payments for 2018 that were less than the national average.

GLAS Payments

495. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a refund, which has been withheld due to a departmental fault, will issue to a person (details supplied); if his attention has been drawn to the fact that this error occurred almost three years ago; the efforts he will make to reimburse the person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2676/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2015.

All scheme year payments have been processed for this case. However, the Department has undertaken a review of 2015 and 2016 GLAS scheme year payments and has identified that an additional payment is due in relation to the Low Input Permanent Pasture action (LIPP) in this case. I expect this payment to issue shortly.

Departmental Expenditure

496. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will publish the airline costs for his Department for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2684/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The airline costs for my Department for 2018 amounted to €580,079. Of that total, some €116,787 was recouped from the EU Commission.

A further refund is due for attendance at EU Council Meetings and some €99,333 in relation

to costs of attendance at Council Meetings was received in July of 2018.

Departmental Expenditure

497. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will publish the cost of newspapers in his Department in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2701/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I wish to advise the Deputy that in 2018 my Department spent €21,866 on newspapers. This includes expenditure on hard copy and digital versions.

Beef Industry

498. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the measures he plans to implement to support the suckler beef sector in view of growing concerns regarding its viability and the lack of an adequate return to the primary producer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2785/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I am conscious that 2018 was a difficult year for the suckler beef sector, particularly in terms of unprecedented weather events, which resulted in increased input costs due to fodder shortages. We must also acknowledge the exposure of the sector to Brexit impacts.

However, one of the unique strengths of the agri-food sector has been the shared vision for the sustainable development of the sector in Food Wise 2025. I hope that this positive engagement will continue. I have utilised the Beef Round table to highlight the need for stakeholders to recognise their inter-dependency and to support the sector through examination of mechanisms to add value along the supply chain and increase the strength of all links in the supply chain, including Beef Producer Organisations. Officials from my Department are currently engaging extensively with stakeholders in relation to Beef Producer Organisations.

More generally in relation to the beef sector, in the last Budget I secured €20 million for a new Beef Environmental Efficiency Pilot targeted at suckler farmers and specifically aimed at further improving the carbon efficiency of beef production.

My Department is examining all appropriate measures to support the different agri-food sectors, including the suckler sector in preparation for the next iteration of the CAP. I am committed to ensuring that suckler farmers continue to receive strong support in the next CAP. My view is that such payments should support and encourage suckler farmers to make the best decisions possible to improve the profitability, and the economic and environmental efficiency, of their farming system.

The Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) is currently the main support specifically targeted for the suckler sector, which provides Irish beef farmers with some €300 million in funding over the current Rural Development Programme (RDP) period. This scheme is an agri-environmental measure to improve the environmental sustainability of the national suckler herd by increasing genetic merit within the herd.

My Department has rolled out a range of schemes as part of the €4 billion Rural Development Programme (RDP), 2014 - 2020. In addition to the BDGP, other supports which are available for suckler and sheep farmers under Pillar II of the CAP include GLAS, ANCs and Knowl-

edge Transfer Groups. Suckler farmers also benefit from the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and Greening payments under CAP Pillar I.

I am strongly of the view that the current range of supports available to suckler farmers, together with ensuring market access to as many markets as possible, both for live animals and beef exports, are appropriate supports for the continued development of the sector. National Farm Survey data suggests that suckler farmers receive support equivalent to approximately €500 per suckler cow on average. It is also envisaged that suckler farmers will be the primary beneficiaries of the €23 million ANC increase in addition to the €20 million available under the Beef Environmental Efficiency Pilot.

Securing new market access and enhancing existing Irish beef access has been a particular priority for many of the trade missions in 2017 and 2018. The opening of the Chinese market for Irish beef last year was the culmination of significant work, over a number of years. My Department continues to prioritise efforts to gain market access to new third country markets and, equally importantly, to deepen existing markets for Irish beef products.

Departmental Staff

499. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if technical agricultural officers working in his Department have the opportunity to work until they are 70 years of age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2812/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Public Service Superannuation (Age of Retirement) Bill 2018, which was enacted on 26th of December 2018 increases the compulsory retirement age for civil servants, recruited prior to 1st April 2004, from age 65 to age 70.

Technical Agricultural Officers employed by my Department, who meet the above criteria, are included in this cohort of staff and now have the opportunity to remain in employment until age 70.

Young Farmer Capital Investment Scheme Applications

500. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a payment under a scheme will issue to a farmer (details supplied) in County Cork. [2841/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named applied for investments under the Young Farmer Capital Investment Scheme of TAMS II and the application was approved on 4 July 2017. The applicant submitted a claim for payment 9 January 2019 which is currently being processed.

Scéim Comhshaoil Talmhaíochta Carbóin Glas Íseal

501. D’fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cén uair a íocfar an deontas GLAS le feirmeoir (sonraí tugtha) i gContae na Gaillimhe; cén fáth go bhfuil moill ar an íocaíocht seo; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [2843/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Glacadh leis

an duine ainmnithe isteach i scéim GLAS 3 agus an 1 Eanáir 2017 an dáta ar cuireadh tús leis an gconradh. Tá na híocaíochtaí ar fad a bhaineann le bliain scéime 2017 faighte ag an té sin.

Bhí moill ar réamhíocaíocht 2018 mar gheall ar fhadhb a bhain leis an éileamh Coimíneachta, atá anois réitithe. Cuirfear an t-iarratas ar aghaidh anois le seiceálacha eile bailíochta a dhéanamh air agus déanfar íocaíocht a eisiúint ach na seiceálacha sin ar fad a shásamh. Leantar le híocaíochtaí GLAS a eisiúint ar bhonn seachtainiúil.

Agriculture Scheme Administration

502. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a young farmer payment under the national reserve in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2910/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted a 2017 National Reserve application to my Department. This application was unsuccessful as the person named did not meet the scheme Terms and Conditions and he was advised in writing of this outcome in January 2018. He was also advised that he had the option to appeal the decision to my Department.

The person named subsequently appealed this decision and following a review of his application, including the information provided by the person named as part of his appeal, the original decision was upheld. The person named was advised of this decision in writing in March 2018 and also advised that if he wished to further appeal this decision to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office, he could do so in writing within three months.

The Agriculture Appeals Office has now contacted my Department seeking a copy of the file relevant to the 2017 National Reserve application by the person named in order to commence the process of consideration of his appeal.

GLAS Payments

503. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a GLAS payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2941/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 1 and has received payments for scheme years 2015, 2016 and 2017 advance. Following the resolution of an outstanding issue, the balance payment for 2017 has been cleared for payment. The case will now move forward for processing of the 2018 advance. GLAS payments are continuing to issue on a weekly basis.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Payments

504. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) will receive a 2018 areas of natural constraint payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3015/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted an application under the Basic Payments scheme and Areas of Natural Con-

strains scheme on 2 March 2018. Full payment in respect of both schemes has issued to the nominated bank account of the person named.

GLAS Payments

505. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) will receive a GLAS payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3023/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The above named was approved into GLAS 2 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016 and has received all payments in respect of the scheme years 2016 and 2017.

In relation to payment for 2018, administrative checks involving a number of sections within the Department take place on all GLAS claims. All cases must clear validation checks before payment can be made. In the process of checking this application an issue has been identified which requires action by the participant. As Department officials have unsuccessfully tried to contact the participant concerned to explain what is required the Advisor concerned is being contacted in this regard. GLAS payments are continuing to issue on a weekly basis.

Electric Vehicles

506. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to roll out fast-charging infrastructure for electric vehicles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2575/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The majority of the existing publicly accessible electric vehicle infrastructure was rolled out by the ESB through its eCars programme. This network includes 77 fast chargers, mainly on national routes. A map showing the charge points, including the status and availability of the charge points, is available on the ESB's website at www.esb.ie/ecars.

In addition, under the first call for applications from the Climate Action Fund, I approved funding of up to €10 million to a project from ESB eCars that will develop a nationwide, state-of-the-art electric vehicle fast charging network capable of facilitating large-scale electric vehicle uptake over the next decade. Further details on this project, and the other projects approved from the fund, are available on my Department's website at www.dccae.gov.ie.

Medical Waste Disposal

507. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 339 of 1 March 2018, in response to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 422 and 430 of 5 December 2017, the status of the new funding proposal for families with large amounts of medical waste; when the scheme will be introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2606/19]

517. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the introduction of the grant towards the cost of pay-by-weight charges for households with a vulnerable person with long-term medical incontinence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2788/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 507 and 517 together.

My Department is continuing the work of developing a mechanism to provide a support for vulnerable persons with a condition such as lifelong or long-term medical incontinence to help meet the average annual cost of disposing of their domestic waste. I am informed that this process has taken longer than envisaged, due to a number of issues, including data protection issues that have arisen since the introduction of GDPR. However, I can assure the Deputy that I am committed to introducing an annual support as soon as practically possible in conjunction with relevant agencies and stakeholders.

Inland Fisheries

508. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the rates being paid by a person (details supplied) to Inland Fisheries Ireland will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2940/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) manages salmon stocks on an individual river basis as each of Ireland's 147 salmon rivers (including river sections and estuaries) has its own genetically unique stock of salmon.

IFI is supported in its management role by scientific advice from Ireland's independent Standing Scientific Committee (SSC), comprising scientists from a range of organisations. IFI also has to have regard EU legislation, most notably the Habitats Directive under which salmon habitats are protected.

Scientific and management assessments of each of the distinct stocks, including the river Feale, are carried out every year with IFI engaged in extensive stock monitoring which feeds into the Scientific Group's annual reviews. An average of the 5 years of data is used to estimate expected returns for the coming year to ensure that a good or bad year does not have a disproportionate impact on the stock assessment in any single year.

Based on the annual assessment carried out for the 2019 season added to the previous 4 years' assessments, the River Feale is not closed. It is open to catch and release angling. The Feale has been previously open to harvest fishing for a number of years.

The rateable value of fisheries is set by the Valuation Office on a statutory basis. It is a matter, in the first instance, for fishery owners to contact the Valuations Office as regards the possibility of amending the valuation in the light of current circumstances.

Inland Fisheries Ireland is statutorily obliged to collect rates based on rateable valuation established by the Valuations Office. IFI has no statutory function in relation to that issue nor any power to amend rateable valuations.

Broadband Service Provision

509. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when a residence (details supplied) can expect to be connected to high speed broadband; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2322/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard

Bruton): The premises referred to in the Question is in the AMBER area on the National Broadband Plan (NBP) High Speed Broadband Map, which is available on my Department's website at *www.broadband.gov.ie*. The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP. The procurement process to appoint a bidder for the State intervention network is now at the final stage. My priority is to bring the procurement process to a fair and impartial conclusion as quickly as possible and I will bring a recommendation to Government in this regard in the coming weeks.

I note that there has been some deployment of infrastructure by Eir in the area of the premises referred to by the Deputy. This is part of that company's ongoing rural fibre rollout.

Eir's rural investment in high speed broadband is an entirely commercial undertaking, and not part of the planned State Intervention network. Although the deployment is monitored under the terms of a Commitment Agreement signed between the company and my Department, it is not funded by the State and it is not planned, designed or directed by my Department in any capacity.

The selection of what premises are to be served under Eir's deployment is an internal and commercial decision for that company. My Department has no statutory authority or function to intervene in the company's commercial decisions, nor in any decisions relating to the roll out and siting of infrastructure throughout Ireland by service providers operating in a liberalised market.

For those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing. These Broadband Officers are acting as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements.

Television Licence Fee

510. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to the recent decision by the European Court of Justice that upheld the ability of the German Government to make a household media charge non-device dependent; if this ruling has been discussed by the television licence fee reform working group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2461/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Working Group on the Future Funding of Public Service Broadcasting is currently deliberating a number of options for the reform of the TV Licence Fee and its collection. It is due to report to me by the end of March. I am aware that the ruling referred to has confirmed that there are no state aid implications for the broadcasting contribution introduced by Germany in 2013 to replace the previous device dependent broadcasting fee. The Court found that the new levy did not lead to a substantial increase in the compensation received by the public broadcasters to cover the costs associated with the public service tasks entrusted to them.

Electric Vehicle Grants

511. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the schemes available if a person wishes to purchase an electric car; the incentives in place to purchase an electric car; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2475/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): There is a range of supports for the purchase of electric vehicles. These supports include a purchase grant of up to €5,000 for new electric vehicles and Vehicle Registration Tax relief of up to €5,000 for battery electric vehicles and up to €2,500 for plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. In addition, further grants of up to €7,000 are available to support the purchase of electric vehicles in the taxi/hackney/limousine sector. Other supports available include:

- Accelerated Capital Allowances for electric vehicles and charging infrastructure;
- A grant of up to €600 to support the installation of a home charger for purchasers of new and second-hand electric vehicles;
- Benefit-in-Kind relief for battery electric vehicles;
- Low motor tax of €120 for battery electric vehicles; and
- discount on tolls of 50% for battery electric vehicles and 25% for plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (up to a maximum amount of €500 per year with greater reductions off-peak on the M50).

A full list of supports is available on www.drivingelectric.ie.

In addition, under the first call for applications from the Climate Action Fund I approved funding of up to €10 million to a project from ESB eCars. This project will develop a nationwide, state-of-the-art electric vehicle fast charging network capable of facilitating large-scale electric vehicle uptake over the next decade. In addition, my Department, in conjunction with the SEAI, is working on how best to support the provision of greater levels of on-street public charging.

Climate Change Adaptation Plans

512. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if directions to public bodies under section 15(2) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 have been issued by his Department or other Departments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2564/19]

513. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the local authorities that have notified his Department under section 4(13) (a) or (b) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 of their intention to adopt or their adoption of climate change mitigation measures; the details of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2565/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 512 and 513 together.

I have secured government approval to develop an All of Government Plan which will set out the actions which must be taken in every Government Department and Body in order first

to ensure we: deliver our 2030 targets; prepare for deep decarbonisation by 2050; and to make Ireland a leader in responding to climate change.

There will be substantial engagement with Departments and agencies as the Plan is developed. In that context I have asked each body under the aegis of my Department to consider their own direct contribution, their practices and the clients and stakeholders with whom they directly interact, to see how climate action can be prioritised.

Section 4(13) of the 2015 Act provides that a local authority may notify the Minister or the Government in writing of specific climate mitigation measures that have been adopted or are intended to be adopted by that local authority. My Department has not received any notification to date under section 4(13) of the Act.

Notwithstanding this, my Department is engaging with a full range of public bodies on foot of other relevant provisions of the 2015 Act. Section 14 provides for the preparation and submission to the Oireachtas of an Annual Transition Statement setting out the mitigation and adaptation measures adopted to reduce emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change and enable the achievement of the national transition objective. The 2018 Annual Transition Statement, available on my Department's website at www.dccae.gov.ie, summarises activity being undertaken across Government as well as in the local government sector to implement both the National Mitigation Plan and National Adaptation Framework.

In January 2018, the Government announced the provision of €10m to the local authority sector to establish four Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs). The Climate Action Regional Offices are being operated by a lead local authority in four different regions grouped according to shared climate change risks. The establishment of these offices will enable a more coordinated engagement across the whole of government and will help build on the experience and expertise which exists across the sector.

Section 15(2) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 provides that a relevant Minister may give a direction to a relevant public body requiring it to submit a report specifying the measures it has adopted to have regard to, in the performance of its functions,

- the most recent approved national mitigation plan, national adaptation framework, or approved sectoral adaptation plans;
- the furtherance of the national transition objective; and
- the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State.

I have not issued directions to any relevant public body in the context of section 15(2) of the Act.

National Broadband Plan Data

514. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the broadband scheme will be rolled out in a location (details supplied). [2640/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The premises referred to by the Deputy is in the AMBER area on the National Broadband Plan (NBP) High Speed Broadband Map, which is available on my Department's website

at www.broadband.gov.ie. The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP. This intervention is the subject of an ongoing procurement process. The procurement process to appoint a bidder for the State intervention network is now at the final stage. My priority is to bring the procurement process to a fair and impartial conclusion as quickly as possible and I will bring a recommendation to Government in the coming weeks.

For those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing. These Broadband Officers are acting as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is already reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements.

Departmental Expenditure

515. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will publish the airline costs for his Department for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2687/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department has a contract in place for the provision of foreign travel services, which was sourced under the Office of Government Procurement travel management services framework. Only essential travel is undertaken and the number of officers travelling on official business is kept to a minimum.

In 2018, total expenditure by my Department on airline costs, amounted to €279,306. For comparison purposes staffing levels in the Department have increased by 21% since 2016 with an increase of 43% in airline costs for the same period. This reflects the expanded remit of the Department since 2016 which now includes climate and environment functions which have significant international commitments.

Departmental Expenditure

516. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will publish the cost of newspapers in his Department in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2704/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department buys a limited number of newspapers and in 2018 spent a total of €14,900. This includes on-line subscriptions which reduces the requirement for paper editions and the associated costs.

Question No. 517 answered with Question No. 507.

Fishing Industry

518. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position with regard to the initial instalments under the support fund for former commercial eel fishermen and women which were due to have been paid to approved applicants by 31 December 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2844/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Canney): The Government's Eel Support Scheme fund is available to all persons who were the holder of a commercial public eel licence or an eel fishing permit from the ESB in the 2007 season (the base year). The 5 reckonable years for payments under the scheme are 2003-2007. This requires that an application is made by the former licence holder. The fund is administered by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI). A tax free sum may be paid to licence or permit holders in respect of each of the five reckonable years for which they were a licence or permit holder. A further taxable payment may be made to licence or permit holders in respect of the average of their catches, based on State held records, during the five reckonable years.

Letters of Offer to applicants, based on verification of the records held by the State in respect of each applicant, are being issued and this process is expected to be finalised this week. A key element of offers is to outline clearly the need for recipients to make a tax return to the Revenue Commissioners in relation to the taxable element of the scheme. Payment will issue once the applicant has accepted the offer.

Illegal Dumping

519. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount spent by each local authority in 2018 on cleaning up illegally disposed waste. [2863/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The total cost of illegal dumping is not collated by my Department as it includes local authority enforcement, disposal and legal costs and also involves costs for other State agencies such as An Garda Síochána. Illegal dumping is first and foremost a matter of individual responsibility and compliance with the law. While enforcement action in this area is a matter in the first instance for local authorities, my Department encourages a multi-faceted approach to tackling the problem, incorporating enforcement, public awareness and education and, as such, provides funding to support the activities of the Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authorities of approximately €1 million per annum and of the network of local authority waste enforcement officers of approximately €7.4 million per annum.

In addition, my Department has developed the Anti-Dumping Initiative to work in partnership with local authorities and community organisations in identifying high risk or problem areas, developing appropriate enforcement responses and carrying out clean-up operations. Since 2017 funding of €3.3 million has been made available from the Environment Fund in this regard which has supported over 400 projects across all 31 local authority areas, remediating black spots and equipping local authority enforcement officers with the latest technologies available to support SMART enforcement of our waste laws.

A review of this initiative is underway which will inform a 2019 anti-dumping work programme that will place an increased emphasis on all actors who facilitate the unauthorised movement and disposal of waste.

Climate Change Adaptation Plans

520. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the steps he is taking to address climate change by reducing the carbon emissions of public lighting in view of the fact that the majority of public lighting is powered by sodium vapour bulbs which are extremely energy inefficient; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2933/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The national project to upgrade our public lighting is a flagship initiative under the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy. The project objective is to support local authorities in replacing traditional lamps with the more efficient LED technologies now available – and achieve the resultant energy efficiency and climate benefits as well as maintenance cost savings. The Project is being led by the Local Authorities through the County & City Management Association (CCMA). My Department is playing an active role in supporting this project including through its membership of the project’s national Steering Group. With the business case now in place the project is moving into the implementation phase – which will be managed by the RMO (Roads Management Office) a shared service for the Local Authorities. I understand that it is envisaged that the first of the regional tenders for upgrade works will issue in 2019, with the aim of having retrofit works underway in the first region in Q1 of 2020. The project was also successful in the competitive process for funding support under the Government’s Climate Action Fund first call for proposals and allocated €17.47million.

Building Energy Rating Compliance

521. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 253 of 16 January 2019, the percentage of new buildings that have an A2 energy rating as required by the nearly zero energy building standard requirements; the percentage of public buildings owned and leased by the State are fully compliant with the standard requirements as of the end of 2018; the mechanism by which compliance with the building standards and EU legal requirements are monitored; and his views on whether the State is compliant with the standard requirements. [2935/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government is responsible for the Building Regulations. The NZEB performance for new dwellings will be typically equivalent to a Building Energy Rating (BER) of A2. The draft regulations and accompanying technical guidance to implement NZEB are expected to be signed into law shortly. Accordingly the A2 performance requirement is not currently in place. Under the current building regulations a typical dwelling is built to an A3, and based on CSO data 98% of all new buildings are now built to an A3 BER.

With regards to new buildings owned and occupied by Public Authorities, in December 2016 the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government issued a letter to all public service bodies advising them of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive requirement for all new buildings owned and occupied by public authorities to achieve NZEB performance after 31st December 2018. The implementation of the NZEB requirement in public buildings is the responsibility of the relevant bodies and I am advised that at this time that the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government does not have figures available on the percentage of NZEB in place in the public sector. However it should be noted that all buildings, public and private, which commence construction after 1st January 2019 must be NZEB under Part L

of the Building Regulations and the compliance of these buildings is monitored and enforced under Building Control Regulations.

Under the Building Control Acts 1990 to 2014, primary responsibility for compliance of works with the requirements of the Building Regulations, rests with the owners, designers and builders of buildings. Enforcement of the Building Regulations is a matter for the 31 local building control authorities, who have extensive powers of inspection and enforcement under the Acts and who are independent in the use of their statutory powers. This applies to all buildings – including those owned and occupied by public authorities.

Ministerial Meetings

522. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has met formally with a person (details supplied) since his appointment as Minister; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3016/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): As a matter of course, as Minister, I meet, from time to time, with the Chairs and CEOs of bodies under the aegis of my Department. I can confirm that I have formally met the individual referred to in the question.

National Broadband Plan Data

523. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if consideration has been given to allow some flexibility in cases in which small sections of certain roads are not included in the roll out of e fibre (details supplied). [3044/19]

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, regardless of location. This is being achieved via a combination of commercial investment and a State led intervention. The procurement process to appoint a bidder for the State intervention network is now at the final stage. My priority is to bring the procurement process to a fair and impartial conclusion as quickly as possible and I will bring a recommendation to Government in this regard in the coming weeks.

With regard to the deployment of infrastructure by Eir in the area referred to by the Deputy, this is part of that company's ongoing rural fibre rollout.

Eir's rural investment in high speed broadband is an entirely commercial undertaking, and not part of the planned State Intervention network. Although the deployment is monitored under the terms of a Commitment Agreement signed between the company and my Department, it is not funded by the State and it is not planned, designed or directed by my Department in any capacity.

The selection of what premises are to be served under Eir's deployment is an internal and commercial decision for that company. My Department has no statutory authority or function to intervene in the company's commercial decisions, nor in any decisions relating to the roll out and siting of infrastructure throughout Ireland by service providers operating in a liberalised market.

For those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives

will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing. These Broadband Officers are acting as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements.

Employment Data

524. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the research conducted into the impact of automation on those that drive for a living. [2301/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Research on the effects of automation on drivers is a cross cutting theme and as such falls under a number of government departments, agencies and research institutions such as universities. These include the Department of Communications Climate Action and Environment (DCCA) and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBE). Much research is also being conducted internationally such as through the European Union.

DBE has responsibility for sectoral issues in the economy. In particular, it provides the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) with research and secretariat support. I understand that this Group recently published a report entitled “Digital Transformation: Assessing the Impact of Digitalisation on

Ireland’s Workforce”, which, inter alia, looks at the impact on transport - to which the Deputy may be referring, and may be found at <http://www.skillsireland.ie/Publications/2018> .

My Department is principally involved in all matters related to road traffic law and the regulation of such vehicles. My Department is working with industry stakeholders, other Government departments and state agencies to develop guidelines for testing of autonomous vehicles on public roads in Ireland. These will be supported by a National Connected and Autonomous Vehicle (CAV) Roadmap and Plan as well as a National Strategy for Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS).

EU Funding

525. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of Irish applications to the EU Connecting Europe Facility in each of the years 2014 to 2018; the successful applications granted funding; and the monetary value to date of same. [2411/19]

537. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of Irish applications to the Motorways of the Sea EU funding source in each of the years 2014 to 2018; the successful applications granted funding; and the monetary value to date of same. [2412/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 525 and 537 together.

A total of 19 Irish transport projects have been selected under the 2014-2017 EU Connect-

ing Europe Facility (CEF) calls for funding. During this period, Irish applicants submitted a total of 28 eligible CEF applications for transport projects. This includes projects also involving other Member States, for funding for multi-beneficiary actions, which I have further detailed below. Three transport-related CEF funding applications of relevance to Ireland were submitted as part of the 2018 CEF call for proposals. These applications are currently being evaluated and assessed by the European Commission, with a decision to be made in the first half of 2019.

CEF funding is allocated in the form of grants awarded to successful applicants following competitive calls for proposals, which are published on the website of the European Commission. Each call has specific funding priorities and explicit criteria for activities that are eligible for funding under that individual call and calls vary from year to year.

Irish beneficiaries have to date received over €90.1 million for projects on Ireland's Trans-European Transport (TEN-T) Network. This figure includes funding where Irish project promoters have successfully joined with project promoters across other EU Member States. These would include successful applications for the deployment of Single European Sky Air Traffic Management Research (SESAR) and road transport projects with other Member States, which includes studies on the harmonisation of interoperable intelligent transport systems (ITS) and cooperative Intelligent transport systems (C-ITS). The ports of Dublin, Cork and Shannon Foynes have all been successful in applying for and obtaining CEF funding.

Motorways of the Sea is considered a horizontal priority of CEF and constitutes the maritime pillar of CEF. It is a separate and smaller funding stream under the overall CEF allocation, and it aims to promote green, viable, attractive and efficient sea-based transport links which are integrated into the entire transport chain.

There have been two successful Irish applications for Motorways of the Sea funding. These were both joint applications for funding made with entities in other Member States.

Details of all Irish successful proposals for CEF funding, including successful Motorways of the Sea proposals, are available on the website of the European Commission.

Finally, I wish to state that my answer to this question is with regard to transport projects only. CEF is a funding instrument for the Trans-European Networks (TEN) of the EU, in the fields of transport, digital, and energy. All matters pertaining to digital and energy CEF applications and funding are a matter for my colleague the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment.

Ports Facilities

526. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has raised the issue of the ownership of Rosslare Europort with his UK counterpart; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2425/19]

527. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether the operational model of Rosslare Europort by a non-port company is in the State's best interests; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2585/19]

528. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the issue of the ownership of Rosslare Europort has been raised with his UK counterpart in view of the threats of Brexit and the need to develop ports here to ensure businesses can access markets. [2590/19]

532. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether it is appropriate that Rosslare Europort has a different ownership structure to other ports here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2338/19]

553. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has addressed the issue of the ownership of Rosslare Europort with his UK counterpart in view of the need to develop ports here. [2594/19]

557. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether the continued control and operation of Rosslare port by Iarnród Éireann is an appropriate model in view of the need to develop ports here. [2598/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 526 to 528, inclusive, 532, 553 and 557 together.

Rosslare Europort is unique among the State-owned ports, as it is not a commercial company operating under the Harbours Acts but is instead operated on commercial basis as a division of Iarnród Éireann. Technically, the port forms part of the Fishguard and Rosslare Railways and Harbours Company, which is a 19th-century joint-venture company, consisting today of Iarnród Éireann on the Irish side and Stena line on the Welsh (Fishguard) side.

The status of the port, and whether its current status potentially inhibits its development, was considered in a strategic review, commissioned by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and carried out by Indecon Economic Consultants. Their report concluded that the creation of an independent port authority would be extremely difficult, given the port's complex legal structure. Instead, it was recommended that the port remain in public ownership and that the possibilities for increased private sector involvement be investigated.

In order to assist Iarnród Éireann's overall consideration of how best to move forward, the company then engaged consultants to assess market interest. The assessment was largely positive in terms of the potential for increased private sector investment in the port; however, it did identify possible implementation issues due to the complicated legislative basis of the port.

Following that assessment, the Department sought and received detailed advice from the Office of the Attorney General on the matter. That advice identified a number of legal issues with any such proposal and those issues remain under consideration by the Department.

The Minister is satisfied that Rosslare Europort as a division of Iarnród Éireann is effectively managing operations at the port and looking at the potential of the Port to develop further and take advantage of any new opportunities. The port is targeting growth and new business opportunities, and recently received the approval of the Iarnród Éireann Board for a strategic plan to grow the port's business. This includes investment plans for up to €25 million in customer facilities and port infrastructure, port assets, and new technology. The Port is engaging with a number of potential new shipping customers to supplement existing operators and offer greater choice to freight and passenger business. Iarnród Éireann and Rosslare Europort briefed my Department late last year on the company's plans for strategic development of the Port over the coming years.

I have met individually with my UK counterpart, Secretary of State for Transport Chris Grayling, to discuss Brexit matters on three occasions since mid-2017. I most recently met the Secretary of State, at his request, in Dublin on 8 November last. Our discussion fully respected the mandate of the EU's Chief Brexit Negotiator, Michel Barnier. The Secretary of State outlined key areas of concern for the UK in relation to transport.

While I did not specifically raise the issue of ownership of Rosslare Europort with the Sec-

retary of State, I set out the importance of continued transport connectivity between Ireland and the UK, including in relation to ports, aviation, road transport, and cross-border rail services. I stressed the importance of finalising the Withdrawal Agreement, highlighted the importance of the UK landbridge for Ireland as a route to European markets, and the need for Irish trade to move efficiently through ports.

I stressed that as regards the future EU-UK relationship, Ireland wants to see the closest possible relationship between the EU and the UK, across a range of areas including transport. At the same time, I re-iterated the importance of preserving the integrity of the EU's Single Market and that the EU's regulatory autonomy is respected.

I recognise that Brexit will have implications for a number of key ports and airports, and Rosslare continues to work closely with my Department and a range of other relevant Government Departments and Offices in preparing for the additional border controls that will arise from Brexit. In this context, my Department has met Rosslare Port management on a number of occasions over the past year, most recently last week, about the infrastructure requirements of the Port in connection with Brexit. My Department has also been meeting ferry and shipping companies regarding their plans for dealing with the challenges of Brexit.

Departmental Expenditure

529. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of his Department's capital expenditure to the end of December 2018 under the heading of B.8 sustainable transport. [2308/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Deputy will appreciate that end year outturn figures for the Vote for 2018 are currently being finalised; however, the provisional breakdown of expenditure under Subhead B8: Public & Sustainable Transport is as follows:

-	Amount
Smarter Travel / Sustainable Urban Transport	€19.3m*
Heavy Rail Safety / Development	€173.1m
Public Transport Infrastructure	€195.6m
Cycling and Walking	€18.1m*

*Subject to finalisation

The bulk of funding provided under the various programmes is allocated to the National Transport

Authority (NTA) which in turn allocates the monies toward specific projects and programmes; however, Iarnród Éireann is also allocated money directly by my Department under the heavy rail safety / development programme in line with the Infrastructure Manager Multi Annual Contract (IMMAC) which funds maintenance and renewal of the heavy rail network.

The Deputy will no doubt welcome the increased allocations I have secured in Budget 2019 which represent an increase of 18% in capital expenditure under B8 Public & Sustainable Transport as compared to last year's allocation.

530. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the review by the Irish Maritime Development Office into the use of the UK landbridge by exporters and importers here. [2336/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I refer the Deputy to my answer to PQ number 2337/19, copied below.

The Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) report was published in November 2018 and is available on the publications section of the IMDO website (www.imdo.ie).

The report estimates that the annual volume of Roll on/Roll off (RoRo) traffic using the landbridge to transport goods to and from the continent is approximately 3 million tonnes, which equates to approximately 150,000 Heavy Goods Vehicles. The total value of trade with the EU using the landbridge is estimated to be €21 billion, and may well be higher. This is a significant proportion of Ireland's trade and a significant aspect of Ireland's international road haulage sector.

The study concludes that the landbridge is a strategically important route to market for many Irish importers and exporters and that certain sectors of the economy will be adversely affected, mainly those that trade in time sensitive goods, e.g. Agri-food, seafood etc. The study recommends that Ireland's continued access to the UK landbridge is protected in the ongoing EU-UK negotiations.

There is ongoing liaison between Ireland, the European Commission and other similar affected Member States on matters relating to the land bridge. However, I have also assessed the maritime capacity for direct sailings between Ireland and continental EU ports as a potential alternative route for trade currently using the Landbridge. I recognise that the longer journey time on these direct routes may not offer a viable alternative and some trade will continue to use the Landbridge or, in the event of significant delays, may become unviable.

Based on consultations with the shipping sector and wider, I have advised Government that sufficient capacity should be available on direct routes to continental ports from end March 2019, and if demand for further capacity arises, the shipping sector can respond quickly. I am keeping this matter under review and will update Government again before end-February 2019.

Brexit Issues

531. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the review by the Irish Maritime Development Office into the way in which Brexit may affect importers and exporters here; the details of his engagement with the office; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2337/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) report was published in November 2018 and is available on the publications section of the IMDO website (www.imdo.ie).

The report estimates that the annual volume of Roll on/Roll off (RoRo) traffic using the landbridge to transport goods to and from the continent is approximately 3 million tonnes, which equates to approximately 150,000 Heavy Goods Vehicles. The total value of trade with the EU using the landbridge is estimated to be €21 billion, and may well be higher. This is a significant proportion of Ireland's trade and a significant aspect of Ireland's international road haulage sector.

The study concludes that the landbridge is a strategically important route to market for many Irish importers and exporters and that certain sectors of the economy will be adversely affected, mainly those that trade in time sensitive goods, e.g. Agri-food, seafood etc. The study recommends that Ireland's continued access to the UK landbridge is protected in the ongoing EU-UK negotiations.

There is ongoing liaison between Ireland, the European Commission and other similar affected Member States on matters relating to the land bridge. However, I have also assessed the maritime capacity for direct sailings between Ireland and continental EU ports as a potential alternative route for trade currently using the Landbridge. I recognise that the longer journey time on these direct routes may not offer a viable alternative and some trade will continue to use the Landbridge or, in the event of significant delays, may become unviable.

Based on consultations with the shipping sector and wider, I have advised Government that sufficient capacity should be available on direct routes to continental ports from end March 2019, and if demand for further capacity arises, the shipping sector can respond quickly. I am keeping this matter under review and will update Government again before end-February 2019.

Question No. 532 answered with Question No. 526.

Transport Policy

533. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether there should be an extraordinary review of Ireland's TEN-T infrastructure; and if so, if he has made representations in this regard. [2339/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The TEN-T Regulations (EU) No 1315/2013 stipulate that a review of the TEN-T network will take place no later than the end of 2023. As I have stated previously, my Department will be making a submission to the European Commission calling for an early review of the TEN-T Network, taking into account our National Development Plan, our National Planning Framework, and the implications of Brexit.

Separately, there are nine multimodal EU Trans European Transport Network (TEN-T) Core Network Corridors, which aim to streamline the coordinated development of the overall TEN-T Core Network. Of these nine Corridors, the "North Sea Mediterranean Corridor" or "NSMED Corridor" is the only corridor that includes the UK and Ireland. This Corridor map outlines a link from Ireland to the UK, through the UK land bridge, and on to continental Europe.

In the context of the withdrawal of the UK from the EU, the European Commission has proposed an Amendment to Regulation (EU) No. 1316/2013 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), which would realign the NSMED Core Network Corridor given that the UK will no longer form part of the Corridor or the TEN-T network. This proposal seeks to ensure that the NSMED Corridor does not become fragmented as a result of Brexit, and will take effect only when the CEF Regulation no longer applies to the UK.

Ireland welcomes the Commission's proposal to revise the current alignment of the NSMED Corridor with linkages between Ireland (Cork and Dublin) and the ports of Rotterdam, Zeebrugge and Antwerp. Ireland also echoed calls from France for further TEN-T links to French ports and Ireland has also made clear to the European Commission that it would support any further proposals from the Commission or other Member States to facilitate enhanced maritime connections between Member States that will mitigate the impact of the UK departure.

A proposal for a new Regulation for CEF - the funding mechanism for TEN-T from 2021 - is also currently under consideration. In the latest draft, the Commission has accepted Ireland's proposal, made jointly with Malta and Cyprus, that funding be provided for infrastructure on the Comprehensive Network in Member States where there is no land border with another EU Member State. If this is maintained as part of the final agreed Regulation, it will mean that organisations will continue to be eligible to apply for funding for projects coming within the application criteria after 2020.

My Department continues to liaise with the European Commission in relation to the TEN-T network in the context of Brexit, including in relation to the EU's proposal outlined above, and my Department has raised Ireland's concerns about the implications for connectivity and trade in light of the UK's decision to leave the EU.

Ferry Services Provision

534. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the recent announcement of a company (details supplied) that it would be unlikely to operate Rosslare to Cherbourg and Rosslare to Roscoff services in 2019, particularly in view of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2341/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Irish Ferries announced in December that it is unlikely to operate a ferry service from Rosslare to France in 2019 but that it intends to substantially increase capacity on its Dublin to Cherbourg route. Irish Ferries is a private commercial company and any decision taken by the company to change services is a commercial decision for the company.

In 2018, Irish Ferries had three weekly sailings from Rosslare to Cherbourg/Roscoff during the Summer months. Currently, Stena Line operates three weekly sailings from Rosslare to Cherbourg.

There is on-going engagement between the Department, ports and shipping companies in relation to Brexit. The new Irish Ferries vessel, the WB Yeats, will result in a year round freight capacity on a direct service from Dublin to France, significantly increasing capacity for both freight and tourism on a direct route to Europe.

Public Transport Expenditure

535. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding available in 2019 for the improvement and provision of new cycling lanes by county in the context of allocations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2353/19]

536. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding allocated under the sustainable transport measures grants programme for 2018, in tabular form; the forecasted allocations for 2019; the way in which funding was allocated to projects and or beneficiaries of funding under the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2355/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 535 and 536 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 statutory

responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure, including cycling infrastructure.

Funding for cycling is provided under a number of different programmes, of which the two principal ones are the Smarter Travel/Sustainable Urban Transport programme and the Cycling & Walking programme.

I am pleased to advise the Deputy that I have secured a significant improvement in funding allocations over the period 2018-2021 which will benefit both cyclists and walkers. These improved allocations over this period include:

- €110 million specifically dedicated to cycling and walking infrastructure in our major urban areas;

- €135 million for sustainable urban transport measures;

- €750 million approximately towards the BusConnects programme in Dublin which will include the delivery of around 200 kilometres of segregated cycling lanes, where possible; and

- €53 million to support the development of new Greenways.

In addition to the above, Government has also made additional money available for cycling projects through both the Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Funds under the National Development Plan.

End year figures for 2018 are currently being finalised; in the meantime, the provisional expenditure outturn for the Smarter Travel/Sustainable Urban Transport programme and the Cycling & Walking programme is €37.4m while funding under these two programmes will increase again in 2019 with approximately €48 million allocated toward the programmes.

To clarify the figures referred to above relate only to my Department's Cycling & Walking programme and its Smarter Travel/Sustainable Urban Transport programme and exclude expenditure under other programmes such as BusConnects or the Greenways Strategy.

As previously stated, as Minister I have responsibility for overall funding; however, the NTA allocates the funding at a project level and I have therefore referred the Deputy's questions to the Authority for a more detailed reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 days.

Question No. 537 answered with Question No. 525.

Public Transport Review

538. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the barriers which prevented the completion in 2018 of the review of the national cycling policy framework which was included in the 2017 climate mitigation plan; the revised completion date for same; if intermediate goals are being put in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2413/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy may be aware my Department has committed toward undertaking a review of public transport policy "to ensure services are sustainable into the future and are meeting the needs of a modern economy". This is line with a commitment given in the Programme for a Partnership Government.

This review is a significant and substantial resource commitment and my Department has commenced and substantially completed the research and analysis required to inform the proposed period of public consultation which I expect to launch in the near future.

The review is premised on the concept of integrated and sustainable transport, in keeping with the objectives of Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future which formed the overarching policy backdrop to the development of the National Cycling Policy Framework. As part of the overall review therefore, analysis of the National Cycling Policy Framework, its implementation and impact is being conducted and will be published as part of the overall review.

Last year, as part of this review I hosted a Public Transport Stakeholder Forum in the Mansion House at which representatives from a broad spectrum of interest groups in the wider public and sustainable transport sector attended, including those representing cyclists .

As stated I expect to initiate a public consultation process in the coming months and I look forward to engaging with the public on this important work.

Transport Policy

539. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps which have been taken to address Ireland’s current link on the European TEN-T network to mainland Europe via the UK landbridge; if he has sought changes to the European TEN-T network; and his views on whether Brexit will significantly disrupt this and the functioning of the landbridge, which will have consequences for Ireland’s connectivity to the single market. [2414/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): There are nine multimodal EU Trans European Transport Network (TEN-T) Core Network Corridors, which aim to streamline the coordinated development of the overall TEN-T Core Network. Of these nine Corridors, the “North Sea Mediterranean Corridor” or “NSMED Corridor” is the only corridor that includes the UK and Ireland. This Corridor map outlines a link from Ireland to the UK, through the UK land bridge, and on to continental Europe.

In the context of the withdrawal of the UK from the EU, the European Commission has proposed an Amendment to Regulation (EU) No. 1316/2013 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), which would realign the NSMED Core Network Corridor given that the UK will no longer form part of the Corridor or the TEN-T network. This proposal seeks to ensure that the NSMED Corridor does not become fragmented as a result of Brexit, and will take effect only when the CEF Regulation no longer applies to the UK.

Ireland welcomes the Commission’s proposal to revise the current alignment of the NSMED Corridor with linkages between Ireland (Cork and Dublin) and the ports of Rotterdam, Zeebrugge and Antwerp. Ireland also echoed calls from France for further TEN-T links to French ports and Ireland has also made clear to the European Commission that it would support any further proposals from the Commission or other Member States to facilitate enhanced maritime connections between Member States that will mitigate the impact of the UK departure.

My Department continues to liaise with the European Commission in relation to the TEN-T network in the context of Brexit, including in relation to the EU’s proposal outlined above, and my Department has raised Ireland’s concerns about the implications for connectivity and trade in light of the UK’s decision to leave the EU.

Ireland is very concerned about the impact of Brexit on the landbridge route to continen-

tal markets. The Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) report, published in November 2018, estimates that the annual volume of Roll on/Roll off (RoRo) traffic using the landbridge to transport goods to and from the continent is approximately 3 million tonnes, which equates to approximately 150,000 Heavy Goods Vehicles. The total value of trade with the EU using the landbridge is estimated to be €21 billion, and may well be higher. This is a significant proportion of Ireland's trade and a significant aspect of Ireland's international road haulage sector.

As outlined in the study, the landbridge is a strategically important route to market for many Irish importers and exporters and certain sectors of the economy will be adversely affected by Brexit, mainly those that trade in time sensitive goods, e.g. Agri-food, seafood etc. The study recommends that Ireland's continued access to the UK landbridge is protected in the ongoing EU-UK negotiations.

There is ongoing liaison between Ireland, the European Commission and other similar affected Member States on matters relating to the land bridge.

However, I have also assessed the maritime capacity for direct sailings between Ireland and continental EU ports as a potential alternative route for trade currently using the Landbridge. I recognise that the longer journey time on these direct routes may not offer a viable alternative and some trade will continue to use the Landbridge or, in the event of significant delays, may become unviable.

Based on consultations with the shipping sector and wider, I have advised Government that sufficient capacity should be available on direct routes to continental ports from end March 2019, and if demand for further capacity arises, the shipping sector can respond quickly. I am keeping this matter under review and will update Government again before end-February 2019.

Public Transport Expenditure

540. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the capital expenditure of his Department to the end of December 2018 under BusConnects. [2438/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility in relation to public transport infrastructure projects and programmes in the Greater Dublin Area, including expenditure in relation to the BusConnects programme.

Noting their responsibility in relation to this matter, I have forwarded the Deputy's query to the NTA for direct reply. Please notify my office if you have not received a response within 10 working days.

Roads Maintenance Funding

541. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the allocations under the non-national safety improvement scheme to Sligo County Council to fund local projects (details supplied) will be made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2488/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and

maintenance of regional and local roads (RLR) in Sligo is the statutory responsibility of Sligo County Council, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from the Council's own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is a matter for the local authority.

On 7th of September 2018 my Department sought applications for funding of safety improvement works on regional and local roads to be carried out by local authorities during 2019. The schemes for inclusion in the application are decided by the local authorities. Sligo County Council applied for funding for 10 schemes, including a pedestrian crossing at the Ursuline Convent on the L9017.

Local authorities are informed of allocations under the Safety Improvement Scheme as part of the annual grant award process. The 2019 allocations will be announced shortly.

It is also open to Councils to develop pedestrian crossings from their Discretionary grant or from their own resources.

Road Traffic Legislation

542. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if allowances can be made under the Clancy amendment which would allow learner drivers who have been waiting for a driver test date for an extended time to continue driving until an appointment date is issued. [2510/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The purpose of the driving test is to set out the minimum level of knowledge, skill and competency that a learner must demonstrate in order to become a fully licensed driver. Until a learner can meet this standard and pass this test he or she is not safe to take to our roads without appropriate supervision. Driving a car is complex and challenging and it is imperative to the safety of all road users that the learning process not be rushed. There can be no exceptions to this principle.

The demand for driving tests is currently high and I accept that waiting times are often too long. The Road Safety Authority (RSA) is addressing this by increasing its capacity to deliver extra tests and my Department recently sanctioned the recruitment of a large number of additional driver testers to this end.

Driver Licence Renewals

543. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there is provision to reactivate a driver licence; if so, if it can be done via retaking a driver test; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2558/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Road Safety Authority (RSA) delivers the driving licence service through the National Driving Licence Service (NDLS). As such, I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

Public Transport Expenditure

544. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the

funding made available and drawn down for cycling measures in 2017, 2018 and projected for 2019 under programmes (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2569/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy may be aware I have secured significant improved funding allocations over the period 2018-2021 which will benefit both cyclists and walkers.

These improved allocations over this period include:

- €110 million specifically dedicated to cycling and walking infrastructure in our major urban areas;

- €135 million for sustainable urban transport measures;

- €750 million approximately towards the BusConnects programme in Dublin which will include the delivery of around 200 kilometres of segregated cycling lanes, where possible; and

- €53 million to support the development of new Greenways.

In addition to the above, Government has also made additional money available for cycling projects through both the Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Funds under the National Development Plan.

End year figures for 2018 are currently being finalised; in the meantime, the provisional expenditure outturn for sustainable transport measures that benefit walking and cycling are as follows:

- €18.1 million spent specifically on cycling and walking infrastructure in our major urban areas;

- €19.3 million spent on smarter travel and sustainable transport measures, which will benefit both cyclists and walkers.

Funding under these two programmes will increase again in 2019 with approximately €48 million being allocated.

The Deputy may be aware that investment in cycling infrastructure before 2018 was delivered under a number of different programmes and schemes, namely the Smarter Transport Measures Grant (STMG) Programme and the Regional Cities Programme. The capital expenditure on these programmes along with the Smarter Travel programme in 2017 was €20.5 million.

Notwithstanding the different programmes in place over the period, the following table shows the comparable relevant expenditure for 2017 and 2018 and the allocation for 2019 -

Year	2017 Expenditure	2018 Expenditure*	2019 Allocation
Total Expenditure / Allocation	€20.5m	€37.4m	€48m

*2018 figures subject to finalisation

I believe that the improved multi-annual capital expenditure figures outlined above will positively assist with the better development and provision of cycling infrastructure across the State, while improving the safety for all road users.

545. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to recognise the role of electric and electrically assisted vehicles in providing for sustainable transport and travel; his further plans to regulate for the increase in pedal assisted electric bikes, electric scooters and electric unicycles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2570/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): A switch to alternatively powered vehicles is a necessary step-change for Ireland to effect substantial reductions in transport emissions. However, it is equally important that the regulation of vehicles and their use protects the lives and safety of all road users and is not simply driven by the market.

In the ‘National Policy Framework on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland’ I outlined my ambition that by 2030 all new cars and vans sold in Ireland would be zero-emission capable. To support this ambition and a Programme for Partnership Government commitment, an interdepartmental Low-Emitting Vehicles (LEV) Taskforce was jointly convened by my Department and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. Phase 1 of the Taskforce considered a range of measures and options available to Government to accelerate the deployment of EVs. Following on from their recommendations a number of generous incentives for EVs were announced as part of Budgets 2018 and 2019 aimed at assisting drivers in purchasing hybrid or electric cars. Phase 1 is now complete; for your information I have included this link to the recently published LEV Taskforce Progress Report .

Before giving consideration to the need to regulate the other vehicles that the Deputy has referred to, I will be asking the Road Safety Authority to conduct an international study into the safe and appropriate use of such vehicles.

Cycling Facilities Provision

546. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to better regulate for the provision of contraflow cycle lanes on one-way roads as is common in Belgium and other jurisdictions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2571/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): There are already a number of contraflow cycle lanes in operation across Dublin City and elsewhere in the country. There are currently no plans to change the legal basis for these lanes as laid out in the Road Traffic (Traffic and Parking) Regulations 1997 (as amended) and underpinned by the appropriate Road Traffic (Signs) Regulations, The provision of such infrastructure, in accordance with that legislation, remains the responsibility of the local authorities.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

547. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the recommendations of the Department of Finance on internalisation of GHG emissions in cost-benefit analysis are being used in the revision of the common appraisal framework guidelines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2572/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The cost of Greenhouse Gas emissions in the Common Appraisal Framework for Transport Projects and Programmes are based on those set out in the Public Spending Code, which are based on the 2008 findings and recommendations of an interdepartmental Working Group reporting to the Cabinet Committee on Climate Change and Energy Security. An updated version of the Public Spend-

ing Code is currently under development by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and is planned to include revisions to a number of parameters, including the valuation of Greenhouse Gas emissions. Officials from my Department have engaged with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform as part of this process of revisions and updates to the Public Spending Code and its associated parameters.

It is the intention of my Department to update the Common Appraisal Framework in 2019. As part of this update, any changes in relevant parameters of the Public Spending Code will be reflected. This will include any updates which are made to the cost of additional Greenhouse Gas emissions which are considered as part of the Cost Benefit Analysis process for transport projects.

Public Transport Initiatives

548. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has sought a plan from the Office of Public Works to reduce car parking spaces at public offices in which alternative travel options are possible and require other public sector organisations to do likewise as part of their workplace travel plans as provided for under action 8 of the Smarter Travel Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 – 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2573/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): In line with Action 8 of Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future my Department funds the development of workforce travel plans through a programme administered by the National Transport Authority (NTA). The Smarter Travel Workplace and Smarter Travel Campus programmes work with employers and third level institutions to encourage more sustainable travel choices among employees and students as appropriate. I am delighted to say that the funding has enabled the NTA to support 138 large workplaces and third level institutions across the country, including 29 public sector workplaces, in developing their workforce travel plans.

I recognise that a key driver in ensuring more people choose a sustainable travel option is the improvement and expansion of public and sustainable transport infrastructure and services and that is why I have been working to increase investment in areas such as – Funding for PSO bus and rail services across the State

- Funding for the development of new and improved cycling and walking infrastructure
- Funding for the planning and development of BusConnects in all major cities
- Funding for the planning and development of MetroLink
- Funding for the planning and development of DART Expansion.

I believe these positive developments will greatly enhance the sustainable transport options open to people and increase the numbers of people choosing to travel to work in a sustainable manner.

I understand from the Office of Public Works that the issue of proximity to public transport links is an important criterion in its consideration of accommodation options for public sector bodies within urban areas and that it no longer provides “stand-alone” car parking spaces for Departments and Offices (i.e. spaces which are not provided by a landlord as part of the building itself).

In relation to supporting sustainable transport choices, the Deputy will be aware that my Department has been working to review public and sustainable transport policy generally and I expect to initiate a public consultation on that review work in the coming months.

Free Travel Scheme Eligibility

549. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if consideration will be given allowing persons under 12 years of age to travel free on public transport as is common in other jurisdictions; and the estimated cost of providing same for one calendar year. [2576/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for public transport fares and 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 reply within ten working days.

Trans European Transport Network Programme

550. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has applied to the European Union to designate the Dublin to Rosslare railway line with Trans European Transport Network, TEN-T, core status; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2591/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The TEN-T Core Network is a subset of the Comprehensive Network, representing the strategically most important nodes and links of the trans-European transport networks. The Dublin - Rosslare Europort rail line is on the TEN-T comprehensive network and does not form part of the TEN-T Core Network.

The EU TEN-T Regulations when adopted in 2013 identified, by way of maps, the routes included in Europe's comprehensive and core transport networks. As I have outlined in responses to previous parliamentary questions, the EU's planning methodology explicitly set out the criteria that was used in the identification of the comprehensive network, as well as those parts of the network that are identified as the core network.

My Department will soon make a submission to the European Commission in respect of the TEN-T network, taking account of the implications of Brexit, the current National Development Plan and National Planning Framework. As stipulated in the 2013 TEN-T Regulation, there is to be a review of the implementation of the core network by the end 2023. The submission by my Department will call for an early review of the TEN-T Core Network.

A proposal for a new Regulation for the Connecting Europe Facility - the funding mechanism for TEN-T from 2021 - is currently under consideration. In the latest draft, the Commission has accepted Ireland's proposal, made jointly with Malta and Cyprus, that funding be provided for infrastructure on the Comprehensive Network in Member States where there is no land border with another EU Member State. If this is maintained as part of the final agreed Regulation, it will mean that the railway line to Rosslare and indeed Rosslare Port itself will continue to be eligible to apply for funding for projects coming within the application criteria.

Brexit Issues

551. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to provide funding to extend the M11 motorway to Rosslare Europort in view of the threats of Brexit and the need to develop ports here to ensure access to the Continent. [2592/19]

552. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to provide funding to develop the access roads in the Rosslare Europort area in view of the threats of Brexit and the need to develop ports here to ensure access to the Continent. [2593/19]

554. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps he will take to examine road connectivity between Rosslare Europort and the west of the country in view of the importance of increasing direct accessibility between the west and continental Europe in order to avoid a likely UK customs delays post Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2595/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 551, 552 and 554 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. Once funding arrangements have been put in place, 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.

However, with regard to the N11 project, I have been advised by TII that the N11 Gorey to Enniscorthy project is progressing well and is on target for completion in 2019. The connection from Oilgate to Rosslare project is identified as a pre-appraisal/early planning project in the National Development plan. Wexford County Council is the Contracting Authority and TII are working with the local authority in term of appraising and delivering this project.

On the issue of Ports development, I can advise that strengthening access routes to Ireland's ports through investment to upgrade and enhance the road transport network is, and remains, a Government priority. My Department is in consultation with TII regarding the relationship between ports development and road infrastructure development in order to ensure that the best options for accessibility and connectivity are achieved.

The UK's exit from the EU highlights the importance of high quality international maritime connectivity and the importance of continuing investment to further improve the quality of port facilities. This is relevant to all our Ports of National Significance, both Tier 1 and Tier 2 (Ports of Waterford and Rosslare), given their potential role in maintaining transportation linkages with crucial EU markets.

In terms of Brexit, a whole-of Government approach has been adopted in relation to our key ports through the establishment of an Inter-Departmental Committee to ensure that ports have the necessary infrastructure in place for Brexit.

All three Ports of National Significance (Tier 1) – Dublin, Cork and Shannon Foynes – are currently undertaking major capital infrastructure programmes. These programmes will enhance national and international connectivity, and provide for future increases in trade and national port capacity requirements by facilitating more vessels, larger sized vessels and increased tonnage and throughput. All of these developments must be financed by the companies themselves without recourse to the Exchequer.

Irish Rail has recently completed a detailed report on Rosslare and a €15 million plan to transform Rosslare Europort has been approved by the board. Irish Rail and Rosslare Euro-

port are committed to an investment plan for the year.

In the context of connectivity from East to West of the country, the National Development Plan (NDP) specifies that there will be significant investment in connectivity through improved roads and international access and supply chains through our Ports.

Noting the above position, I have referred the questions to TII for a more detailed and direct reply on the issues raised concerning national road infrastructure projects. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days

Question No. 553 answered with Question No. 526.

Question No. 554 answered with Question No. 551.

Ports Policy

555. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to upgrade Rosslare Europort to tier 1 status in view of the threats of Brexit and the need to develop ports here. [2596/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The 2013 National Ports Policy designated Rosslare Europort as a Port of National Significance (Tier 2).

Ports of National Significance (Tier 2) ports are responsible for at least 2.5% of overall tonnage through Irish ports, have the potential to handle higher volumes of unitised traffic and have existing transport links to serve a wider, national marketplace beyond their immediate region.

Ports of National Significance (Tier 1) are ports that are responsible for 15% to 20% of overall tonnage through Irish ports and have clear potential to lead the development of future port capacity in the medium and long term, when and as required.

The tonnage of goods handled at all Irish ports are published annually by the Central Statistics Office. The following is a link to the latest published CSO figures showing tonnage over the last 12 years:

<https://www.cso.ie/multiquicktables/quickTables.aspx?id=tba07>.

Rosslare Europort continues to fulfil the criteria of a Port of National Significance (Tier 2).

Irish Rail has recently completed a detailed report on Rosslare and a €15 million plan to transform Rosslare Europort has been approved by the board. Irish Rail and Rosslare Europort are committed to an investment plan for the year and will be proactive in attracting new business.

In terms of Brexit, a whole-of Government approach has been adopted in relation to our key ports and airports through the establishment of an Inter-Departmental Committee to ensure that ports have the necessary infrastructure in place for Brexit.

Ports Facilities

556. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to improve multimodal connectivity at Rosslare Europort specifically between rail and ferry services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2597/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter for Iarnród Éireann and I have therefore forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

Question No. 557 answered with Question No. 526.

International Driving Permits

558. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if UN driver licence certificates are recognised here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2601/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I believe the Deputy is referring to the International Driving Permit. The permit is a translation of a person's driving licence, and the permit and licence must be carried together. The Permit is recognised in Ireland.

Pension Provisions

559. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide copies of records relating to a pension fund (details supplied) between 2008 and 2015; the solvency of the fund; the impact of same on the valuation of Aer Lingus and the shares of the company; and his plans and strategies to address the structure, management, solvency or deficit relating to same. [2609/19]

560. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if copies will be provided of records relating to the legislative proposals and changes concerning a pension scheme (details supplied) in the State Airports (Shannon Group) Act 2014. [2610/19]

561. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if copies of records will be provided regarding the proposal for change of rules introduced by trustees of a pension fund (details supplied) following the passage of the State Airports (Shannon Group) Act 2014. [2611/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 559 to 561, inclusive, together.

The Deputy will be aware that the Irish Airlines (General Employees) Superannuation Scheme (IASS) is currently the subject of on-going legal proceedings and I am therefore restricted as to what I can say and the documentation that I can make public in relation to the scheme.

The information sought by the Deputy covers a number of issues relating to the scheme, some of which would be available in my Department, particularly those records relating to the superannuation scheme provisions included in the State Airports (Shannon Group) Act 2014. However, those particular records could amount to thousands or tens of thousands of documents, depending on the timeline. If the Deputy would like to contact my Department to discuss how such documentation may be made available to her, whether by means of a Freedom of Information request or otherwise, my officials will assist as best they can, having regard to Discovery as well as Freedom of Information procedures.

Sports Facilities Provision

562. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when phase two of the National Indoor Arena will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2618/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Sport Ireland, which is funded by my Department, is the statutory body with responsibility for the development of sport, increasing participation at all levels and raising standards, including the development of the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus at Abbotstown.

Work commenced in July 2017 on the development of Phase 2 of the Sport Ireland National Indoor Arena. The project was due for completion in mid-2019 but it is currently progressing ahead of schedule and is now expected to be completed in March 2019. Phase 2 will see the construction of full-sized and half-sized covered synthetic pitches, primarily for soccer and rugby but capable of accommodating all field-sports, together with changing facilities, strength and conditioning facilities, offices and meeting rooms.

When it is completed, this covered facility will provide our elite athletes and competitors in the relevant codes with year-round, always open, training facilities regardless of weather conditions, in preparation for competitive fixtures and international tournaments.

Energy Usage

563. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the dates over the past 18 months that lights at junctions on the M6 motorway from Athlone to Dublin were turned off for energy saving measures; if the lights at junctions were turned off as part of an energy saving measure was in conjunction with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland; if credits will attach to Westmeath County Council for the energy saved in its area; and if so, the items for which these credits are being offset against. [2623/19]

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 national roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Departmental Expenditure

564. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will publish the airline costs for his Department for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2700/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department spent €187,195.00 on Air Travel in 2018.

Departmental Expenditure

565. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will publish the cost of newspapers in his Department in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2717/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The total expenditure by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport on newspapers in 2018 is €14,022.

Rail Network

566. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to reopen the Midleton to Youghal railway line for public transport purposes; the timeline for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2747/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Development Plan (NDP) states that the priority funding objective in relation to the mainline rail network is the maintenance and renewal of the existing network. In line with that funding objective, the funding allocations committed under the NDP provide for a fully-funded, or steady state, level of maintenance and renewal across the Iarnród Éireann network. This represents a significant and recurring annual contribution from the taxpayer towards our heavy rail network.

As noted in the NDP, Cork City Council and Cork County Council, in partnership with the National Transport Authority, are currently finalising the Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (CMATS) which will consider issues relating to congestion and transport needs in and around Cork City and surrounding areas, including Midleton. This strategy will provide a framework for the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services across the Cork Metropolitan Area, for the period up to 2040.

I understand that the strategy will be published for public consultation in the near future.

Finalisation of the strategy will, together with the funding provided under the National Development Plan, provide the policy backdrop to consideration of future transport development in the Cork region.

Ports Facilities

567. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department has received funding to hire additional staff to carry out sanitary and phytosanitary checks and controls at ports and airports; the number of full-time equivalent posts that funding will support; and the date by which these staff will be hired. [2750/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The responsibility for carrying out sanitary and phytosanitary checks and controls at ports and airports is a matter for the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine will be able to assist the Deputy in any query he has on the above matter.

Ports Facilities

568. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department has received funding to hire additional staff to prepare export certificates at ports and airports; the number of full-time equivalent posts that funding will support; and the date by

which these staff will be hired. [2751/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The responsibility for preparing export certificates at ports and airports is a matter for the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine will be able to assist the Deputy in any query he has on the above matter.

Ports Facilities

569. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department has received funding to hire additional staff to carry out relevant controls at ports and airports; the number of full-time equivalent posts that funding will support; and the date by which these staff will be hired. [2752/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The responsibility for carrying out agricultural controls at airports and ports is a matter for the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine will be able to assist the Deputy in any query he has on the above matter.

Aer Lingus Staff

570. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the action he has undertaken to contact the management of Aer Lingus in view of its consideration of outsourcing of the catering department and in further view of the public commitments given at the time of the sale of the remaining 25% shareholding in Aer Lingus that there would be no adverse impact on jobs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2782/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I have no role in relation to employment matters or commercial decisions of private companies. My functions, as Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport on Aer Lingus, are now essentially the same as with any Irish airline.

The legally-binding commitments made by IAG in 2015 as part of its offer for the State's minority shareholding in Aer Lingus relate to Heathrow slots, the location of the headquarters and the Aer Lingus brand.

Ministerial Meetings

571. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he will next meet with a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2802/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I meet with the Chief Executive Officer of Fáilte Ireland regularly. I last met with the Chief Executive Officer on the 9th of November 2018 to review the company's 2019 plans. I will consider the timing of my next meeting with him as part of my ongoing diary commitments.

Light Rail Projects Status

572. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when a decision will be made for a final route of metro north; the timeframe for the process from agreed route and construction; the cost of the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2832/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, including MetroLink.

The Deputy is presumably aware that the previously proposed project known as Metro North has been superseded by a different project known as MetroLink and which is included in the National Development Plan (NDP). The NDP provides an indicative allocation of €3 billion toward development and construction of MetroLink, which will be a 26km metro service running from Sandyford in South County Dublin to north of Swords in North County Dublin.

The NTA and TII have already published an ‘Emerging Preferred Route’ for public consultation last year and a further round of public consultation will take place early this year on a ‘Preferred Route’ before any decision on a Final Route and later submission to An Bord Pleanála, at which stage statutory consultation periods will take place.

Noting their responsibility in relation to this matter, I have forwarded your request to the NTA for their consideration and direct reply. Please notify my office if you have not received a reply within 10 working days.

Driver Licences

573. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if progress has been made with regard to enabling asylum seekers apply for a driver licence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2876/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This matter is still under consideration in consultation with my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality. It is but one of a number of priority issues that my officials are currently dealing with and as such I am not in a position to provide an updated position for the Deputy at this time.

Sports Facilities Provision

574. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding is still in place for a leisure centre (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2880/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme (LASPP) provides grant aid to a maximum of €3.8 m to local authorities towards the capital costs of new swimming pools or the refurbishment of existing pools. Buncrana is still in the 2000 round of the LASPP, is at contract documents stage and is eligible for the funding once it complies with all of the requirements of the Programme.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland Expenditure

575. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the cost to date incurred by Transport Infrastructure Ireland on maintaining and providing security for the services station on the M11 in County Wexford; when it is envisaged this service station will open; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2923/19]

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 national roads (including service areas) is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Córas Iompair Éireann

576. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the four vacant posts on the board of CIÉ will be filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3021/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): There are currently three vacancies on the CIÉ Board.

In line with Government's guidelines on Appointment to State Boards and my Department's agreed protocols on board appointments, the CIÉ Board positions were recently advertised by the Public Appointments Service, with a closing date of the 9th of January 2019.

A shortlisting process is expected to commence shortly, after which a number of candidates will be submitted for my consideration and appointment. I expect that the process will be complete and appointments made in the coming weeks.

Sports Capital Programme

577. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the successful recipients of the sports capital grant for 2019 will be announced. [3025/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The 2018 round of the Sports Capital Programme opened for applications on Friday 7 September and the application period closed on Friday 19th October. By that deadline, a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of €162 m in funding.

187 of these applications are for projects originally deemed invalid under the 2017 round of the programme but who submitted corrected documents. These applications were assessed first and last week I was delighted to announce allocations to 170 of these projects with a total value of €7 m. Details of all these project are published on my Department's website at <http://www.dttas.ie/sport/english/sports-capital-programme-awards-new>.

The assessment of the remaining new applications will now proceed. For the first time, applicants who have submitted incorrect documentation under this round will be given the opportunity to correct their application during the assessment period. While there will be no

undue delay in completing the assessment process, in view of the opportunity to correct documentation, the record number of applications received and the detailed information contained in each application, it is likely to take a number of months to have all applications assessed. Accordingly, I expect that it will be at least the second quarter of this year before the full set of allocations under this current round of the programme are announced.

Capital Expenditure Programme

578. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding capital expenditure in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3080/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy may be aware I have secured improved funding allocations over the period 2018-2021 which will benefit both cyclists and walkers.

These improved allocations over this period include:

- €110 million specifically dedicated to cycling and walking infrastructure in our major urban areas;
- €135 million for sustainable urban transport measures;
- €750 million approximately towards the BusConnects programme in Dublin which will include the delivery of around 200 kilometres of segregated cycling lanes, where possible; and
- €53 million to support the development of new Greenways.

In addition to the above, Government has also made additional money available for cycling projects through both the Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Funds under the National Development Plan.

End year figures for 2018 are currently being finalised; in the meantime, the provisional expenditure outturn for sustainable transport measures that benefit walking and cycling are as follows:

- €18.1 million spent specifically on cycling and walking infrastructure in our major urban areas;
- €19.3 million spent on smarter travel and sustainable transport measures, which will benefit both cyclists and walkers.

Funding under these programmes as detailed above will increase again in 2019 with approximately €48 million allocated toward the programmes.

The figures detailed above do not include monies allocated under the aforementioned Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Funds or under my Department's Greenways Strategy.

I believe that the improved multi-annual capital expenditure figures outlined above will positively assist with the better development and provision of cycling infrastructure across the State, while improving the safety for all road users.

579. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the shortage of available childcare services especially in the Dublin 15 area (details supplied); the efforts underway to address same; the advice for parents that cannot secure a place in a childcare service for their children; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2304/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department funds 30 City and County Childcare Committees across the country. Part of their role is to advise my Department on capacity issues. I have asked officials to make contact with Fingal Childcare Committee to follow up on your question. Your constituent may also wish to make contact with them seeking assistance. Also, if your constituent is considering childminding services, Childminding Ireland may be able to direct them to some of their members in the area.

Each year Pobal conducts research on behalf of my Department to examine a number of factors related to childcare services in Ireland, including the monitoring of capacity. The Early Years Sector Profile report, which was published in November and relates to the 2017/2018 programme year, indicates that existing childcare provision, in general, meets current needs nationwide in terms of capacity whilst recognising that small pockets of under supply may exist within this.

This report outlines a 4% vacancy rate as a percentage of children enrolled in Dublin - Fingal, i.e., 11,149 children enrolled in registered services with 450 vacant childcare places. It also identifies waiting lists totalling 1,076 children. Pobal reports that nationally the trend for waiting lists suggests a reduction in waiting lists for older children and an increase for under twos. Pobal cautions that its data on waiting lists cannot by itself be used to inform capacity decisions as parents often place their children on more than one waiting list.

With regard to capacity generally, I secured €8.86 m in capital funding for childcare in 2019. While the precise details of the 2019 Capital offering have yet to be finalised, this funding will be used to meet the most pressing needs of the sector with the ultimate aim of benefitting parents and children through improving our childcare infrastructure and capacity. A particular focus in 2019 will be to expand service provision for children under three years of age.

Under the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan published in 2018, I ensured that Childcare was identified as one of our nation's strategic priorities. I am delighted that €250 million in additional funding has been committed to for the expansion of high quality, early learning and care and school age childcare over the duration of the Plan.

Local Authority Facilities

580. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will address concerns raised in correspondence (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2317/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The maintenance of playgrounds is in the main a matter for local authorities to make provision for and therefore the matter does not come under the remit of my Department .

However, my Department does administer a Capital Grant Scheme for Play and Recreation. The purpose of the Scheme is to support new and existing play and recreation facilities for children and young people. This includes the provision of new facilities and equipment, with an emphasis on the use of innovative design and the utilisation of non-traditional play spaces, or the refurbishment of existing play facilities. Applications under this scheme must be submitted

through the Local Authorities to my Department.

It is expected that this funding will be available in 2019 and the scheme will be open for applications during the second quarter of the year.

Illegal Adoptions

581. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the percentage of the 126 persons identified with illegal birth registrations who were adopted from an organisation (details supplied) who have been informed of their illegal registration; and the number of that group offered counselling services. [2320/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the subject matter of the Deputy's question relates to an operational matter for Tusla, I have referred the matter to Tusla for their direct reply.

Domestic Violence Refuges Provision

582. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if a women's refuge (details supplied) in Dublin 6 has reopened as a women's refuge; if not, the reason therefore; the reason the refuge centre is no longer accepting donations of clothes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2378/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has statutory responsibility for the care and provision of services to victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (DSGBV), whether in the context of the family or otherwise.

The refuge to which the Deputy refers was closed in September 2017 following a Health and Safety audit, initiated by Tusla, which highlighted potential electrical issues. The health and safety issues identified during the audit are now resolved.

Tusla is in the process of contracting a specialist domestic violence organisation to manage the facility. It is expected that outreach services will be in place for service users in advance of accommodation services being made available. Tusla has advised me that the refuge will be fully operational by the end of Quarter 1, 2019.

In the interim, Tusla has worked in partnership with Dublin Regional Homeless Executive (DRHE) to provide short-term accommodation to a cohort of homeless women who have experienced domestic violence. This arrangement will continue until the contract with a specialist domestic violence organisation is in place to manage the facility.

Tusla is grateful for the willingness of the local community to help service users with donations and has advised that the facility has adequate resources in place at present. Tusla is also cognisant that donations of unsolicited goods require significant resources, particularly the time of staff and available storage capacity. In order to ensure that donated goods can be put to the best possible use, Tusla has advised that local charity shops might benefit more from such donations at this time.

Child and Family Agency Investigations

583. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if Tusla will be directed to follow-up on the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2395/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the Deputy is aware it is not appropriate for me to comment on individual cases. I have referred the matter to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, and Tusla have confirmed that the matter is receiving appropriate attention.

Illegal Adoptions

584. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when the scoping exercise into illegal adoptions will be published; the number of records being examined; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2464/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The review of adoption records is to determine if similar evidence of illegal registration can be identified from the records of other former adoption agencies and other relevant bodies as was identified in the St. Patrick's Guild files. It is not possible at this stage to anticipate the type of information that will emerge from the review.

Given the sensitive personal data contained in the files, data protection and GDPR issues have arisen, which have delayed the review, but these have now been addressed and the final report of the review is expected to be submitted to me before Easter 2019.

The review is being overseen by an independent chair. I would anticipate that details on the methodology and sample size will be included in the final report.

Childcare Services Staff

585. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the ratio of childminders to children and the number of children allowed to be in the care of one childminder. [2513/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Under the Child Care Act 1991 (Section 58L), childminders are currently exempt from regulation if they:

1. Care for one or more children to whom they are related;
2. Care for one or more children of the same family and no other children (other than the childminder's own children) in the childminder's home; or
3. Care for not more than 3 children of different families (other than the childminder's own children) in the childminder's home.

Under the regulations that relate to the care of children of pre-school age - the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 - childminders who are not exempt from regulation may care for no more than 5 pre-school children at any given time, including their own pre-school children. No more than two of the children can be under the age of 15 months (except where the children are siblings) including the childminder's own children.

On 17th February 2019 relevant sections of the Childcare Support Act 2018 will commence,

which will amend Section 58L of the Child Care Act 1991, and on the 18th February regulations relating to school-age childcare will come into force: the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) Regulations 2018.

As from 17th February, the third category of childminder exempt from regulation will be amended to be “a person taking care of not more than 6 children, of which not more than 3 are pre-school children, of different families (other than that person’s own such children) at the same time in that person’s home, except where that person has been continuously registered as an early years service for a period of one year, wishes to remain on the register, and continues to satisfy such conditions as may be prescribed”. A childminder who cares for 7 or more children (of any age), or 4 or more pre-school children, will be required to register with Tusla, unless exempt on one of the other grounds.

It will remain the case that a childminder who cares only for pre-school children (and who is not exempt from regulation) will not be able to care for more than 5 pre-school children.

The regulations governing school-age childcare, which will come into force on 18th February, will provide that a childminder who cares for school-age children only may not care for more than 12 children at the same time. From that date on, unless exempt from regulation (under the rules set out above), a childminder who cares for both pre-school children and school-age children may not care for more than the number of children specified in the table.

(1)	(2)
No. of pre-school children being cared for	Maximum no. of school age children
1	10
2	7
3	5
4	2
5	1

For example, if a childminder cares for 1 pre-school child, they can also care for up to 10 school age children at the same time. If they care for 5 pre-school children, they can only care for 1 school age child at the same time.

These ratios apply in respect of children who are in the care of a childminder at the same time. For example, a childminder may care for 5 pre-school children and 1 school-age child in the morning and then care for 12 school-age children (but no pre-school children) in the afternoon.

The school-age childcare regulations are intended not only to implement minimum standards in the area of school-age childcare, but also to allow (Tusla-registered) school-age childcare providers to avail of subsidies under the forthcoming Affordable Childcare Scheme, due to launch at the end of 2019.

Ministerial Meetings

586. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she met with particular childcare providers in order to inform early years policy; if so, the number of providers; the format that outreach was made in; and the outcomes in this regard. [2514/19]

587. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to continue outreach with childcare providers that would wish to be involved in the future

of policy formation regarding the early years sector; if so, the format in which this will be carried out; and the way in which childcare providers that would like to advise her Department on their experiences can ensure that their advice and opinions will be relayed to her. [2515/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 586 and 587 together.

As Minister, I have committed a significant amount of my time to meeting users and providers of services that we support and those who advocate for new and alternative policies in these programme areas; including stakeholders in the early learning and care and school age childcare sectors. The Early Years Division of my Department has also developed a strong track record for working closely with a wide range of stakeholders as we collectively seek to build the best possible early learning and care and school age childcare sector for children and their families.

Progress made in recent years on the development of policy has been achieved in collaboration and consultation with the sector. The changes underway to achieve our mutual goals can only be achieved by working together and the Government's support for the shared vision with the sector has been evidenced by the 117% increase in investment over the past four budgets.

On becoming Minister for Children and Youth Affairs I established the Early Years Forum so that my officials and I could communicate on a structured basis with stakeholders from the sector. Members include, for example, representatives of private and community providers, academics, representative of children's rights organisations and parent representatives. This Forum, which I chair, meets at least biannually to discuss and inform early years policy. Member of the group in turn communicate with their members to ensure a good two-way cascade of information and influence.

My Department funds 30 City and County Childcare Committees around the country which are sources of valuable local information on the sector. Both the staff of these organisations and their boards have vast insight into the challenges of the sector. I regularly visit these organisations to hear from them how we can continue to improve policy. My officials meet with their umbrella organisation, CCI, on a regular basis to ensure that policy is informed by experiences on the ground. My Department also funds a number of National Voluntary Childcare Organisations which again bring matters to our attention and with which we consult regularly. I meet some of these in structured meetings or as part of visits or conferences I engage with.

Key pieces of policy work such as the preparation of our new 10 year strategy, First 5, or the Affordable Childcare Scheme, warrant additional focused engagement with the sector.

The Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS) was first informed by an Open Policy Debate in 2015 as part of the work of the Inter-Departmental Group on Future investment in Childcare. Various representatives of the sector made a valuable contribution to the debate and the IDG report reflects their input. During the development of the policy of the scheme there was a public consultation and more than 4,000 responses were received and analysed. The ACS project currently utilises a number of smaller working groups of key stakeholders to inform ongoing development. For example, the ACS team has conducted focus groups, completed usability testing and chaired working groups directly with parents and sample groups of childcare providers to test, review and refine the scheme in an iterative process to design a system that will be user friendly for both parents and childcare providers.

Furthermore regarding the ACS, there will be several hundred training and information events for childcare providers and their staff announced shortly to prepare for the launch of the scheme later this year. In 2017, eight roadshow events took place nationwide, attended by almost 1,000 childcare practitioners, to discuss plans at that stage, including the September

2017 measures and the introduction of Programme Support Payments. Feedback at the events influenced policy formulation.

As part of the development of First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families, a number of early learning and care providers and provider representative organisations participated in opportunities for engagement, including at two Open Policy Debates that I participated in. At one of these events, I asked two providers, one private and one community, to address the group of approximately 100 stakeholders, sharing their personal and professional reflections on what they would like to see in the Strategy.

The recently published School Age Childcare Regulations were informed by a working group which included sectoral representatives.

As Minister I regularly speak at conferences where I also have the opportunity to be briefed on important concerns and developments.

I am satisfied that the time my officials and I commit to engaging with the sector is both critical and valuable. I believe that good engagement via a collaborative approach will assist us to tackle the many challenges and opportunities facing the early learning and care sector in Ireland. We are committed to continuing to develop ways to most effectively engage with stakeholders.

Domestic Violence Refuges Provision

588. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on the accusation that her Department and Tusla are using an outdated methodology to calculate the adequacy or otherwise of provision of domestic violence refuge places and supports as reported in the media (details supplied). [2665/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am aware of the media report referenced by the Deputy.

Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has statutory responsibility for the care and protection of victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (DSGBV).

The Council of Europe's document on minimum standards for support services for victims of domestic violence, "Combating Violence Against Women: Minimum Standards for Support Services", continues to be in effect. This document provides a detailed breakdown of minimum and aspirational standards that apply to a wide range of services for victims, including the level of provision of shelter places.

Tusla has advised me that it references this document in relation to all standards that apply to a wide range of services, including the level of provision of refuge spaces.

"Combating Violence Against Women: Minimum Standards for Support Services" references two standards: either one shelter space per 10,000 head of adult population, or one shelter space per 10,000 head of female population, with specific measures of population and calculation of shelter spaces. Tusla is currently applying the latter standard as the requirement for a lesser number of shelter spaces reflects a community focused integrated response for victims, where community-based organisations and outreach supports are in place alongside refuges.

This reflects the structure of services available in Ireland.

Tusla is liaising with Cosc, the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and

Gender-based Violence, in relation to requirements under the Istanbul Convention.

A strong focus for Tusla is on geographical access to services and the provision of additional emergency refuge capacity nationally. As part of its planning to develop services, Tusla has commenced the process to review domestic violence refuge accommodation provision in order to ascertain if the current standard used is meeting its obligations under the Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). Tusla has advised me that the review of emergency domestic violence accommodation in the Dublin area will be completed by Quarter 4, 2019. I expect Tusla to publish the report once it has considered it.

Tusla will continue to work with service providers throughout the country in the provision of resources to victims of domestic violence, including emergency refuge accommodation, non-refuge accommodation, and community supports.

Departmental Expenditure

589. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will publish the airline costs for her Department for 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2686/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): A total of €54,364.60 was spent by my Department in 2018 on air travel.

My Department uses a Public Service Framework for the Provision of Travel Management Services and the company providing these services seeks best value quotations on behalf of the Department. The figure quoted includes all official and Ministerial air travel.

Departmental Expenditure

590. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will publish the cost of newspapers in her Department in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2703/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): A total of €4,382 was spent by my Department on the cost of newspapers in 2018. This includes printed newspapers and subscription services to two online paper services.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Data

591. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of complaints made to Tusla in respect of social workers by county in 2017 and 2018, in tabular form. [2783/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I have written to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency to request this information. A further response will issue to the Deputy when I have received their reply.

Child and Family Agency

592. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when the board of Tusla first had sight of a report (details supplied). [2840/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has advised me that the Board of Tusla was not furnished with a copy of the report referred to by the Deputy. A copy of the report was furnished to the Chairperson of the Special Inquiries Committee, a sub-committee of the Board, in April 2018.

Child and Family Agency Services

593. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if consent of both parents is required before a child can be referred to a play therapist; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2929/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The issue of parental consent, within the context of play therapy, does not fall under the remit of my Department.

This issue falls under the remit of the HSE. The question is therefore more appropriate for my colleague the Minister for Health, Deputy Simon Harris.

Youth Services Funding

594. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the budget allocation under the youth service grant scheme in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [3022/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Youth Service Grant Scheme (YSGS) provides funding, on an annual basis, to 30 national and major regional voluntary organisations. The continued funding of voluntary youth organisations through the Scheme is intended to ensure the emergence, promotion, growth and development of youth organisations with distinctive philosophies and programmes aimed at the social education of young people.

The YSGS allocation for the years 2016 to 2018 is as follows:

Year	YSGS allocation
2016	€10,148,979
2017	€10,651,764
2018	€10,658,170

The overall budget allocation for the youth sector in 2019 is € 60.4m in current funding. This represents an additional €1.5m over 2018; an increase of €8.5m in the youth funding provided in 2016. The level of funding supports the delivery of a range of youth work programmes and services for all young people, including those from disadvantaged communities, by the youth work sector.

I am not in a position, currently, to give details on the YSGS allocation for 2019. My Department has commenced a process to identify service development needs for 2019 and to finalise the 2019 youth funding allocations. The primary purpose of this process is to ensure that youth services are sufficiently resourced to meet the needs of young people and particularly those who are at risk of drugs or alcohol misuse, early school leaving, homelessness or who are

living in disadvantaged communities.

In this regard, officials within my Department are currently processing funding renewal applications on behalf of both national youth organisations and youth projects throughout the country. Every effort will be made to complete this process as soon as possible and all youth organisations and youth services will be notified of their allocation at the earliest possible date.

I will be happy to inform the Deputy of the YSGS allocation for 2019 when this information becomes available.

Adoption Records Provision

595. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans in relation to progressing the rights of adopted persons to access personal birth information and files; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [3052/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am committed to the enactment of the Adoption (Information & Tracing) Bill 2016.

This important legislation will give adopted people, people who have been the subject of an illegal birth registration, birth parents and relevant guardians a statutory right to an information and tracing service. It also provides that relevant records will be maintained by the Adoption Authority of Ireland.

The Bill must operate within the current constitutional framework and must seek to balance the rights to identity and to privacy, which may sometimes be in conflict. However, the Bill operates on the basis of a presumption in favour of disclosing information in so far as is legally and constitutionally possible. I am continuing to actively explore all options in relation to facilitating the release of as much information as possible to adopted and other relevant persons and will introduce any necessary amendments at Committee Stage.

It is my intention to progress to Committee Stage of the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016 in the Seanad Éireann as quickly as possible.

Adoption Records Provision

596. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of cases of irregular or false registrations of adopted persons that have been identified; the number of persons affected who have been contacted; the number of persons who have been unable to be contacted; the reason therefore; her plans to address the issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [3053/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am committed to the process of notifying people who are affected by illegal registrations identified on the files of St. Patrick's Guild and providing these individuals with as much information as possible regarding their identity.

Tusla social workers are supporting these individuals as they deal with the news that they have been illegally registered at birth. The information that an illegal birth registration has taken place is potentially life changing and the State has a responsibility to reach a high level of certainty that this has in fact happened before it contacts the individuals concerned. This threshold was reached in the 126 cases which Tusla are dealing with.

The progress made regarding contacting those affected is a matter for Tusla and the process is still ongoing. The Deputy will be aware that the process of contacting people in these circumstances is a sensitive and complex one and the pace must respect the wishes of the individual involved.

The Deputy will also be aware that I initiated a review of adoption records to determine if similar evidence of illegal registration could be identified from the records of other former adoption agencies and other relevant bodies as was identified in the St. Patrick's Guild files.

It is not possible at this stage to anticipate the type of information that will emerge from the review. Given the sensitive personal data contained in the files, data protection and GDPR issues have arisen, which have delayed the review, but these have now been addressed and the final report of the review is expected to be submitted to me before Easter 2019.

Adoption Records Provision

597. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of a society (details supplied); if she was consulted regarding the liquidation of the society; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [3054/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I understand that St. Patrick's Guild Adoption Society ceased operations in December 2014. Its records were transferred to Tusla in May 2016. This has ensured that the relevant records are safeguarded and can be accessed for information and tracing services.

The liquidation or otherwise of the Society is not a matter for the Minister. The Society is no longer an accredited body under the Adoption Act 2010.

LEADER Programmes Funding

598. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the financial allocations in each of the years under the 2014 to 2020 Rural Development Programme per measure 19 support for LEADER local development; the annual amount expended on the programme in each year of the RDP to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2379/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): LEADER, which is referred to at EU level as Measure 19 of the Rural Development Programme, forms part of Ireland's Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 and has a total budget of €250 million over the period in question. €220 million of this funding has been allocated to the Local Action Groups (LAGs) throughout the country who deliver the LEADER programme. The remaining €30 million is available for schemes to be delivered at a national level.

The funding which has been allocated to the LAGs is provided for the duration of the programme, rather than on an annual basis. This provides greater flexibility to the LAGs in managing their resources.

Table 1 below details the overall expenditure incurred each year to date under the programme. This expenditure includes the initial costs incurred by the LAGs in developing their Local Development Strategies in the early years of the programme, LAG administration costs and the cost of their engagement with communities to generate projects, and project expenditure itself.

Expenditure and project approvals under LEADER have increased significantly over the last year. A total of 1,644 projects have now been approved by the LAGs for funding of over €55.8 million since the programme began. A further 355 projects with a combined value in excess of €22 million are currently within the approvals process. The level of project expenditure under the programme is expected to increase further in 2019 as payment claims are submitted in respect of these project approvals.

Table 1: LEADER 2014-2020 Expenditure broken down per year

-	Total Programme Expenditure
2015	€1,251,185.25
2016	€1,260,920.54
2017	€12,123,851.06
2018	€22,983,712.69
2019	€453,201.43
Total	€38,072,870.97

Departmental Expenditure

599. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he will publish the airline costs for his Department for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2698/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The cost of Ministerial foreign travel is routinely published by the Department as part of our FOI publication scheme, and this information is available on the Departments website. In addition I can inform the Deputy that the total cost incurred by the Department for airline travel in 2018 was €5,886, inclusive of Ministerial travel.

Departmental Expenditure

600. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he will publish the cost of newspapers in his Department in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2715/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The cost of newspapers in my Department in 2018 was €6,551.80.

Departmental Programmes

601. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the current and capital funding allocated to the RAPID programme, community facilities scheme and community enhancement programme, respectively in each of the years 2016 to 2018; the amount of such funding allocated per local authority and local community development committee; the amount expended in each such year; and the 2019 allocation in tabular form. [2776/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Communities Facilities Scheme and the nationwide re-cast RAPID programme were launched for the first time in 2017. €65,000 was provided to each local authority area under each scheme, a total of €130,000 for each area.

In 2018, these two programmes were replaced by the Community Enhancement Programme (CEP). The below table gives the amount allocated, and provided to each Local Authority/LCDC for this new programme in 2018. Details are provided for both the main CEP and the ring-fenced fund for Men's Sheds under the CEP.

The national allocation for the CEP in 2019 is currently €4 million. The funds have not yet been allocated to the local authorities.

Local Authority	Main 2018 CEP(Capital)	Men's Shed fund(Capital)	Total 2018 CEP
Carlow	€252,039	€7,246	€259,285
Cavan	€259,648	€14,493	€274,141
Clare	€321,746	€14,493	€336,239
Cork City	€459,524	€13,043	€472,567
Cork	€618,516	€31,884	€650,400
Donegal	€600,565	€31,884	€632,449
Dublin City	€1,329,824	€34,783	€1,364,607
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	€361,092	€8,696	€369,788
Fingal	€477,189	€15,942	€493,131
Galway City	€227,879	€5,797	€233,676
Galway County	€378,937	€18,841	€397,778
Kerry	€365,239	€17,391	€382,630
Kildare	€442,585	€26,087	€468,672
Kilkenny	€281,205	€8,696	€289,901
Laois	€284,032	€10,145	€294,177
Leitrim	€183,271	€5,797	€189,068
Limerick	€510,601	€31,884	€542,485
Longford	€226,909	€7,246	€234,155
Louth	€408,482	€10,145	€418,627
Mayo	€403,803	€21,739	€425,542
Meath	€371,923	€21,739	€393,662
Monaghan	€229,476	€8,696	€238,172
Offaly	€311,997	€10,145	€322,142
Roscommon	€239,556	€8,696	€248,252
Sligo	€250,359	€13,043	€263,402
South Dublin	€737,700	€13,043	€750,743
Tipperary	€465,727	€20,290	€486,017
Waterford	€394,081	€8,696	€402,777
Westmeath	€284,675	€18,841	€303,516
Wexford	€470,891	€23,188	€494,079
Wicklow	€350,530	€17,391	€367,921
Total	€12,500,000	€500,000	€13,000,000

Departmental Programmes

602. Deputy John Curran asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the

number of project approvals and the monetary value of each project to the RAPID programme, community facilities scheme and community enhancement programme, respectively in each of the years 2016 to 2018 per local authority and local community development committee in tabular form. [2777/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The nation-wide re-cast RAPID programme and the Communities Facilities Scheme were launched for the first time in 2017. €65,000 was provided to each local authority area under each scheme, a total of €130,000 for each area and €4m across the country.

In 2017, 292 projects were approved under the RAPID programme. Details of each project are available on my Department's website on the following link:

<https://drcd.gov.ie/revitalising-areas-by-planning-investment-and-development-rapid/>.

In 2017, over 2,100 projects were approved under the Communities Facilities Scheme. Details of each project are available on my Department's website on the following link:

<https://drcd.gov.ie/community/communities-facilities-scheme>.

In 2018, these two programmes were replaced by the Community Enhancement Programme (CEP), which received total funding of €13m.

Detail on approved projects for 2018 are available on my Department's website on the following two links. Information is provided on over 3,000 projects that have been approved to date under both the main CEP and a ring-fenced Men's Shed fund under the CEP.

<https://drcd.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/CEP-Jan-2019-Project-approvals.pdf>.

<https://drcd.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/Mens-Sheds-Funding-Jan-2019.pdf>

RAPID Programme

603. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the current and capital funding under the RAPID programme in each year over the 2016 to 2018 period to the Dublin north east inner city area; the amount expended in each such year; and the 2019 allocation to this area in tabular form. [2778/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The information requested by the Deputy is provided in the table below. Funding is provided to support initiatives which are overseen by the North East Inner City Oversight Committee, chaired by the Department of An Taoiseach.

The North East Inner City Initiative (NEIC) commenced in 2016. No RAPID funding was provided for the initiative in 2016, however separate funding was provided by the then Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government from the SICAP/Local and Regional Development Supports Subhead for which my Department now has responsibility.

Since the establishment of the Department of Rural and Community Development in July 2017 funding for the NEIC Initiative was provided from the RAPID Subhead in 2017 and 2018. From 2019, this Subhead will be renamed as Supports for Disadvantaged Communities.

Year	CURRENT	CAPITAL	AMOUNT EXPENDED
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2016	250,000	Nil	250,000
2017	1,232,830	1,267,170	2,500,000
2018	2,569,220	590,330	3,159,550
2019	5,233,000	1,267,000	n/a

Control of Dogs

604. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his plans to update the Control of Dogs Acts 1986 to 2010. [2903/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development (Deputy Seán Canney): The Control of Dogs Acts 1986 to 2010 set out a range of requirements for all dog owners or any other person in charge of a dog. The Control of Dogs Regulations set out further requirements in respect of owners of 10 specific breeds. The aim of these specific control requirements for certain breeds is to provide a balanced and workable arrangement which prioritises the protection of society while also recognising the rights of dog owners.

I have asked my officials to examine the requirements in relation to restricted breeds in order to ensure that safe and fair arrangements remain in place and are strengthened if necessary. I am aware of research that critically examines the current approach to the regulation of restricted breeds. I am also aware of the view that some additional breeds may warrant inclusion on the list of restricted breeds. I have asked my officials to examine this matter, giving consideration to the range of views held. This will involve examining the relevant legislation to ensure that existing laws and international best practice, as well as the views of stakeholders, are taken into account. Any amendments to existing legislation will be dependent on the outcome of this review. This work has commenced and will continue throughout 2019.

Action Plan for Rural Development Implementation

605. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the progress made with the implementation of the action plan for rural development to date; and when the next progress report will issue. [3081/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Progress Reports on the implementation of the Action Plan for Rural Development are published twice a year on my Department's website, www.drcd.gov.ie. The most recent, Third Progress Report, was published in November 2018 and outlines the progress which took place in relation to all actions due for delivery between January 2018 and June 2018, or which are being implemented on an ongoing basis over the course of the three year Action Plan.

Of the 275 actions reported on in the latest report, 266 had been completed or were substantially advanced. A number of case studies also feature in the Third Progress Report, which illustrate the positive impact the actions being delivered are having on rural communities.

The coordinated, whole-of-Government approach of the Action Plan is achieving results in terms of increased employment in the regions and increased investment in projects and communities across the country. Since 2015, there has been an increase of over 163,000 in the number of people employed in regions outside of Dublin, surpassing the Government's target of 135,000 by 2020. We are also seeing increased employment in the hospitality sector from the promotion of tourist attractions and investment in greenways and blueways.

My Department is in the process of compiling the Fourth Progress Report on the Action Plan for Rural Development, which will report on the delivery of measures in the second half of 2018. It is envisaged the report will be circulated to the Monitoring Committee which oversees the Action Plan in the first quarter of this year, for consideration and subsequent publication.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

606. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of applications by category 1 and 2 projects made under the rural regeneration and development fund by county to date; the number of successful and unsuccessful project applications, respectively per category that applied for funding per county; the successful projects by county that have been approved for funding per category; the value of funding approved for each such project; when successful applicants will receive funding in 2019; the amount allocated for the fund in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3082/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Under Project Ireland 2040, the Government has committed €1 billion to the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund over a 10 year period to support rural economic development and help build strong communities. The Fund has been allocated €315m over the period 2019 to 2022, with €55m set aside in my Department's budget for successful projects in 2019. The respective allocations for the years 2020 to 2022 will be confirmed as part of the annual budgetary process.

The first call for applications for the Fund closed at the end of September and there was an excellent response from all across the country, with 280 applications received. A breakdown of applications received by Category and County is set out in the Table 1.

Applications for the Fund are currently being examined by the Project Advisory Board, made up of representatives from key Government Departments and external experts, which was established to oversee the assessment process. Category 1 "shovel ready" projects were prioritised in the assessment process in the first instance and Category 2 projects - those which need development funding to become potential Category 1 applications in future calls for applications - are also now being considered.

I announced the first set of 18 successful Category 1 projects for funding on the 23rd November 2018. Details of funding allocated to successful applications by County is set out in Table 2. My Department is currently engaging with the 18 successful lead applicants as part of the due diligence process and contractual arrangements, including payment milestones, will be finalised shortly.

A further announcement detailing successful Category 1 and Category 2 projects will take place early in 2019, with a second call for the Fund taking place later in the year.

Table 1. Applications by County and Category

County	Category 1	Category 2	Total per County
Carlow	1	5	6
Cavan	2	3	5
Clare	13	10	23
Cork	17	49	66
Donegal	8	4	12
Dublin	0	1	1

Galway	9	5	14
Kerry	7	7	14
Kildare	4	9	13
Kilkenny	4	5	9
Laois	4	1	5
Leitrim	2	3	5
Limerick	13	5	18
Longford	2	1	3
Louth	2	2	4
Mayo	7	6	13
Meath	2	6	8
Monaghan	5	4	9
Offaly	1	4	5
Roscommon	2	1	3
Sligo	3	2	5
Tipperary	3	3	6
Waterford	1	4	5
Westmeath	1	2	3
Wexford	5	6	11
Wicklow	1	2	3
Multiple Locations	7	4	11
Totals	126	154	280

Table 2. Successful RRDF Applications by County

County	Number of Successful Applications	Total RRDF Funding
Carlow	1	€654,820
Cavan	1	€867,174
Clare	1	€1,023,300
Cork	1	€2,157,375
Donegal	2	€3,228,042
Galway	2	€2,276,887
Kerry	1	€1,270,000
Kilkenny	1	€561,750
Laois	1	€1,200,000
Limerick	3	€7,167,477
Mayo	2	€2,895,062
Sligo	2	€1,115,752
Total	18	€24,417,639

LEADER Programmes Expenditure

607. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the progress made to date with the roll-out of the LEADER programme 2014 to 2020; the expendi-

ture incurred to date on the programme by administrative, animation and projects costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3083/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): LEADER is a multi-annual programme which has a total budget of €250 million over the period to 2020.

Total expenditure on the LEADER programme since it commenced - effectively in 2016 when the majority of Funding Agreements were signed - amounts to over €38 million. This comprises:

- €1.5 million in initial costs incurred by the LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs) to develop their Local Development Strategies.

- €22.9 million in administration costs of the LAGs and the cost of their engagement with communities to generate projects.

- €13.6 million on project expenditure.

The level of project activity under the LEADER programme has increased significantly over the last year. 1,644 projects have now been approved for funding of over €55.8 million, compared to 592 projects approved at the end of 2017. A further 355 applications, requesting an additional €22 million, are at an earlier stage in the approvals process.

Project payments have increased significantly in recent months as approved works are completed and claims are submitted. Over €13.6 million of project expenditure has been incurred to date, compared to just under €700,000 at the end of 2017.

I expect that the progress now being made on the LEADER programme will continue as further projects are approved and payment claims are made. The progress has been assisted by improvements made by my Department in 2018 to the applications and approvals process, in consultation with the LAGs.

Brexit Issues

608. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the contingencies being taken in a no-deal Brexit scenario; the legislative areas under his remit that will have to be changed; and the impact this will have on schemes and funding. [3085/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I can confirm that Departments across Government have been planning for all Brexit scenarios but as the UK's exit date of 29 March approaches, Government has decided that immediate priority must now be given to preparations for a no-deal Brexit.

The Government published a Contingency Action Plan on 19 December 2018, which my Department inputted into, setting out its approach to dealing with a no-deal Brexit and is determined that Ireland will be as ready as we can be in mitigating any impacts from Brexit and of a no-deal scenario.

Preparations in advance of Brexit have been focused on engagement and awareness in relation to our stakeholders in the rural and community development sectors.

Intensive work has been undertaken across Government to screen all Irish legislation currently in force to identify areas where legislative amendments will, or may, be required in the context of a no deal Brexit. My Department has engaged with this screening process and has

not identified any legislative areas under my remit where amendment is required in advance of a no-deal Brexit.

As the Tánaiste outlined to the Dáil last Thursday, the Government has identified 17 different areas, across nine Government Departments, to be included in a single omnibus Bill in the context of a no deal Brexit. In addition, the Government has also identified a further 28 pieces of secondary legislation that will be required in such a scenario.

I am very conscious that the potential effects of a disorderly Brexit on communities and on certain economic sectors, such as agrifood, will have a major regional impact.

Therefore, a key element of my Department's contingency planning is to ensure maximum flexibility in our programme of initiatives, to allow for responses to emerging needs and to continue to build resilience in communities.

CLÁR Programme

609. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of projects approved under CLÁR measures 1, 2, 3 and 4 since the programme was re-established on an annual basis by county; the number of projects that were not approved by county; the main reasons for refusal; if there is an appeal mechanism in place to appeal refusal decisions; the funding allocated for approved projects in each county under the CLÁR programme annually; and the final amount expended on approved projects annually to the end of 2018 in each county under CLÁR in tabular form. [3086/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): As the Deputy will be aware, CLÁR is an important part of the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development and focuses on areas which have suffered the greatest levels of population decline.

The programme was effectively closed for new applications in 2010. However, I re-launched CLÁR in 2016, and, since then, more than 1,200 projects have benefited from funding of €25 million under the programme. The type of projects which have been funded include safety measures around schools and other community facilities, multi-use play areas, supports for voluntary first-response emergency organisations, targeted community infrastructure needs, and funding for vehicles to transport people to cancer care centres and other respite services.

The table below updates the information provided in my response to the Deputy's question of 4th December last. The 2017 figures provided in that response referred to the funding allocated in 2017 rather than the funding expended. The table summarises the number of projects approved, the number of unsuccessful projects, and the amounts paid out under the programme in each calendar year from 2016 to 2018, on a county basis.

Details of the funding allocated to all approved projects in each county are available on my Department's website at www.drcd.gov.ie/clar/.

There are various reasons why projects were not successful, which include:

- non-compliance with the scheme criteria,
- lack of match funding, and
- the level of demand exceeding the funding available.

There is no formal appeals mechanism in place under the CLÁR programme, but my De-

partment provides feedback in respect of unsuccessful applications on request.

CLÁR Programme – Summary of projects and payments by county

County	No. of projects approved	No. of unsuccessful projects	Amount Paid		
			2016	2017	2018
	2016-2018	2016-2018	2016	2017	2018
Carlow	33	3	€80,000	€97,864.20	€58,579.89
Cavan	60	20	€498,184	€295,030.10	€296,353.51
Clare	52	18	€284,000	€189,070.76	€468,638.17
Cork	67	71	€562,222	€61,582.31	€555,606.17
Donegal	106	73	€878,632	€228,864.20	€236,711.00
Galway	92	24	€392,000	€609,845.82	€346,621.50
Kerry	73	116	€744,964	€143,067.93	€384,759.13
Kilkenny	24	12	€223,000	€107,030.00	€212,465.00
Laois	43	17	€148,900	€39,208.00	€12,187.00
Leitrim	53	17	€274,800	€447,600.50	€189,302.54
Limerick	53	30	€235,000	€179,727.77	€137,660.00
Longford	44	19	€237,560	€141,896.65	€227,931.00
Louth	28	17	€173,520	€31,379.00	€188,481.96
Mayo	87	60	€976,869	€664,832.73	€628,607.36
Meath	22	7	€127,600	€104,000.00	€81,069.00
Monaghan	63	27	€356,440	€303,236.55	€368,862.20
Offaly	36	21	€123,398	€185,664.80	€259,638.23
Roscommon	57	23	€406,497	€260,177.48	€337,711.11
Sligo	73	21	€598,400	€299,712.60	€173,488.00
Tipperary	78	19	€371,000	€181,283.71	€357,111.69
Waterford	48	21	€261,600	€329,518.00	€286,925.00
Westmeath	37	27	€214,280	€57,549.00	€203,089.30
Wicklow	15	20	€70,000	€98,586.43	€28,395.00
National/regional organisations	27	16			€295,524.60
Totals	1,271	699	€8,238,866	€5,056,728.54	€6,861,229.71

Library Services Funding

610. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his views on the levels of expenditure under the libraries capital programme annually over the 2016 to 2018 period. [3087/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department funds a libraries capital programme that will invest some €29 million in 19 projects, and in the My Open Library service, between 2016 and 2022. The programme has been developed on the basis of priority proposals submitted by local authorities and is fully committed at this stage.

Two major developments have already been completed under the programme with Kevin Street library in Dublin and Athy library in County Kildare opening in 2018. Moreover, two mobile libraries have been commissioned in Kerry and Wexford; a new schools library van has

been funded in Tipperary; and equipment, furniture and fittings have been funded for 20 or so libraries to support the continued roll-out of My Open Library.

I expect local authorities to continue to make good progress in 2019. To this end, I have secured an increased capital allocation of €6 million for the programme this year. The allocation reflects increasing activity under the programme with, for example, construction on three major developments advancing significantly or completing this year, namely the libraries in Edgeworthstown (Longford), Ennis (Clare) and North Clondalkin (South Dublin).

Capital Expenditure Programme

611. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount allocated between current and capital expenditure in 2018 to schemes (details supplied); and the amount expended in each such scheme to the end of 2018, in tabular form. [3088/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The amount allocated to these specific schemes in 2018, and the expenditure incurred, is outlined in the table below. The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, Walks Scheme and CLÁR Programme each form part of the wider A.4 National Rural Development Schemes programme, and the allocations below this A.4 sub-head level are, therefore, indicative.

These expenditure figures remain provisional until the publication of the audited 2018 appropriation account for my Department, which is expected in September 2019.

Scheme/Programme	2018 Current Allocation	2018 Current Expenditure	2018 Capital Allocation	2018 Capital Expenditure
Town and Village Renewal Scheme	--	--	15.00	12.75
Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme	1.00	1.15	10.38	7.35
Walks Scheme	2.00	1.80		
CLÁR Programme	--	--	5.00	6.87
Local Improvement Scheme	--	--	10.00	16.40
Community Enhancement Programme (and all measures under the RAPID subhead)	2.23	1.91	5.77	14.28

LEADER Programmes Expenditure

612. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development

the level of expenditure committed at the end of 2018 under the 2014 to 2020 LEADER programme for each programme; the drawdown of such grant aid to date by each programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3091/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): LEADER is a multi-annual programme which has a total budget of €250 million over the period to 2020. €220 million of this funding has been allocated to each of the individual Local Action Groups (LAGs) who deliver LEADER. The remaining €30 million is allocated for thematic programmes delivered at a national level.

Total expenditure on the LEADER programme since it commenced, effectively in 2016, until the end of 2018 amounted to approximately €37.6 million. This comprises:

- €1.5 million for costs incurred by the Local Action Groups to develop Local Development Strategies,
- €23 million for the administration costs of the LAGs and the cost of their engagement with communities to generate projects, and
- €13.1 million on project expenditure.

The level of project activity under the LEADER programme increased significantly during 2018. In total at the end of 2018, 1,626 projects had been approved by the LAGs for funding of over €55.3 million. A further 349 project applications, requesting an additional €21.7 million, were at various stages in the approvals process.

Table 1 below provides a breakdown of the number of projects approved by each Local Action Group, together with details of the project payments made to date. Expenditure will increase in line with project approvals, as these projects are implemented and submit payment claims.

Table 1: Total LEADER Approvals and Expenditure by LAG

Local Action Group	No. of Projects Approved to 31 Dec 2018	Value of Projects Approved to 31 December 2018	Total Project Payments to 31 Dec 2018
Carlow	21	€1,197,148	€766,514
Cavan	36	€2,238,457	€398,960
Clare	106	€2,080,807	€460,913
Cork North	46	€1,925,272	€463,909
Cork South	20	€600,436	€208,113
Cork West	25	€995,778	€146,440
Donegal	103	€4,375,932	€1,728,046
Dublin Rural	43	€1,349,327	€376,806
Galway East	35	€1,461,140	€21,367
Galway West	23	€384,509	€102,284
Kerry	168	€3,221,379	€724,370
Kildare	18	€673,526	€57,827
Kilkenny	55	€1,498,732	€565,527
Laois	41	€941,706	€398,690
Leitrim	51	€1,819,686	€368,803
Limerick	71	€3,131,593	€480,115

Longford	40	€985,239	€51,398
Louth	53	€1,183,533	€212,238
Mayo	96	€3,969,786	€496,612
Meath	24	€966,042	€37,301
Monaghan	37	€2,145,727	€331,873
Offaly	93	€2,333,738	€951,892
Roscommon	36	€2,173,843	€198,518
Sligo	66	€2,306,081	€743,910
Tipperary	102	€3,082,112	€450,879
Waterford	48	€3,099,710	€1,595,104
Westmeath	45	€802,578	€254,216
Wexford	92	€3,418,623	€470,699
Wicklow	32	€951,045	€103,759
Grand Total	1,626	€55,313,484	€13,167,083

Brexit Issues

613. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the discussions he has had to date with his counterparts in Northern Ireland in relation to the continuation of cross-Border programmes post-Brexit, if such programmes that have been organised on a cross-Border basis and that have made a major contribution to development in the Border region will continue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3092/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department is a designated Accountable Department for certain measures under the PEACE IV Programme. My colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, has overall responsibility for both the PEACE and INTERREG programmes including discussions on the future of these programmes.

That said, I can confirm the Government is committed to the successful implementation of the PEACE and INTERREG programmes and to successor programmes post-2020. The Government's ambition for these programmes is reflected in the EU-UK Joint Report on Brexit in which the parties undertook to honour their commitments to the programmes under the current Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) and to examine possibilities for future support favourably. This is matched by the European Commission's commitment to propose a continuation of the programmes in its proposal for the next MFF for the period 2021-2027.

The draft Withdrawal Agreement between the EU and the UK provides that UK involvement in current PEACE and INTERREG programmes will continue up to their normal completion. Moreover, the Commission brought forward a proposal last month for a specific Regulation to enable both programmes to continue in the event of a no-deal scenario. This proposal gives legal certainty to the programmes if there is no deal.

Finally, I am very pleased that the Commissions proposals for the next round of Cohesion policy, published last May, included a specific proposal for a special new PEACE PLUS programme to build on and continue the work of both PEACE and INTERREG in recent years.

Invalidity Pension Applications

614. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for an invalidity pension will be awarded to a person (details supplied). [2536/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The lady referred to has been awarded invalidity pension with effect from 25 October 2018. Payment will issue to her nominated credit union account on 31 January 2019. Any arrears due from 25 October 2018 to 30 January 2019 (less any overlapping social welfare payment) will issue as soon as possible. The lady in question was notified of this decision on the 17 January 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

615. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person (details supplied) will be awarded an extension of time on a SOLAS scheme due to age. [2310/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person in question is currently a participant on a Community Employment (CE) scheme in County Galway.

An overall lifetime limit of six years from 1 January, 2007 applies to CE participants. The person in question was in receipt of Farm Assist prior to commencing his current period on CE in 2013 and he will have completed his life-time participation limit of six years on 19 April, 2019. In addition, he had been on CE for an additional 4 years and 10 months prior to 2007.

On completion of his term on CE, the person in question can apply for Jobseekers Benefit. He will then be assisted through the activation process to work towards securing employment and achieving financial self-sufficiency. This process also helps identify potential employment opportunities and offers support in overcoming any barriers to employment.

Alternatively he can apply for Jobseekers Allowance or Farm/Fish Assist. If deemed eligible, it will then be open to him to apply for a place on the Rural Social Scheme (RSS). To qualify for participation on the RSS, an individual must be actively farming, have a valid herd number/fishing licence and be in receipt of one of a number of specified social welfare payments including Jobseekers Allowance and Farm/Fish Assist.

My Department also understands that the person in question has also been self employed and engaged in farming.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Applications

616. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when an illness benefit payment will be finalised and issued to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare. [2331/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department administers the Illness Benefit scheme to those customers who cannot work because they are sick or ill provided they are covered by the appropriate class of social insurance (PRSI) and satisfy the PRSI conditions.

The Illness Benefit claim for the person concerned is in payment and all arrears owing to her have been issued. The latest payment issued to this customers bank account on the 15th January 2019 that brought her payment up to date.

She is medically certified to the 4th June 2019.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Eligibility

617. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the resources available to a family in homeless services that is in receipt of social welfare payments and have to drive their children to school each day (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2343/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Under the SWA Scheme a travel supplement is intended to assist with ongoing travel costs that cannot be met from the person's own resources and are deemed to be necessary.

It is open to the person concerned to submit an application for financial assistance to meet travel costs.

The person concerned should phone 0404 20400 to make an appointment to meet a Community Welfare Officer at the Government Offices, The Murrough, Wicklow Town.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Applications

618. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when an illness benefit application by a person (detail supplied) in County Kerry will be processed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2359/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Occupational Injury Benefit claim from the person concerned has been processed and all arrears owing to him have issued.

The claim is both medically certified and up to the 11th January 2019.

If the person concerned remains ill and unfit for work, a further medical certificate should be submitted to the Department as soon as possible in order for further payments to issue.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

619. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social

Protection the progress to date in the determination of an appeal for a disability allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2399/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who has decided to hold an oral hearing in this case on the 28th January 2019. The person concerned has been notified of the arrangements for the hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

620. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a community employment scheme will be extended in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2462/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Requests for extending participants on Community Employment Schemes are only considered by this Department at the request of the Project Sponsor, which in this case is Ballymacelligott CE Co Ltd.

A request for an extension has not yet been made by the sponsor.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Invalidity Pension Eligibility

621. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason an invalidity pension was not granted to a person (details supplied); if this decision will be reconsidered; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2480/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): On receipt of additional medical evidence submitted in support of the appeal of the lady concerned, a review of the claim was carried out by a deciding officer and she has been awarded invalidity pension with effect from 10 May 2018.

Payment will issue to her nominated bank account on 31 January 2019. Arrears due from 10 May 2018 to 30 January 2019 (less any overlapping social welfare payment) will issue as soon as possible. The lady in question was notified of this decision on 17 January 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Applications

622. **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. [2482/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department administers the Illness Benefit scheme to those customers who cannot work because they are sick or ill provided they are covered by the appropriate class of social insurance (PRSI) and satisfy the PRSI conditions.

The Illness Benefit claim for the person concerned has been processed and any arrears due have been issued.

The claim is both is medically certified and paid up to date and to the 31st January 2019.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Payments Administration

623. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a payment for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2486/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The person concerned is currently a qualified adult on her partner’s social welfare claim. This means that her partner is currently in receipt of a payment for her.

The monetary difference between this payment and her illness benefit entitlement is being calculated and processed currently, and any arrears due to her will be paid as quickly as possible.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Staff Data

624. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of employees in her Department; the number professionally qualified with organisations (details supplied); the number with other relevant professional qualifications; and the number with no professional qualifications in tabular form. [1887/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The staffing level in my Department as at the end of December 2018 was 6728 officers (6363 full-time equivalents).

A register of staff qualifications is maintained by this Department. The number of staff who have informed the Department on acquiring a professional qualification with the following organisations or bodies to which you refer are as follows:

Professional Qualifications	Nos.
Irish Institute of Purchasing and Materials Management	0
Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply	0
Institute of Public Administration	258
Chartered Accountants Ireland	1

Chartered Institute of Management Accountants	3
Institute of Certified Public Accountants	4
Association of Chartered Certified Accountants	13

My Department is not in a position to provide details of those staff members who do not hold a professional qualification.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Staff Data

625. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of employees in her Department authorised to engage in procurement; the number professionally qualified with organisations (details supplied); the number with other relevant professional qualifications; and the number with no professional qualifications in tabular form. [1904/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The procurement of supplies and services is essential to support the Department in providing high quality service to the public in a cost effective and efficient manner. The Department is compliant with best practice in the procurement of supplies and services and all staff involved in procurement must adhere to comprehensive rules set out in the Department's Procurement Policy and Procedures.

The Project Office in my Department is responsible for development and implementation of a project management framework and procurement policy. It promotes best practice in project governance, project management and the procurement of goods and services. It supports Project Managers and staff involved in procurement through the provision of advice, guidelines and templates which draw on best practice nationally and internationally. It works closely with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) to ensure that its policies, procedures and template are in accordance with up to date legislation and EU Directives.

The Project Office also maintains a contract database of all contracts awarded over €25k and in accordance with the provisions under the FOI publication scheme, publishes details of public contracts awarded (over €25k) on <http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Procurement-Contracts-Awarded.aspx>.

A voluntary register of staff qualifications is maintained by the Staff Development Unit in my Department. The total number of qualifications recorded on the register is currently 2439 covering a variety of disciplines. The table below sets out the number of staff recorded as having attained a professional qualification, for the organisations requested by the Deputy.

Professional Qualifications	Nos.
Irish Institute of Purchasing and Materials Management	0
Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply	0
Institute of Public Administration	258
Chartered Accountants Ireland	1

Chartered Institute of Management Accountants	3
Institute of Certified Public Accountants	4
Association of Chartered Certified Accountants	13

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

626. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a domiciliary care allowance appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2493/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred on the 29th November 2018 to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

627. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied) will be addressed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2507/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): An application for carer's allowance (CA) was received from the person concerned on 3 May 2018.

On the basis of the evidence submitted the deciding officer in the case decided that the requirement for full-time care and attention was not satisfied.

The person concerned was notified on 2 October 2018 of this decision, the reason for it and of their right of review and appeal.

They appealed this decision and submitted additional evidence in support of their appeal. This additional evidence gave a more comprehensive description of the care requirements of the person being cared for, which indicated that full-time care and attention was required.

Accordingly, CA was awarded to the person concerned on 16 January 2019 and first payment will issue to their nominated bank account on 24 January 2018.

Arrears of allowance due from 10 May 2018 to 23 January 2019 have also issued.

The person concerned was notified on 16 January 2018 of this outcome, the reason for it and of their right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Fuel Allowance Applications

628. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for the fuel allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2508/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Free Fuel (FF) allowance is a means tested allowance, payable to people who either live alone or only with certain other qualified people.

Carers Allowance (CA) is a qualifying payment for receipt of FF allowance. However based on the information provided to the Department, the person concerned does not qualify for this allowance as their household also includes people who are not in a qualifying category.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Applications

629. **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. [2512/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department registered an Illness Benefit claim for the person concerned on the 20th August 2018 and the person has an entitlement to a graduated (reduced) rate of Illness Benefit.

However, the person concerned is currently in receipt of full rate Carers Allowance and it is more financially beneficial for her to continue to receive a full Carers Allowance payment than to receive a reduced rate Illness Benefit payment and a half rate Carers Allowance.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

630. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when the appeals office will make a decision on a domiciliary care allowance appeal requesting an oral hearing in respect of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2531/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred on the 15th January 2019 to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing. The request by the person concerned for an oral hearing has been brought to the attention of the Appeals Officer.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

631. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied) will be awarded. [2555/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I confirm that my department received an application for disability allowance from this lady on 12 December 2018. On completion of the necessary investigations on all aspects of the claim a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

The processing time for individual disability allowance claims may vary in accordance with their relative complexity in terms of the three main qualifying criteria, the person's circumstances and the information they provide in support of their claim.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Adoption Legislation

632. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to include provision of rights that would guarantee legal certainty for male same-sex families adopting children abroad as part of the proposed civil registration Bill; and if not, the reason therefor. [2581/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): There currently exist a range of provisions in respect of adoptions, including those made from abroad by male same-sex couples.

In terms of registration, children adopted abroad are registered in the register of inter-country adoptions. This register is maintained by the Adoption Authority, which is appointed by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

Domestic adoptions are registered in the Adopted Children Register, by the General Register Office, on receipt of an adoption order made by the Adoption Authority. It is not necessary to amend this legislation as it already allows for registration of adoptions by same-sex male couples. The abridged adoption certificate, which appears identical to a birth certificate by displaying details of adopters as "mother" and "father", will be updated by way of regulation to also include details of "parent", to coincide with commencement of legislation that will provide for this on birth certificates.

Legal recognition of adoptions is provided for in the Adoption Act 2010 (as amended). This legislation is the responsibility of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, who has informed me of the following concerning adoptions by same-sex male couples.

The Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017 was commenced on the 19th of October 2017. The primary purpose of the Act is to give effect to Article 42A (Children) of the Constitution, in so far as it relates to adoption. In particular, the Act provides for:

- The adoption of any child, regardless of the marital status of his/her parents.
- The Adoption Authority of Ireland or the Court, to regard the best interests of the child as the paramount consideration.

- The Authority or the Court to ascertain the child's views and such views to be given due weight having regard to the age and maturity of the child.

- The introduction of revised criteria for dispensing with consent, in the case of the adoption of children whose parents fails in their duty towards them.

- The adoption of a child by his or her step parent without the requirement for the child's other parent to adopt his or her own child.

- The provision for the joint adoption of a child by civil partners and cohabiting couples.

- The further adoption of a child who was previously adopted.

The Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017 amends the Adoption Act 2010. Before the commencement of the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017 only a sole applicant or a married couple could apply to adopt a child under the Adoption Act 2010. On commencement of the Marriage Act 2015, a same sex married couple who were married in accordance with that Act automatically became eligible to apply to adopt a child.

Therefore, there are no plans to include provisions in civil registration legislation, including the proposed Civil Registration Bill 2019, that would extend additional provision in respect of such adoptions.

Pension Provisions

633. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the position in relation to the proposed changes of the pension system in 2020; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2602/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): A policy to introduce the Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to pensions calculation was adopted by Government in the National Pensions Framework in 2010, as was the decision to base the entitlements of all new pensioners on this approach from 2020.

I launched a public consultation on the design of the full TCA to be introduced from 2020 on the 28th of May to which a wide variety of stakeholder groups were invited. A number of workshops were also held on the day to elicit views and feedback. All Oireachtas members were invited to a detailed briefing in Leinster House by my officials shortly afterwards. The consultation was open for over 3 months and the Department received almost 300 responses from individuals and organisations including open written submissions. Those submissions outlined the views of respondents on a number of issues, including the number of years required for a full pension, as intended as part of the consultation process.

Analysis of the views submitted is being finalised, and I understand will be submitted to me very shortly. When I have considered this analysis, I will bring a proposal to Government.

It should be noted that the pension is still intended to be a contributory pension, as exists in most developed countries, and that those who have contributed to the Social Insurance Fund would still build up pension rights through PRSI paid over the years.

The scheme will be introduced by legislation, and the proposals will, I believe, be broadly debated by members of the Oireachtas.

In advance of this, on 23 January 2018, the Government agreed to a proposal that will al-

low pensioners affected by the 2012 changes in rate bands to have their pension entitlement calculated using an interim “Total Contributions Approach” (TCA) which will include up to 20 years of new HomeCaring periods. This approach is expected to significantly benefit many people, particularly women, whose work history includes an extended period of time outside the paid workplace, while raising families or in a caring role. Following enactment of the necessary legislation at the end of 2018, reviews of c. 80,000 pensioners impacted has commenced, and given the numbers involved will take a number of months to complete. As the reviews are processed, the pensioners involved will be notified of the outcome of their review, or asked to provide further information to allow the review to be concluded. Where the review results in a rate increase, their weekly payment will be adjusted and arrears paid - backdated to 30 March 2018, or the pensioner’s 66th birthday if later. Where an increase is not awarded, their personal rate of pension will remain unchanged. Work on the reviews will continue until all identified pensioners have been notified of their review outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Pensions Reform

634. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person (details supplied) will be included in the upcoming pensions review; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2635/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Since the end of September 2018, my Department has been examining the social insurance records of pensioners born on or after 1 September 1946 who have an entitlement to and are being paid a reduced state pension (contributory) under post Budget 2012 rate bands. Their rate of payment is now being formally reviewed under legislation recently enacted. Given the number of pensioners involved in the review this is expected to take a number of months to complete.

Those individuals who have an underlying entitlement to a state pension (contributory) but are currently beneficiaries of a higher rate increase for a qualified adult (IQA) payment on their spouse or partner’s pension will also be included in the review. This work will commence in Quarter 2, once primary state pension (contributory) claimants have been progressed.

Where the outcome is that the person’s state pension (contributory) is the highest rate payable, they will be transferred onto that higher rate payment without delay and they will receive arrears backdated to March 2018, or their 66th birthday if later.

Where possible, my Department will use information already held to assist in the reviews. For example, a deciding officer will consider awarding HomeCaring Periods where a person’s gap in employment coincides directly with a period for which they received certain social welfare payment such as Child Benefit (for a child up to age 12) or Carers Allowance or Benefit. Additional information will be requested in writing from pensioners in relation to unexplained gaps in their social insurance record if required to complete their review. Information requests will also explain how to access my Department’s on-line service to provide the relevant information. On receipt of the requested information, their pension review will be carried out and they will be notified of the outcome in writing.

If a pensioner does not qualify for a rate which exceeds their current weekly entitlement, they will continue to receive their existing payment. No entitlement rates will be reduced as a result of this review.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Expenditure

635. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will publish the airline costs for her Department for 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2691/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The net cost of airline flights for my Department for 2018 amounted to €51,392.11. As many of the flights involved relate to meetings where the flight costs are refundable by the organisers, this net figure includes overall flight costs of €80,021.61 incurred during 2018, reduced by €28,629.50 in respect of refunds relating to those costs.

Most of the air travel undertaken by my Department relates to meeting Ireland's obligations arising from our membership of the EU and other international organisations, such as the United Nations, Council of Europe, International Social Security Association, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, International Labour Organisation, etc.

In line with the general principles governing all official travel abroad, as set out in Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's circulars and guidelines, official travel abroad undertaken by my Department is kept to an absolute minimum and is undertaken as economically as possible, using the shortest practical routes and the most cost-effective method of transport.

Departmental Expenditure

636. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will publish the cost of newspapers in her Department in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2708/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Expenditure on newspapers purchased by my Department in 2018 amounted to €9,993.53. These costs are provisional and subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The Department monitors such expenditure closely at all times and keeps these costs to a minimum.

The total expenditure cited above includes the purchase and delivery of print copies of newspapers as well as online subscriptions where required, as online content is only available with a subscription in some cases.

Community Employment Schemes Review

637. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the details of the review of community employment schemes she is undertaking; the persons on the review group; if the community sector is represented on this review group; the length of time she expects this review to take; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2748/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy will be aware, I secured Government agreement Wednesday 9th January (Government Decision S180/20/10/0861) to establish an Interdepartmental Group to explore the most appropriate organisational arrangements, including which Department should host Community

Employment (CE) Social Inclusion schemes.

The group will comprise of officials from my own Department and officials at Principal Officer level or equivalent from the Departments of Public Expenditure and Reform; Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Rural and Community Development; Children and Youth Affairs; Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; Health; Justice and Equality and Housing, Planning and Local Government.

I welcome any proposals put forward by community groups and expect the outcome of the deliberations of the Interdepartmental group to be available later this year.

Civil Registration Legislation

638. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when the civil registration Bill will be introduced; the timeline for its introduction; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2809/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Civil Registration Bill 2019 will resolve a number of difficulties in the registration of donor assisted births. It will extend the required particulars for registration of a birth to include “Parent” on a birth certificate. At present birth certificates issued in respect of donor-assisted children born to same sex couples only allow for the recording of the mother’s details. These changes will facilitate the registration and re-registration of births of children of same sex female couples, and this will affirm their parental rights.

In addition to the current labels of “Mother” and “Father” on birth certificates, parents of non-donor assisted children may also avail of the label “Parent” should they so request it.

While the changes proposed will affect a relatively small number of people, they touch on matters that are very sensitive and of great importance to those families affected and I have personally met with and spoken to many affected by this issue. The drafting of the Bill is currently being finalised by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel and it is my intention to introduce the Bill to Dáil Éireann as soon as possible.

The Bill will also include provisions for:

- a role for a next of kin in providing a Coroner with additional details in relation to a deceased person’s particulars;
- sharing of GRO data and records with a body such as the National Library or National Archives; and
- collection of additional details in respect of deceased persons in order that the CSO can comply with obligations under EU Regulations.

Carer’s Allowance Applications

639. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the fact that a person (details supplied) has been waiting for a decision on a carer’s allowance application since March 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2813/19]

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.

A person can be considered to be providing full-time care and attention where they are engaged in employment, self-employment or on training courses outside the home for a maximum of 15 hours per week, provided that they can show to the satisfaction of a deciding officer that adequate care has been provided for the care recipient in their absence.

The matter was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) in July 2018 to assess the level of care being provided, assess means and confirm that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied.

In August the SWI wrote to the person concerned requesting further information. A reminder issued later that month.

The person concerned attended a meeting with the SWI in November 2018 and stated he had submitted the requested documents, however my Department have no record of receiving same.

The SWI has afford the person concerned another opportunity to furnish these documents and is to meet with him on Monday 21 January 2019 to finalise same.

Once the SWI has reported on this, a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Waiting Times

640. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the processing time for carer's allowance applications; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2814/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department is committed to providing a quality service to all its customers. This includes ensuring that applications are processed as quickly as possible.

Where any scheme area experiences delays, all possible steps are taken to improve processing times. This includes the assignment of additional resources, where available, and the review of business processes, to ensure the efficient processing of applications.

In general, social welfare schemes with a number of complex qualifying conditions can take longer to process.

To qualify for carer's allowance, the carer must show that they are habitually resident in the State, that they are providing full-time care and attention to a person who requires this level of care and that their means are less than the statutory limit.

At the end of December 2018 the average waiting time for a decision on a new carer's allowance claim was 17 weeks.

Additional staff were assigned to the CA claims processing area from within the CA area and from other areas of the Longford Centralised Schemes Office to help improve the process-

ing times. It is expected that processing times will improve further in the coming weeks as a result.

Pensions Reform

641. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of efforts to alter the State pension qualification criteria to ensure that all persons who have had periods outside of the PAYE system or who have been a homemaker for a period of time are entitled to a full State pension. [2815/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Government intends to introduce a Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to establishing the level of entitlement for all new state pension contributory claims from 2020 onwards (TCA2020).

I launched a public consultation on the design of the full TCA to be introduced from 2020 on the 28th of May to which a wide variety of stakeholder groups were invited. A number of workshops were also held on the day to elicit views and feedback. All Oireachtas members were invited to a detailed briefing in Leinster House by my officials shortly afterwards. The consultation was open for over 3 months and the Department received almost 300 responses from individuals and organisations including open written submissions. Those submissions outlined the views of respondents on a number of issues, including the number of years required for a full pension, as intended as part of the consultation process.

Analysis of the views submitted is being finalised, and I understand will be submitted to me very shortly. When I have considered this analysis, I will bring a proposal to Government.

It should be noted that the pension is still intended to be a contributory pension, as exists in most developed countries, and that those who have contributed to the Social Insurance Fund would still build up pension rights through PRSI paid over the years.

In advance of this, on 23 January last, the Government agreed to allow pensioners, born on or after the 1st September 1946, affected by the 2012 changes in rate bands, to have their state pension (contributory) entitlement calculated under an interim TCA (TCA2012). This also provides for up to 20 years of home caring periods in the calculation of that entitlement, for those who took time out of the workplace for parenting children under age 12, or looking after individuals who needed increased levels of care.

In late September, my Department commenced the examination and categorisation of around 79,000 individual social insurance records of pensioners identified for review. Information letters have issued to these 79,000 pensioners to let them know that their social insurance record is being examined and what will now happen. This number for review will increase weekly, as new non-maximum rate state pension (contributory) claims are awarded, and each of these pensioners will be communicated with by the Department.

Legislation to facilitate this interim TCA and the application of HomeCaring Periods was enacted at the end of 2018. This allows the Department to progress the reviews and that work has now begun. The Department has recruited over 110 temporary staff members to expedite this work. As the reviews are processed, the pensioners involved will be notified of the outcome of their review, or asked to provide further information to allow the review to be concluded. Where the review results in a rate increase, their weekly payment will be adjusted and arrears paid - backdated to 30 March 2018, or the pensioner's 66th birthday if later. Where an increase is not awarded, their personal rate of pension will remain unchanged. Given the numbers involved, it will take my Department a number of months to work through all the claim

reviews. Work on the reviews will continue until all identified pensioners have been notified of their review outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Appeals

642. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the review of illness benefit payments for a person (details supplied). [2838/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on the 8th November 2018. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on the 12th December 2018 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

643. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance review for a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2839/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Based on the evidence supplied in support of this person’s application, her application for disability allowance (DA) was disallowed on the grounds that the medical qualifying condition was not satisfied. The person in question was notified in writing of this decision on 4 October 2018.

They requested a review of the decision by a deciding officer (DO) and submitted additional medical evidence for consideration on 19 November 2018. Once a decision is made the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

644. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made in relation to a disability allowance claim by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2846/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

(Deputy Finian McGrath): I confirm that my department received an application for disability allowance from this gentleman on 6 November 2018. On completion of the necessary investigations on all aspects of the claim a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

The processing time for individual disability allowance claims may vary in accordance with their relative complexity in terms of the three main qualifying criteria, the person's circumstances and the information they provide in support of their claim.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Applications

645. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an invalidity pension appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2848/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Invalidity pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

The department received a claim for IP from the gentleman concerned on 08 August 2018. His claim was disallowed on the grounds that the contribution conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on the 14 August 2018 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review and appeal. The gentleman concerned has appealed the decision to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO).

In order to establish whether the medical and contribution conditions for IP are satisfied in this case, the Department sent two forms to the gentleman on 10 January 2019. On receipt of the completed forms the appeal will be processed as quickly as possible and he will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory)

646. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the State pension (contributory) awarded to a person (details supplied) in County Cork will be backdated to when the applicant turned 66 years of age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2865/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned applied for state pension (contributory) on 27 April 2017. On 18 July 2017, the person's claim was disallowed as, according to my Department's records, the person had not entered insurable employment before reaching 56 years of age and did not have the required 520 contributions.

Through correspondence from the person's accountant, dated 7 August 2017, the person then notified the Department that they had been in a farming partnership with their spouse. Their case was referred to the Department's Scope section to investigate. Following a Scope decision that a retrospective partnership did exist, the person was deemed to be a self-employed

contributor and consequently PRSI liabilities for the years from 1988/89 to 2007 were due.

Under social welfare legislation, a self-employed contributor shall not be regarded as satisfying the qualifying conditions for state pension (contributory) unless and until all outstanding self-employment contributions are paid. In this case, the person's outstanding self-employment liabilities were paid in full on 7 March 2018. The person's state pension (contributory) was then awarded from that date and the person concerned was notified in writing.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals

647. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2866/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence, has decided to allow the appeal of the person concerned by way of a summary decision. The person concerned was notified of the Appeals Officer's decision on 16th January 2019.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Pensions Reform

648. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason the legislation necessary to transpose IORP II into law was not passed by 13 January 2019; and when the legislation necessary for transposition will be passed. [2868/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The over-arching objective of IORP II Directive is to facilitate the development of occupational retirement savings in the EU. Many of the provisions contained within the Directive will support positive reform of the Irish occupational pension sector. The Directive provides for a range of new requirements concerning governance, management standards in schemes, safekeeping of assets, the need for clear and relevant information to members, the removal of obstacles to cross-border provision of pension services and the facilitation of cross border transfer of schemes. There are also provisions that will enhance the powers of the Pensions Authority for effective supervision of occupational pensions.

The IORPS Directive was the result of almost three years of discussion and negotiation and came into force on 12 January 2017. Officials in my Department, supported by the Pensions Authority, are managing the transposition process of the IORP II Directive. This is a substantial Directive and preparation of regulations to transpose the Directive are at an advanced stage. It is expected that transposition into Irish law will be achieved later this quarter. This timeframe is in keeping with many other EU countries. It should be noted that from enquiries made, the Department is aware of only one country which has transposed the Directive to date.

Codes of practice will also be issued by the Pensions Authority following approval of the Minister. The codes will expand on requirements, policies and principles prescribed in the transposing regulations. They will explain in practical detail what the Authority will expect from trustees to demonstrate their commitment to serving the best interests of members, deferred members and other beneficiaries.

To ensure that schemes are informed of their obligations under the Directive, the Pensions Authority will also undertake a communication campaign on the implementation of the Directive. The Authority will engage and consult with industry stakeholders and trustees on implementation of the new regulatory regime and related codes of practice. The emphasis of this engagement will be on providing sufficient support, time and information in order for industry and trustees to plan for and make the changes needed.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory)

649. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a pension increase and back payment will be awarded to a person (details supplied). [2875/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Since the end of September 2018, my Department has been examining the social insurance records of pensioners born on or after 1 September 1946 who were awarded state pension (contributory) on reduced post Budget 2012 rate bands. Information letters were issued to all these pensioners explaining that my Department will contact them again to either inform them about the outcome of their review or to request further information in order to complete their review. All of the claims involved will be individually examined in age order, starting with those aged 71 years or over. Due to the number of pensioners involved, the process will take a number of months to complete.

Where possible, my Department will use information already held to assist in these reviews. For example, a deciding officer will consider awarding HomeCaring Periods where a person's gap in employment coincides directly with a period for which they received certain social welfare payments such as Child Benefit (for a child up to age 12) or Carers Allowance or Benefit. Additional information will be requested in writing from pensioners in relation to unexplained gaps in their social insurance record if required to complete their review. Information requests will also explain how to access my Department's on-line service to provide the relevant information. On receipt of the requested information, the person's state pension (contributory) pension will be reviewed and they will be informed of the outcome in writing.

It is expected that the first review outcomes will be notified during Quarter 1 2019. Regardless of when a review is completed, where a pensioner qualifies for an increase, the increase will be paid with their next due payment and arrears backdated to March 2018, or their 66th birthday if later. If a pensioner does not qualify for an increase, they will continue to receive their existing rate of payment. No personal pension entitlement rates will be reduced as a result of this review.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Inspections

650. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the procedure for a social welfare inspector that is investigating a case; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2884/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Social Welfare Inspectors, SWIs, are appointed under Section 250 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 (as amended). As part of their function, they are required to investigate and report on customer's claims and confirm that scheme conditionality is in order. They also have a role in ensuring that compliance is in order in relation to employer's PRSI.

The Department's Inspectorate investigates is responsible for ensuring that employers comply with the Acts in relation to Pay Related Social Insurance contributions and for investigating such matters as the insurability of employment under the Acts. Its remit also includes the combating of fraud and abuse of the Department's schemes. The appointment and duties of Social Welfare Inspectors are provided for in Section 250 of the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act 2005. These outline the requirement for a claimant to give an inspector information and any documents that s/he may require for the purposes of an investigation. They also include the power to enter any premises liable for inspection and inspect and take copies or extracts from any records found there as may be necessary to ascertain compliance with the Act.

The social welfare inspector decides what investigative approach is required and is most appropriate to the case. Investigations may involve desk assessments, office interviews, written and or verbal enquiries and may also include home visits. These may be notified or un-notified depending on the nature of the case. Inspectors may also be required to make visits to employers and may also engage in site visits.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Inspections

651. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if it is correct procedure for a social welfare inspector to call to the place of work of a person when they are working; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2885/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Social Welfare Inspectors, SWIs, are appointed under Section 250 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 (as amended) and are required to investigate and report on customer's claims and confirm that scheme conditionality is in order. They also have a role in ensuring that compliance is in order in relation to employer's PRSI.

As part of their investigations, SWIs may need to call to a person's place of employment when they are working. This depends on the scheme involved and the specific circumstances of each case. It is at the discretion of the Inspector to decide whether or not visits to an employer are necessary. Such visits to a person's place of employment are generally an operational control measure. The inspector may notify the employer and or the person in advance or may have reasons for not doing.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Public Services Card

652. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protec-

tion if the investigation by the Data Protection Commissioner into the public services card has been completed; if so, the findings of this investigation; the actions that will be taken on foot of the investigation; her plans to publish the report by the Data Protection Commissioner; if not, the reason therefor; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2906/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): In October 2017, the Data Protection Commissioner, DPC, initiated an investigation to assess the legal basis for the processing of data in connection with the public services card, PSC, and other related matters.

The DPC provided a draft report on the PSC to my Department in late August 2018. The draft report requested further information and clarifications on a broad range of areas. The DPC gave strict instructions that the Department should not disclose the draft report to any other party and this request was respected.

My Department provided a comprehensive response to the DPC's draft report on 30 November 2018 and we now await the commissioner's response.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy

Brexit Issues

653. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the scheme by scheme analysis being conducted on the impact of Brexit on reciprocal arrangements, social insurance schemes and social assistance schemes between Ireland and the United Kingdom has been completed; if so, the findings of this analysis; the actions taken or which will be taken; if this analysis has been or will be published; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2907/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Government and the EU remain committed to securing a negotiated Brexit outcome. We have been planning for all Brexit scenarios but in light of uncertainties in London and the Brexit deadline of 29 March, the Government decided at its meeting of 11 December that immediate priority must now be given to preparations for a no deal Brexit and that Government Departments and state agencies should urgently take forward work on that basis.

The contingency action plan which the Government published on 19 December sets out in comprehensive terms, the challenges to be faced and the actions taken and planned by the Government across key sectors in the event of a no deal Brexit scenario.

My key area of interest is the impact of Brexit on the current reciprocal arrangements for social insurance schemes, social assistance schemes and child benefit between Ireland and the UK, including Northern Ireland. I met with the then UK Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, the Right Honourable Esther McVey, on 23 April 2018. We agreed on our objective in ensuring that the reciprocity of social welfare rights and entitlements, which currently exist for Irish and UK citizens moving within Ireland and between Ireland and Britain under the Common Travel Area, are safeguarded and maintained.

During the passage of the Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2018 through the Oireachtas I gave a commitment to share once complete, the analysis being conducted by my Department on the impact of Brexit on the reciprocal arrangements for social insurance schemes, social assistance schemes and child benefit between Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Brexit Issues

654. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if reciprocal pension arrangements between Ireland and the United Kingdom will continue as they are currently even in the event of a no-deal Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2908/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Government and the EU remain committed to securing a negotiated Brexit outcome. We have been planning for all Brexit scenarios but in light of uncertainties in London and the Brexit deadline of 29 March, the Government decided at its meeting of 11 December that immediate priority must now be given to preparations for a no deal Brexit and that Government Departments and state agencies should urgently take forward work on that basis.

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JobPath Data

655. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the sanction rates and penalties in place for failure to engage with the JobPath scheme by county in tabular form. [2931/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Penalty rates were introduced in 2011 as a means of encouraging Jobseekers to engage with activation measures and to co-operate with efforts of the Department to assist them in securing employment. The Department is committed, under Pathways to Work, to incentivise the take-up of activation opportunities, including implementing sanctions for failure to engage.

The legislation underpinning the application of penalty rates is provided for in the Social Welfare Act, 2010. Penalty rates can only be applied in specific circumstances and the decision to impose a penalty can only be made by a deciding officer of the Department. Penalty rates are only applied as a last resort. If dissatisfied with that decision it is open to the Jobseeker to appeal the decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office.

The penalty rates which currently apply to Jobseeker’s Allowance customers aged 26 years and over is €44.00 per week. For those age 25 years old the penalty rate is €33.00 per week and for those aged 18-24 years the rate is €25.00.

The introduction of the JobPath service in mid-2015 has complemented my Department’s existing activation services and has facilitated a very significant increase in the numbers of Jobseekers to whom activation services can be provided. Significantly, of those Jobseekers

who are in activation at any given time, either within my Department's Intreo service, or the contracted services of JobPath and the LES, only approximately 1% have a penalty rate applied.

A breakdown by County of the number of penalty rate sanctions currently applied to customers engaging with JobPath is set out below.

County	Currently engaged with JobPath with a current Penalty Rate
Cavan	10
Clare	3
Cork	16
Donegal	33
Dublin	186
Galway	24
Kerry	2
Kildare	9
Kilkenny	8
Laois	8
Leitrim	1
Limerick	20
Longford	5
Louth	13
Meath	13
Monaghan	7
Offaly	12
Roscommon	3
Tipperary	14
Waterford	5
Westmeath	9
Wexford	26
Wicklow	5
Total	432

I hope this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

656. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [3010/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence, has decided to allow the appeal of the person concerned by way of a summary decision. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer's decision.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals

against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

657. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a jobseeker's benefit appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [3014/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred on 14 January 2019 to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

658. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an invalidity pension appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [3024/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Invalidity pension, IP, is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance, PRSI, contribution conditions.

The department received a claim for IP for the gentleman concerned on 18 April 2018. His claim was disallowed on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on 2 August 2018 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review and appeal.

The gentleman concerned appealed this decision and submitted further medical evidence in support of his appeal. Following a review of his application, a Deciding Officer wrote to the gentleman concerned on 18 January 2019 requesting further information relevant to his claim and that he confirm his preferred method of payment. Upon receipt of same, the IP claim will be finalised and he will be notified directly.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Public Services Card

659. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if it is no longer compulsory for persons to register for the public services card to receive social protection payments; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [3056/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Section 241 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act, 2005 (as amended), provides that a person must satisfy the Minister as to his/her identity when making a new claim for a social welfare payment/entitlement and sets out how that can be done.

Section 247C of the 2005 Act provides that an existing claimant must satisfy the Minister as to his/her identity, sets out how that can be done and provides for disqualification where an existing claimant fails to so do.

Once a customer completes the SAFE 2 registration process, they may be issued with a Public Services Card, PSC. The PSC is replacing older documents used to show entitlement to a benefit, including the social welfare services card and the paper travel pass.

Accordingly, it will in future be necessary to produce a PSC as proof of identity for certain types of transactions, including collecting welfare payments in cash at post offices and availing of free travel on public transport.

I trust this clarifies the position for the Deputy.

Employment Data

660. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons born in 2001 to 2004 that had earnings (details supplied) based on P35 returns for 2017, in tabular form. [3057/19]

661. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons born in 2000 to 2003 that had earnings (details supplied) based on P35 returns for 2016, in tabular form. [3058/19]

662. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons born in 1999 to 2002 that had earnings (details supplied) based on P35 figures for 2015, in tabular form. [3059/19]

663. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons born in 1998 to 2001 that had earnings (details supplied) based on P35 returns for 2014, in tabular form [3060/19]

664. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons born in 1997 to 2000 that had earnings (details supplied) based on P35 returns for 2013, in tabular form [3061/19]

665. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons born in 1998 to 2001 that had reckonable earnings for social insurance purposes by gross income group (details supplied) based on P35 returns for 2017, in tabular form. [3100/19]

666. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons born in 1997 to 2000 that had reckonable earnings for social insurance purposes by gross income group (details supplied) based on P35 returns for 2016, in tabular form. [3101/19]

667. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons born in 1996 to 1999 that had reckonable earnings for social insurance purposes by gross income group (details supplied) based on P35 returns for 2015, in

tabular form. [3102/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 660 to 667, inclusive, together.

The tables below show the number of persons who had earnings for social insurance purposes under Class M as requested by the Deputy. Class M includes people with no contribution liability such as employees under age 16 or people aged 66 or over (including those previously liable for Class S), persons in receipt of occupational pensions (on the occupational pension income only) or people within Class K with a nil liability. The only benefits accruing to Class M contributors are Occupational Injuries Benefits, in certain cases.

2013 Earnings

Birth Year	Numbers of People	0.1-5,000	5,001 - 10,000	10,001 - 15,000	15,001 - 20,000	20,001 and higher
1997	1,182	751	361	52	15	3
1998	812	579	191	25	14	3
1999	442	332	94	10	5	1
2000	235	184	41	7	2	1
All	2,671	1,846	687	94	36	8

2014 Earnings

Birth Year	Numbers of People	0.1-5,000	5,001 - 10,000	10,001 - 15,000	15,001 - 20,000	20,001 and higher
1998	1,179	786	327	34	26	6
1999	837	627	177	22	9	2
2000	431	333	82	12	3	1
2001	263	202	52	5	2	2
All	2,710	1,948	638	73	40	11

2015 Earnings

Birth Year	Numbers of People	0.1-5,000	5,001 - 10,000	10,001 - 15,000	15,001 - 20,000	20,001 and higher
1999	1,186	794	332	38	16	6
2000	896	669	196	23	7	1
2001	483	359	107	14	2	1
2002	263	212	43	5	1	2
All	2,828	2,034	678	80	26	10

2016 Earnings

Birth Year	Numbers of People	.01-5,000	5,001 - 10,000	10,001 - 15,000	15,001 - 20,000	20,001 and higher
2000	1,223	814	354	37	15	3
2001	908	661	208	26	11	2
2002	445	363	63	10	6	3
2003	204	152	46	5	1	0
All	2,780	1,990	671	78	33	8

2017 Earnings

Birth Year	Numbers of People	.01-5,000	5,001 - 10,000	10,001 - 15,000	15,001 - 20,000	20,001 and higher
2001	1,246	869	310	44	18	5
2002	901	700	166	21	9	5
2003	404	295	95	11	0	3
2004	189	157	26	3	2	1
All	2,740	2,021	597	79	29	14

2017 figures are based on the most up to date information provided by the Office of the Revenue Commissioners.

Illness Benefit Payments

668. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount and dates of payment of illness benefit to a person (details supplied) in County Cork in 2018. [3109/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned has been furnished with a statement of Illness Benefit paid for 2018. This information has issued to the Deputy and the person concerned directly by post.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

Wind Energy Guidelines

669. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of proposed guidelines regarding the development of industrial wind turbine farms; the date for the publication of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2501/19]

670. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if consideration has been given to implementing a pause on all planning permission applications regarding industrial wind turbine farms nationwide until the publication of proposed guidelines for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2502/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 669 and 670 together.

My Department is currently undertaking a focused review of the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines. The review is addressing a number of key aspects including sound or noise, visual amenity setback distances, shadow flicker, community obligation, community dividend and grid connections. As part of the overall review, a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is being undertaken on the revised Guidelines before they come into effect, in accordance with the requirements of EU Directive 2001/24/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, otherwise known as the SEA Directive.

SEA is a process by which environmental considerations are required to be fully integrated into the preparation of plans and programmes which act as frameworks for development consent, prior to their final adoption, with public consultation as part of that process. Following a tendering process, my Department appointed SEA experts in December 2017 to assist in this regard. It is expected that a public consultation on the revised draft Guidelines, together with

the comprehensive environmental report under the SEA process, will be commenced later in Q1 2019, with the aim of issuing the finalised Guidelines, following detailed analysis and consideration of the submissions and views received during the consultation phase, in mid 2019.

When finalised, the revised Guidelines will be issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Planning authorities and, where applicable, An Bord Pleanála must have regard to guidelines issued under section 28 in the performance of their functions generally under the Planning Acts. In the meantime, the current 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines remain in force.

Proposals for wind energy developments are subject to the statutory requirements of the Planning Acts, in the same manner as other proposed developments. Therefore, it is not intended to place a moratorium on applications for planning permission for wind farm developments as referred to pending the finalisation of the revisions to the 2006 Guidelines.

Brexit Issues

671. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the right of United Kingdom citizens resident here to vote in European Parliament elections will be maintained in the miscellaneous provisions (withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union on 29 March) Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2624/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): It is intended to bring legislative proposals to Government shortly to amend the European Parliament Elections Act 1997 (as amended) in order to give effect to the recommendations in the Report on European Parliament Constituencies 2018 in connection with the configuration of our European Parliament constituencies and the number of members to be elected from each such constituency. This report was prepared by the European Parliament Constituency Committee following the adoption of European Council Decision (EU) 2018/937 of 28 June 2018 on the composition of the European Parliament. In the case of Ireland, the Council Decision provides for 13 members to be elected to the 2019-2024 European Parliament, an increase from the present 11 members. The legislative process will provide the vehicle for making such other amendments as may be necessary for the implementation of policy decisions taken and the holding of the European Parliament elections later this year. I expect the Bill to be published in the coming weeks.

Legislative Process

672. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the position regarding the residential tenancies (amendment) Bill; when he will publish the Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2313/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Residential Tenancies (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2018 was published on 19 December 2018. The Bill is scheduled for second stage debate in Dáil Éireann on 22, 23 and 24 January 2019 with the intention of progressing through the legislative process in the Houses of the Oireachtas as quickly as possible during the current Oireachtas session.

Social and Affordable Housing

673. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he has finalised the regulations for the affordable purchase scheme; when he expects to publish the regulations and circulate them to the local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2314/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The relevant provisions of Part 5 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2009 have been commenced. It provides a statutory basis for the delivery of affordable housing for purchase by local authorities. Part 5 contains significant detail on the procedures and operation of the new Affordable Purchase Scheme.

The Scheme is based on local authorities providing, directly or indirectly, below market price housing. The local authority takes a charge against the property equal to the discount provided. The Act provides for a charge up to a maximum of 40% of the market value. The charge is fully repayable at re-sale or at the end of the charge period. Repayments will be paid into a centralised affordable housing fund which will be administered by the Housing Finance Agency.

The new affordable housing scheme will be specifically targeted at low- to middle-income households earning a maximum annual gross income of less than €50,000 for single income applicants and less than €75,000 for dual income applicant).

The primary legislation will be supported by associated regulations, which are currently at the final legal drafting stage, following extensive consultation between my Department, the Housing Agency and local authorities. The regulations, once finalised shortly, together with guidance, will be issued to local authorities.

Planning Issues

674. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if consideration has been given to amending the cost involved in making planning objections with local authorities and An Bord Pleanála (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2365/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The fees for making submissions or observations on planning applications and appeals are set at levels intended to prevent frivolous or vexatious submissions, while not acting as a deterrent to persons with genuine concerns or interest in proposed developments from making submissions. Furthermore, An Bord Pleanála has discretion to dismiss an appeal where it is satisfied that the appeal is vexatious, frivolous or without substance or foundation, or where the appeal is made with the sole intention of delaying development or of securing the payment of money, gifts, considerations or other inducement by any person.

Section 33 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (the 2000 Act), provides that the Minister may make regulations in relation to the planning fees applied by planning authorities, including in relation to the making of a submission or observation on a planning application. The current planning related fees payable to planning authorities have been in place since 2002. It is proposed to review the fees involved in the context of the introduction of e-planning (the online submission of planning applications and appeals), which it is envisaged will be rolled out during 2019.

With regard to the fees payable to the Board, section 144 of the 2000 Act provides that the Board may determine the fees that it may charge in relation to its functions, subject to Ministerial approval, including the fee for the making of submissions or observations on planning

appeals. The Board is further empowered to review such fees at least every three years having regard to any change in the consumer price index (CPI), and it may amend them accordingly without the necessity of Ministerial approval. The last CPI review of the Board's fees was carried out in 2016 and the fee for making submissions or observations remained unchanged. The Board proposes to conduct both a CPI and a general fees review in 2019.

Local Authority Funding

675. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the per capita funding of local authorities ratio by county. [2441/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): The funding system that applies to local authorities is a complex one, as authorities derive their income from a variety of local sources including commercial rates, charges for goods and services and funding from Central Government.

Central Government funding of local authorities similarly presents a complex picture, with transfers, both current and capital, coming from a wide range of Departments and Offices for a variety of purposes. Some streams of funding are delivered directly from funding departments to local authorities, while others are routed through departmental agencies.

Most of the funding sourced from Central Government and provided to local authorities must be used for specified services. These can be grouped into 5 broad programme categories: recreational, education, environment, housing and transport.

In 2017, total transfers of funding from all central government sources to local authorities exceeded €2.6 billion. Additional detail on Central Government funding of local authorities is provided in the Comptroller and Auditor General's Annual Report, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.audit.gov.ie/en/Find-Report/Publications/2018/2017-Annual-Report-Chapter-04-Central-government-funding-of-local-authorities1.pdf>.

In addition to Local Property Tax allocations and Departmental Grants and Subsidies, local authorities derive income from local sources including commercial rates, and goods and services such as housing rents, environmental and other charges. It is a matter for each local authority as to how it can maximise income sources and manage its own spending, in the context of the annual budgetary process.

My Department works closely with local authorities to ensure the local government sector can meet existing and emerging challenges; however all funding issues have to be considered within the parameters of the national fiscal and budgetary situation and competing priorities.

Across all schemes and funding sources, my Department provided just over €2.6bn to local authorities in 2018. The table below sets out the funding that was allocated to each local authority by my Department in 2018, the population of each local authority and the consequential per capita distribution.

It is important to note that local authorities vary significantly from one another in terms of size, population, population distribution, public service demands, infrastructure and other income sources; all are factors which should be taken into account when comparing levels of funding in different local authority areas. It is not, therefore, possible to compare absolute levels of funding from my Department to each local authority as to do so does not reflect the

significant differences that exist between them. Account would also need to be taken of funding provided by other Government Departments and agencies.

LOCAL AUTHORITY	2018 Total funding from DHPLG€	Population (2016 Census figures)	Per Capita Funding €
CARLOW	30,780,451.63	56,932.00	540.65
CAVAN	29,257,717.50	76,176.00	384.08
CLARE	41,205,977.76	118,817.00	346.80
CORK CITY	104,449,751.88	125,657.00	831.23
CORK COUNTY	120,375,716.12	417,211.00	288.52
DONEGAL	53,469,255.97	159,192.00	335.88
DLR	70,988,600.29	218,018.00	325.61
DUBLIN	500,104,484.63	554,554.00	901.81
FINGAL	151,548,292.21	296,020.00	511.95
S. DUBLIN	144,629,565.54	278,767.00	518.82
GALWAY CITY	34,170,748.39	78,668.00	434.37
GALWAY COUNTY	46,784,764.63	179,390.00	260.80
KERRY	63,506,162.98	147,707.00	429.95
KILDARE	113,059,683.88	222,504.00	508.12
KILKENNY	56,168,694.43	99,232.00	566.03
LAOIS	24,514,842.46	84,697.00	289.44
LEITRIM	15,087,273.95	32,044.00	470.83
LIMERICK*	376,084,748.83	194,899.00	1,929.64
LONGFORD	26,399,233.14	40,873.00	645.88
LOUTH	46,634,888.33	128,884.00	361.84
MAYO	48,569,230.57	130,507.00	372.16
MEATH	81,728,733.99	195,044.00	419.03
MONAGHAN	31,857,085.49	61,386.00	518.96
OFFALY	26,412,505.16	77,961.00	338.79
ROSCOMMON	21,142,322.13	64,544.00	327.56
SLIGO	34,156,831.63	65,535.00	521.20
TIPPERARY	80,046,316.30	159,553.00	501.69
WATERFORD	77,477,396.42	116,176.00	666.90
WESTMEATH	35,028,703.90	88,770.00	394.60
WEXFORD	65,795,845.99	149,722.00	439.45
WICKLOW	59,062,489.09	142,425.00	414.69
TOTALS	2,610,498,315.22	4,761,865.00	548.21

* This includes funding provided to Limerick City and County Council in its role as the shared service provider for the Housing Assistance Payment scheme.

Planning Guidelines

676. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he and/or local authorities have the powers to implement an area-specific, time-bound moratorium on granting of planning permissions for housing developments (details supplied); if so, the person or body responsible for putting in place such a moratorium; the way in

which it would operate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2454/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I have no powers to implement a moratorium on the granting of planning permissions by a planning authority for any type of development. Under section 30 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, I am specifically precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to any particular case with which a planning authority or An Bord Pleanála is or may be concerned, except in specified circumstances which do not apply in the situation referred to.

In the circumstances concerned, the relevant local authority has adopted a local area plan for the area in question, which sets out the order of scheduled phases of development based on a set of criteria, such as road capacity, environmental considerations, etc. Local area plans are put in place to support appropriate development at the local level, consistent with the planning and sustainable development policies set out in the relevant county or city development plan, and regional and national policies set out in the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and the National Planning Framework, respectively.

Planning applications within each local authority area are considered by the planning authority in this context, including in relation to the phasing of new development where set out in the relevant statutory development plan or local area plan.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

677. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his views on the application by an organisation (details supplied) for a change of use of public spaces in an area in order to provide additional social housing units; the details of the proposed rental scheme that will be offered to new tenants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2465/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I am precluded under section 30 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, from exercising any power or control in relation to any particular case with which a planning authority or An Bord Pleanála is or may be concerned, except in specified circumstances, which do not apply in this case. As a result, I cannot seek to influence the outcome of a planning case and cannot make any comment in relation to individual cases.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Funding

678. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of upgrade funding for a group water scheme (details supplied) in County Kildare. [2537/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Group water schemes are independent community-owned enterprises and are an important means of providing piped water to rural areas where no such supply exists.

While, as Minister, I am responsible for overall policy direction and prioritisation in the area of rural water services and for funding for the Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme, local authorities lead on local implementation of the funding measures.

The group water scheme in question is located in South Kildare. The scheme was included by Kildare County Council in their 2017 bids under Measure 1 of the Multi-annual Rural Water

Programme 2016-2018. This measure provides for improvements to group water schemes in order to achieve compliance with the quality parameters of the Drinking Water Regulations. In 2017 my Department's funding allocations under the programme included an allocation of €89,490 for works to the scheme. While no specific allocation was made in 2018 the scheme was eligible to receive funding from a retained reserve to support projects not included in the allocations. In doing this my Department undertook to work with the Council with a view to there being a plan in place to ensure the satisfactory progression of works.

I understand that in 2018 Kildare County Council completed an options report on the scheme. This report was compiled by the Council to provide clarity on the best way forward for investment in the scheme. A whole life cost (capital and operation) was used to make this assessment.

I understand the report showed that the best solution, from an economic and compliance point of view is for the scheme to interconnect to, and be taken in charge by, Irish Water. The Irish Water supply would ensure that householders in the supply area for the scheme receive drinking water that is in compliance with the Drinking Water Regulations on a consistent long-term basis. The least favourable option identified was to continue as a private group water scheme. Under this option, the associated costs are considerably higher than for the other options and even with significant capital investment the scheme would still be considered vulnerable to non-compliance with the Drinking Water Regulations. The water supplied by the scheme has a record of containing high levels of nitrates.

In October 2018 the Council wrote to the management of the scheme outlining the funding position and enclosing a copy of the options report. The letter advised that funding was available to upgrade the scheme to the standard required by Irish Water in order to take the scheme in charge. I am advised that officials from Kildare County Council met with the scheme on 10 January 2019.

Funding is not an impediment to a solution that is sustainable and cost effective in the long-term. Funding was available under the Multi-annual Rural Water Programme 2016-2018 for an agreed sustainable and economic long-term solution. Funding for such an approach remains available under the 2019-2021 cycle of the funding programme.

Planning Issues

679. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the consequences for the legality of a grant of planning permission for a site if there was an element of fraud in the application that was discovered after the grant of planning permission, for example, if the document outlining the consent of the owner of the site to the planning application being sought was not genuine; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2563/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The legal interest of an applicant for planning permission in the land or structure concerned has to be stated in the completed planning application form. Where the applicant is not the owner of the land or structure, the name and address of the owner has to be stated on the planning application form. The written consent of the owner to the party making the planning application must also be submitted as part of the application.

The planning process operates on the expectation that applicants and those representing them provide decision makers with true and correct information upon which the planning authority can base its decision.

Furthermore, an applicant for planning permission or an agent acting on behalf of the applicant is required to sign a declaration as part of the planning application form, stating that to the best of their knowledge and belief, the information provided on the completed form is correct and accurate and fully compliant with the 2000 Act and Regulations made thereunder.

Any dispute arising between the owner of land and the applicant for planning permission in relation to the use of land is a civil matter and not one in which I as Minister, or the planning authorities have any function. Section 34(13) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 makes it clear that a person shall not be entitled solely by reason of a permission granted under that section to carry out any development.

Rent Pressure Zones

680. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the steps open to a person who has been offered a tenancy of a residential property but knows the rent being charged is in breach of the rent pressure zone limits compared to the rent charged to the previous tenant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2636/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Strategy for the Rental Sector, published in December 2016, introduced the Rent Predictability Measure to moderate rent increases in those parts of the country where rents are highest and rising resulting in great difficulty for households finding affordable accommodation. In these areas, called Rent Pressure Zones (RPZ), rents can only increase by a maximum of 4% annually. The measure applies to new and existing tenancies. This means that it applies when rents are set at the start of a tenancy and when rents are set in a rent review during an ongoing tenancy or new tenancy, unless otherwise exempted. An area may be designated as a Rent Pressure Zone for up to three years. The designation of an area may be lifted earlier than this if the pressures on rent levels are deemed to have eased. The Housing Agency continues to monitor the rental market and may recommend further areas for designation.

A Rent Pressure Zone calculator is available on the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) website at: <https://onestopshop.rtb.ie/calculator/rpz>, to assist landlords and tenants in determining if their dwelling is in a Rent Pressure Zone and to calculate the maximum rent amount permitted for their dwelling.

The first rent review in relation to a property in a Rent Pressure Zone (RPZ) can only take place 24 months after the time that the tenancy was established or the time that the rent was last set. Thereafter, rent reviews can take place annually. The existing requirement that the rent set is not above the local market rents for similar properties still applies in designated Rent Pressure Zones. The landlord must also provide three examples of rents for similar properties in a comparable area to demonstrate this. In addition, in the case of a tenancy of a dwelling in an RPZ, a landlord must, at the commencement of the tenancy, furnish the tenant with details of the amount of the previous rent for the dwelling and the date it was set.

Tenants must be given 90 days' notice of new rent and can make an application for dispute resolution to the RTB where they feel the rent increase is in excess of the market rent or, if applicable, does not comply with the Rent Predictability Measure.

The Residential Tenancies (Amendment)(No. 2) Bill 2018 was published on 19 December 2018 to deliver on a number of commitments flowing from Rebuilding Ireland and commitments made in September 2017 to provide powers to the RTB to investigate and sanction landlords who engage in improper conduct including non-compliance with the rent increase

restriction in Rent Pressure Zones.

These key measures and reforms are designed to enhance enforcement powers for the RTB, provide greater security of tenure for tenants and further underpin the operation of the RPZ arrangements, and will not only protect those who are renting but will also deliver greater stability and transparency to the rental sector.

This Bill will make it a criminal offence for landlords to implement rent increases that contravene the law, do not adhere to new definitions of a substantial change and fail to cooperate with an investigation or to register and update tenancies with the RTB. It will allow the RTB to initiate an investigation without the need for a complaint to be made.

Local Authority Housing Applications Data

681. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of new housing applicants that have come onto local authority housing lists on an annual basis in each of the past three years; and if he will direct the Housing Agency to include these data in the summary of housing needs assessment in 2019 and all future years. [2670/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Details on the number of households qualified for social housing support in each local authority area are set out in the statutory Summary of Social Housing Assessments (SSHA). Since 2016, the summary process has been carried out on an annual basis.

The most recent summary, which was carried out in 2018, details the number of households on all local authority waiting lists as at 11 June 2018 and can be found on my Department's website at the following link:

https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/summary_of_social_housing_assessments_2018_-_key_findings.pdf

It is important to note that the SSHA is a point in time snapshot of the demand for social housing support in each local authority area. It does not explicitly provide data on the number of new applicants that joined the social housing list each year. However, Table 2.8 of the SSHA details the length of time each qualified household has spent on the waiting list. My Department is currently working with the Housing Agency on the proposed 2019 summary and is examining the data sets already collected and the potential new data sets that might be collected in the context of the annual summary, including that referred to by the Deputy.

Local Authority Housing Waiting Lists

682. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if consideration is being given to the idea of a housing list passport as suggested in the Social Housing Strategy 2020 to allow persons to move from one local authority area to another for specified reasons (details supplied) without losing their time on the housing list. [2671/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under the Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011, a household may apply to one housing authority only, for social housing support, at a time. Furthermore, it is not possible for a household on the waiting list of one housing authority to transfer its application to another authority and to carry the time spent on the previous list.

The Social Housing Strategy 2020 included a commitment to examine the possibility of introducing a “housing passport”. The basic premise is that households in receipt of, or qualified for, social housing support in one local authority area could potentially transfer to, or be allocated, social housing in another local authority area.

My Department is currently developing proposals in relation to this matter, details of which will be outlined when the work involved is complete.

Planning Investigations

683. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when he will publish the report into alleged planning malpractice in Donegal County Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2672/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Review Into Certain Planning Matters In Respect Of Donegal County Council, by Mr. Rory Mulcahy S.C., was received by my Department in June, 2017.

Following initial analysis and assessment of the report’s findings and recommendations, including interaction with the Department’s own legal advisers and the Attorney General’s Office, a comprehensive set of queries and a request for advice in relation to certain matters, including potential dissemination or publication of the report, was submitted to the Attorney General’s Office.

Following the receipt of the Attorney’s advice, officials in my Department have considered the matter further and prepared a submission for my consideration in respect of, inter alia, the issue of publication or dissemination of the report. Once I have concluded my deliberations, I will be in a position to make a further statement.

Departmental Expenditure

684. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will publish the airline costs for his Department for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2695/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Officials from my Department attend meetings in respect of EU-related issues and international agreements as necessary to ensure that the State is suitably represented at such engagements. Other events and meetings will also be attended by Ministers or officials as deemed appropriate. The cost to the Department of providing airline travel in 2018 was €75,023.

Departmental Expenditure

685. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will publish the cost of newspapers in his Department in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2712/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department avails of an electronic press cuttings service which serves for most of its printed media monitoring needs. In terms of hard-copy printed newspapers, the cost of purchase for my

Department in 2018 totalled approximately €10,824. In general, the Department relies on on-line versions of the daily newspapers but not all newspapers have an online presence and there can be differences between online and printed content.

Local Authority Housing Data

686. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of casual vacancies relet by local authorities each year since 2014, in tabular form. [2754/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department does not hold information on the number of casual vacancies relet by local authorities each year. The allocation of dwellings is a matter for each local authority.

Traveller Accommodation

687. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if funding is available to enable local authorities to carry out renovation and refurbishment works at existing Traveller homes; and if so, the procedure for obtaining this funding. [2784/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, housing authorities have statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) in their areas. My Department's role is to ensure that there are adequate structures and supports in place to assist the authorities in providing such accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding.

A dedicated budget is in place to fund the delivery of Traveller-specific accommodation including renovation and refurbishment work. A budget of €13m is available for this purpose in 2019, an increase of €1m on the €12m available in 2018.

Housing authorities submit funding proposals to my Department annually for individual Traveller-specific projects, both new developments and renovation and refurbishments. These projects are assessed in my Department in advance of allocations being made. Local authorities may apply for additional funding throughout the year as needs arise.

Elected Office Requirements

688. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 1191 of 15 January 2019, if consideration will be given to running a pilot scheme similar to one which operated in the UK in 2012 to 2015 to provide election candidates with disabilities with financial assistance for disability related costs related to standing for election. [2790/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): I have no current plans to introduce a pilot scheme to specifically financially assist candidates with disabilities who wish to stand for election. The focus of my Department's work in this area relates to progressing the accessibility of voting and voter information, which is set down in the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017 -2021 as an

action point for my Department in order to improve the participation of persons with disability in political and public life.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Eligibility

689. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if consideration will be given to permitting the sale of properties to local authority tenants under the tenant purchase scheme 2016 (details supplied). [2803/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, were designed to better facilitate the development of mixed tenure sustainable communities. Part V homes are specifically excluded from the Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme 2016 to ensure that homes delivered under this mechanism will remain available for people in need of social housing support and that the original policy goals of the legislation are not eroded over time. The continued development of mixed tenure communities remains important in promoting social integration.

In line with the commitment given in Rebuilding Ireland a review of the first 12 months of the Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme 2016 operation has been completed 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 consideration of a number of implementation issues arising.

Local Authority Housing Rents

690. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the procedure by which local authorities may amend their differential rent scheme; and if it is an executive or reserve function. [2821/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The right of local authorities to set and collect rents on their dwellings is laid down in section 58 of the Housing Act 1966. The making or amending of such schemes is an executive function and does not require the approval of the elected members. It is subject to broad principles laid down by my Department in Circular letter HRT 3/2002 of 6 March 2002, which states that rent levels should reflect tenants’ ability to pay.

Considerable work has been carried out by my Department in developing a draft national differential rents framework for the purposes of section 31 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, which has not been commenced to date. Such a framework has as its main aim the harmonisation of local authority rents, including a set of standardised income disregards, whilst retaining the general principle of rents related to household income. Under section 31, the making and revocation of a rent scheme would become reserved functions, while the charging of rents would remain an executive function.

This work is now being examined further in the light of the broader commitment given in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, to review the disparate systems of differential rent for social housing in place across local authorities. The overall objective is to ensure that housing supports are fair and sustainable and prioritise those on lowest incomes.

I expect that the review will be completed in the near future.

Building Energy Rating Compliance

691. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 253 of 16 January 2019, the percentage of new buildings that have an A2 energy rating as required by the nearly zero energy building standard requirements; the percentage of public buildings owned and leased by the State that are fully compliant with the standard requirements as of the end of 2018; the mechanism by which compliance with the building standards and EU legal requirements is monitored; and his views on whether the State is compliant with the standard requirements. [2934/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): Under the current building regulations, a typical dwelling is built to an A3 Building Energy Standard (BER). Currently, based on CSO statistics, 98% of all new dwellings are built to an A3 rated BER standard.

The Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZEB) performance for new dwellings will be typically equivalent to a BER of A2.

The draft regulations and accompanying technical guidance to implement this have now completed public consultation and the regulations are expected to be signed into law shortly. Accordingly the A2 performance requirement is not currently in place. Transitional arrangements will apply when these regulations are implemented. The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive requires all new buildings to be NZEB by 31 December 2020 and all new buildings owned and occupied by public authorities to be NZEB after 31 December 2018.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION (EU) 2016/1318 of 29 July 2016, on guidelines for the promotion of nearly zero-energy buildings and best practices to ensure that, by 2020, all new buildings are nearly zero-energy buildings, advises the following: “Experience from the construction sector shows that the timing of the end of construction or completion of a building might be uncertain and may suffer delays. Member States would need to factor in the period of validity of building permits, the length of construction and completion of building works”. This recommendation is available at the following link;

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32016H1318>.

With regards to new buildings owned and occupied by public authorities, in December 2016 my Department issued a letter to all public service bodies advising them of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive requirement for all new buildings owned and occupied by public authorities to achieve NZEB performance after 31 December 2018. It was accompanied by specifications and guidelines on how this could be achieved in practice, and to apply to all buildings owned and occupied by public authorities commencing design from 1 January 2017. A workshop was held with approximately 200 representatives of the public sector in January 2017 to review these specifications and they were then made available on the website of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).

The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive requires that new Buildings owned and occupied by public authorities are NZEB. Normally it is not expected that a leased building will be owned by a public authority but the final decision on this will rest with the Public Authority.

The implementation of the NZEB requirement in public buildings is the responsibility of the relevant bodies and at this early stage, data is not available on the percentage of NZEB in place in the public sector. However, apart from dwellings, it should be noted that all other buildings, public and private, which commence construction after 1 Jan 2019 must be NZEB under Part L of the Building Regulations and compliance in this regard is monitored and enforced under

Building Control Regulations. It is planned to introduce NZEB for dwellings in the coming months.

Under the Building Control Acts 1990 to 2014, primary responsibility for compliance of works with the requirements of the Building Regulations, rests with the owners, designers and builders of buildings. Enforcement of the Building Regulations is a matter for the 31 local building control authorities, who have extensive powers of inspection and enforcement under the Acts and who are independent in the use of their statutory powers. This applies to all buildings, including those owned and occupied by public authorities.

Having regard to the above, I am satisfied regarding the State's compliance with relevant requirements and the associated guidance of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive.

Local Authority Housing Rents

692. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the percentage at which differential rent should be calculated at by local authorities, specifically Westmeath County Council. [2979/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): At present the making of rent schemes and the setting of rent levels is a matter for each local authority under section 58 of the Housing Act 1966. As a result the levels of rents charged vary across authorities with the result that households in similar circumstances may be charged different amounts of rent depending on the city/county they are living in.

The chief executive of the authority makes the rent scheme subject to broad principles laid down in my Department's Circular letter HRT 3/2002 of 6 March 2002, principally that rent levels should be linked to a tenant's ability to pay.

Considerable work has been carried out by my Department in developing a draft national differential rents framework under section 31 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009. Such a framework has as its main aim the facilitation of a significant harmonisation in local authority rents, whilst retaining the general principle of rents related to household income.

This work has been examined further in the light of the broader commitment given in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, to review the disparate systems of differential rent for social housing in place across local authorities. The overall objective is to ensure that housing supports are fair and sustainable and prioritise those on lowest incomes.

I expect that the review will be completed shortly.

Local Authority Housing Data

693. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the breakdown by each local authority and by year of the 250 homes brought back into use via the buy and renew scheme. [3089/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The breakdown by year and across each local authority of the social homes delivered under the Buy and Renew Scheme is outlined below, up to end Q3 of 2018, indicating a total of 235 homes delivered in this way. Additional homes have been delivered in Q4 of 2018, which will bring the total to over the 250 homes previously referred to; further details will be available

once the process of validating delivery for Q4 across all local authority areas, currently under-way, is finalised.

LA	2018 to Q3	2017	2016
Carlow	12	-	-
Clare	10	2	1
Cork City	10	-	-
DLR	-	12	-
Dublin City	-	1	-
Fingal	11	11	-
Kerry	15	12	-
Kildare	-	2	-
Laois	-	3	-
Leitrim	2	-	-
Limerick	18	12	1
Louth	12	22	7
Meath	5	11	-
Monaghan	1	-	-
Offaly	-	4	-
Tipperary	2	1	-
Waterford	-	29	-
Westmeath	2	-	-
Wexford	4	-	-

Repair and Leasing Scheme

694. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the breakdown by each local authority and by year of the 48 homes brought back into use and tenanted under the repair and lease scheme. [3090/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): At the end of Q3 2018, a total of 1,214 applications had been received from property owners; 48 homes had been brought back into use and were tenanted; and 122 agreements for lease had been signed. A detailed breakdown of the Repair and Lease (RLS) scheme data by local authority up to end Q3 2018 is available on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision>.

A breakdown of the 48 homes delivered under the scheme by year and Local Authority is set out below:

Table 1: RLS Delivery

Local Authority	Units Delivered - 2017	Units Delivered - Q1-Q3 2018
Carlow County Council	0	2

Dun Laoghaire - Rathdown County Council	1	0
Fingal County Council	0	3
Limerick City & County Council	0	7
Meath County Council	0	1
Monaghan County Council	0	4
Roscommon County Council	0	2
Waterford City & County Council	6	11
Wexford County Council	2	9
Total	9	39

Firearms and Ammunition Security

695. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 289 of 6 December 2018, the date on which the report commenced; the date on which the report was formally completed; if she was presented with a copy of the report; if a draft copy of the report was made available to her; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2342/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I assume the Deputy is referring to the review of the Department's management procedures in respect of sensitive assets referenced in the previous question. The audit of sensitive assets with a review of the Department's management procedures in respect of both firearms and ammunition was commenced in 2017 and completed in 2018. The Deputy will be aware that this is an internal Departmental management report detailing sensitive operational matters with security implications and it would not be appropriate for me to comment further.

Údarás na Gaeltachta

696. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pearse Doherty** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an bhfuarthas comhfhreagras ó Údarás na Gaeltachta ina bhfuil tuairim na Roinne á lorg faoi thogra i nDún na nGall (sonraí tugtha); an dtig léi a dhearbhu go bhfuil oifigigh na Roinne i mbun cainteanna foirmiúla leis an Údarás i dtaca leis an togra sin; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [2345/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Mar is eol don Teachta, tionóladh cruinniú faoin ábhar atá luaite aige ar 5 Nollaig 2018, a raibh mé féin i láthair aige.

Ag eascairt as an gcrúinniú sin, aontaíodh go n-iarrfaí ar Údarás na Gaeltachta cás gnó i leith fhorbairt an togra ar mhaoin an Údaráis a chur i dtoll a chéile. Tá cáipéisíocht ina leith faighte ón Údarás ó shin atá mar ábhar plé faoi láthair idir fheidhmeannaigh mo Roinne agus an Údaráis.

Ar nós tograí caipitil eile cosúil leis an gceann seo, beifear ag féachaint chuige sa chás seo go bhfaightear an luach is fearr ar infheistíocht phoiblí ar leas an phobail go ginearálta i gcomthéacs, dár ndóigh, riachtanais an Chóid um Chaiteachas Poiblí.

Fáiltíodh go ginearálta roimh an dul chun cinn a rinneadh ag an gcrúinniú thuasluaite agus is féidir leis an Teachta a bheith cinnte de go ndéanfar cúram cuí go céimiúil den togra seo, i gcomhar le hÚdarás na Gaeltachta agus páirtithe leasmhara eile.

Court Judgments

697. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if the parties in a case (details supplied) have agreed to a full and final settlement of the appeal process in a High Court judgment; if so, the terms of such a settlement; and the expenditure and expenses to date arising from the decision to appeal same. [2357/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The State's appeals against the High Court judgments in this case were heard over three days and two written judgments were handed down by the Court of Appeal on the 14 February 2018 that upheld the State's appeals in all respects. There was no appeal against the judgments of the Court of Appeal. That litigation is now concluded. The judgments are in the public domain and on the website of the Court Services. Issues beyond that are confidential.

National Monuments

698. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when the last survey of archaeological monuments was conducted after a survey (details supplied); the names of subsequent reports; when an updated study will be conducted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2580/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Archaeological Survey of Ireland within my Department's National Monuments Service (NMS) maps and updates the data on our archaeological resources on an ongoing basis. Information on over 140,000 monuments across the country is currently stored in the Department's Sites and Monuments Record. NMS is assisted in this task by, inter alia, members of the public and the third-level education sector who provide notifications of potential new archaeological sites. The content of the Sites and Monuments Record is presented digitally, and is available to the public, through the Historic Environment Viewer, maintained by NMS. Monuments on the Sites and Monuments Record are also featured in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's LPIS and IFORIS land mapping systems and are part of the Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions requirements of the Common Agricultural Policy. In this way up to date information on all known archaeological sites and monuments, including new discoveries, is widely available and readily accessible to all interested parties.

The Record of Monuments and Places compiled under the National Monuments Acts affords automatic statutory protection to over 120,000 recorded archaeological sites and monuments in the State. Anyone proposing works in relation to a monument that is included in the Record of Monument and Places must give my Department two months' advance notice of such work. The Acts also allow me to place a Preservation Order on any other important archaeological sites or monuments that may be at risk, including new discoveries. My Department records and investigates all reports of damage or threats to archaeological features, including referring them to an Garda Síochána for investigation and prosecution where appropriate.

Archaeological excavations are regulated under section 26 of the National Monuments Act 1930, as amended. All excavation licences are issued on the basis that the investigations are for the purpose of searching for archaeological features and to provide for their subsequent record-

ing or protection. A standard licence condition requires a report to be submitted to my Department on the results of each investigation.

My Department also liaises regularly with the utility and infrastructure providers and has agreed codes of practice in place with a number of these agencies, including Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Bord na Móna and ESB Networks, aimed at safeguarding archaeological sites and monuments. In addition, there are programmes with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Teagasc and farm organisations with the aim of raising archaeological awareness within the farming community which is the principal custodian of our archaeological heritage.

Departmental Expenditure

699. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will publish the airline costs for her Department for 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2688/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The total airline costs incurred by my Department in 2018 was €51,863.

Departmental Expenditure

700. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will publish the cost of newspapers in her Department in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2705/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I am advised that the expenditure incurred by my Department for newspapers in 2018 was €11,004.

My Department makes every effort to ensure that costs in this respect are kept to a minimum.

Offshore Islands

701. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans in place to bring forward legislation on island proofing at all levels of policy making in view of the 68% decline in the population of offshore islands during the period 1926 to 2016. [2810/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): As Minister with responsibility for the islands, I note with regret the decline in the population of our offshore islands. I believe the reason for this to be multi-layered and not attributable to any one cause.

Undoubtedly, socio-economic factors are a contributor to this decline and this was particularly identified in the report of the Inter-departmental Committee on Island Development - A Strategic Framework for the Development of Ireland's Islands from 1996 under the Department of the Taoiseach.

This report pointed to below standard access infrastructure for the islands - both trans-

port and pier infrastructure - as significant elements of this. It is in this context that my Department has invested heavily in pier infrastructure and in ferry and air transport services in the last two decades. This work continues. In addition to other projects, my Department, under the islands programme will oversee four significant projects under the National Development Plan, Project Ireland 2040.

In combination with policies that are being implemented by other state bodies in the areas of health, education and community development I believe that there is a de facto island proofing already in place and further legislation is not required at this time. However, it is an area that my Department commits to keeping under review.

Film Industry

702. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the estimated cost in 2019 if the budget for the Irish Film Board was increased by 11%. [2898/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): In June 2018, the Irish Film Board was renamed Screen Ireland.

Details of the financial allocations for 2019 to bodies under the aegis of my Department are published in the Revised Estimates for Public Services (REV) 2019 which is available at the following link: <https://www.per.go.ie/en/rev/>

For ease of reference, the figures for Screen Ireland are reproduced below.

Year	Allocation	Change
2018	€18,022,000	
2019	€20,040,000	+ 11.2%

The increased allocated to Screen Ireland in 2019 is therefore €2,018,000, or just over 11%, higher than in 2018.

Arts Council Funding

703. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the budget allocation to the Arts Council in 2018 and 2019, in tabular form. [2899/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Details of the financial allocations for 2019, including those to bodies under the aegis of my Department, are published in the Revised Estimates for Public Services (REV) 2019 which is available at the following link:

<https://www.per.gov.ie/en/rev/>.

The table hereunder shows the allocation to the Arts Council in 2018 & 2019

Allocation	€m
2018	68,213
2019	75,002

