

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 22, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 23 to 50, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 51 to 56, inclusive, answered orally.

Brexit Preparations

57. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has spoken with his French counterpart regarding Brexit recently and the arrangements that France has in place for Calais and other ports. [4074/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I met my French counterpart, Minister Elisabeth Borne, on Brexit matters in Dublin on 23 November 2018. I highlighted the importance of transport connectivity and Ireland's concerns in particular in relation to the continued use of the UK landbridge when the UK leaves the EU. We discussed also the potential implications for ports both in Ireland and in France given the levels of trade that both of our countries have with the UK. Minister Borne shared many of my concerns and said that France, like Ireland, was preparing for all scenarios, including facilitation of EU and Irish traffic at Calais.

The landbridge is the fastest shipping route to continental Europe and as such is relied upon by many Irish exporters and importers for the transport of time-sensitive products, such as those in the agri-food/perishable goods sector, just-in-time and high value goods.

An estimated €18.2 billion of our exports rely on this route, first travelling from Ireland by sea to the UK, making their way through the UK roads network to ports such as Dover, and then entering continental Europe at French ports, particularly the port of Calais. Disruption or delays on the Dover – Calais maritime link when the UK leaves the EU could considerably impact on hauliers and Irish businesses and is of major concern.

At official level, the Landbridge Project Group, chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and including officials from my own Department, the Revenue Commissioners, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and others has been working closely with the European Commission and other affected Member States (France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden) with a view to preparing EU ports to facilitate the transit of EU products through the UK once it becomes a third country through the use of EU rules on internal transit set out under the Union's Custom Code.

A cross-departmental delegation of officials including from my Department travelled to France in November of last year for meetings on Brexit preparedness. The need for French ports to facilitate the movement of Irish trucks transiting the UK was discussed.

Irish officials also met with the European Commission for technical consultations on the landbridge in December 2018.

The Government will continue to work with our French counterparts, other EU Member States and the European Commission in seeking to ensure that the landbridge can continue to be an effective route for our businesses trading with the rest of the EU Single Market.

Separately, a number of representatives from French ports have travelled to Ireland to meet with Irish port representatives on a number of occasions and most recently in January of this year.

Questions No. 58 to 63, inclusive, answered orally.

Railway Stations

64. Deputy Bríd Smith asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the impact on persons with disabilities who can not access DART and rail transport due to the non-maintenance and failures of lifts at certain stations; his plans to ensure such persons can access rail and DART services in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6714/19]

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. However, I am not involved in the day-to-day operations of public transport.

The issues raised by the Deputy about problems with passenger lifts at some train stations are operational matters for Iarnród Éireann. That said, I am concerned that the company would be doing its utmost to ensure continued accessibility for passengers who need these facilities, and I have been assured that Iarnród Éireann is committed to providing all its customers, including those who are mobility and sensory impaired, the highest level of accessibility on its rail network.

When lifts get damaged and are out of service, some specialised parts may be required which can take some time to be delivered. Iarnród Éireann endeavours to return all out-of-service lifts to operational service as quickly as possible. The company's provider of lift maintenance services gives priority to lift requirements for repair and attention. Iarnród Éireann has also advised that extensive and deliberate vandalism has a big impact on the functionality and reliability of lifts on the network. The Iarnród Éireann website and the Passenger Information System displays at all DART stations is updated in the event of a lift being out of order.

I am advised that a number of measures are being taken by Iarnród Éireann to improve access for people with disabilities to rail and DART services. Under the Accessibility Retro-fit Programme funding is provided for, amongst other things, the upgrading of train stations to make them accessible to wheelchair users. In this regard, I secured a trebling of the funding provided for the Retro-fit Programme to €28 million for the period 2018 to 2021. In 2018 €1m was provided for rail station accessibility upgrades and this has been increased to €3m for 2019. With increased funding from 2019 it is envisaged that larger projects will be undertaken at railway stations including the installation of lifts and bridges to allow easy access "across track" platforms for wheelchair users.

Following a review by Iarnród Éireann of accessibility on the DART, Maynooth and Northern Commuter lines, and consultation with users and representative bodies, the company has launched a new Improved Accessibility Policy. This involves a new zonal system for DART, Maynooth and Northern Commuter, that is designed to provide better service and quicker response times to passengers who require assistance. This policy divides the 31 stations on the DART, Maynooth and Northern Commuter lines into 13 zones, with each zone including between one to four stations. One station in each zone will always be manned and will provide support to other stations in that zone. Full details are available on the Irish Rail website.

Iarnród Éireann has reduced the notice period for providing assistance to customers on the DART from 24 hours to 4 hours and the company is working towards reducing this notice period even further.

Furthermore, Iarnród Éireann intends to deploy Customer Service Officers (CSO) on all Intercity routes. This will mean that, at all stops, train services with a CSO on board will be able to ensure ramp assistance is available.

Iarnród Éireann is also developing a dedicated app to support customers who have mobility or sensory impairments, and I provided additional funding for this in 2018. This will be introduced in coming months. The app will allow users to pre-book a journey that confirms they will have assistance by a member of Iarnród Éireann staff at their departure and arrival stations and provide them with support in an emergency.

Public Transport Fares

65. Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has investigated or plans to investigate a similar move here in view of the decision of Luxemburg to introduce free public transport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6722/19]

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 the statutory responsibility for the regulation of fares in relation to public passenger transport services.

The NTA also has statutory responsibility for securing the provision of public transport services by way of public transport services contracts in respect of services that are socially necessary but commercially unviable.

The funding of those services comprises both the fares paid by passengers and the subvention payments from the Exchequer. The main purpose of the subvention payment is to meet the gap between income from fares and the cost of operating services.

I understand that free public transport is available in some European cities and towns to encourage increased use of public transport. The objectives of such initiatives can be to reduce traffic congestion, to attract people into cities for leisure purposes, and to provide environmental benefits.

In 2019, the Irish Exchequer will provide just over €300m as subvention for public service obligation (PSO) transport services and Rural Transport Local Link services. I understand that the NTA wrote to the Deputy in September last and indicated that, in 2017, passengers paid about €580 million in fares on subsidised bus and rail services.

Therefore, if such services were to be provided free to passengers, then the expected cost to the Exchequer would be in excess of the €580m collected in fares in 2017. This amount would be additional to the 2019 Exchequer allocation of €300m for PSO support and the further amount (€95m allocation for 2019) that the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection pays to public transport providers in respect of its Free Travel Scheme which provides free transport to almost 1 million people in the State, including all people aged over 66 living permanently here, along with some other qualifying people. So taking round approximate figures, the Deputy's idea would cost the taxpayer about €600 million per year, in addition to the €400 million that the Exchequer already spends on public transport services. And this is just the cost of the actual services; it does not count the Exchequer investment in public transport infrastructure which in 2019 is about €350 million and will be rising sharply over the coming years.

The NTA also advised the Deputy that the estimates of the full year cost of providing free travel do not factor in the cost of providing the additional fleet, depots, drivers, etc. to meet the likely resultant substantial increase in passenger numbers if fares were reduced or eliminated.

While I have no immediate plans to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of introducing free public transport for all users, which would require substantial additional funding by the taxpayer or from other sources, I am interested in hearing about innovative and radical ideas that would meet the needs of passengers, and encourage more people out of their cars and onto public transport, thus alleviating congestion and helping to tackle climate challenges.

Question No. 66 answered with Question No. 61.

Bus Services

67. Deputy Bríd Smith asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has received reports from the NTA on the performance of a company (details supplied) that recently won the tender for certain Dublin Bus routes; his views on the operation of these routes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6713/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Under the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 it is a statutory function of the National Transport Authority (NTA) to determine the appropriate mix of directly awarded and competitively tendered bus services. Arising from this, the NTA undertook a number of competitive procurement processes in 2017 and selected Go-Ahead as the preferred bidder in the competition to operate 24 routes (23 existing plus 1 new) in the Dublin Metropolitan area. As the Deputy is aware, the phasing in of these new services commenced in September 2018 and concluded on 20 January with the transfer of nine routes.

The NTA does not regularly provide operational performance reports to my Department in relation to individual contracts that it has with transport operators.

In the case of Go-Ahead, I have been advised by the NTA that it has reviewed punctuality performance for the period 20th January 2019 to 4th February 2019 (i.e. the data it has to hand since the latest round of service transfers from Dublin Bus to Go-Ahead). From that data, on-time punctuality performance has improved overall by approximately 2% on the Go-Ahead routes compared to the same period last year, when they were operated by Dublin Bus.

There are, however, variations by route and it is notable that the most recent service transfers are performing less well punctuality-wise. This repeats a pattern seen in previous phases of service transfers, where drivers new to a route initially tend to adopt a conservative driving manner, resulting in some delays compared to schedule.

In terms of passenger use, after a period of adjustment as passengers familiarise themselves with timetable changes, growth in passenger use has generally been positive, in particular where services have been enhanced compared to Dublin Bus timetables.

The NTA intends to ensure that customers will experience improved service levels across all of the routes in question, and it will achieve this through a variety of means:

- The quality of service is measurable and, therefore, the NTA has set out in the contract with the new operator, the customer service levels that are expected. The NTA will use the contract terms to drive up levels of customer service.

- All services operated under the contract will continue to be regulated by the NTA as they are today. These means that LEAP, Free Travel Pass, Real Time Information, National Journey Planner etc. will all continue to operate on these services.

- The NTA has the statutory powers to determine fare levels, and the NTA will continue using its fares determination process to rationalise and improve the fare structure across all the different operators in the regulated bus market, including the new operator.

Public transport passenger journeys are growing, with Dublin Bus experiencing strong growth which is forecast to continue. That growth will allow Dublin Bus continue to expand its services in tandem with the roll-out of Go-Ahead's routes.

We are always looking for ways to improve our public transport services and the NTA conducting an open, competitive process as part of providing enhanced and expanded services for passengers, and then monitoring and implementing its contacts, is part of that improvement process.

Rural Transport Programme

68. Deputy Martin Heydon asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the position paper submitted by the Rural Transport Network identifying the importance of statutory planning to progress the potential of local transport services and the need to build on alignments with local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6701/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I met the Chair and a delegation from the Rural Transport Network (RTN) last year. In advance of the meeting, the RTN forwarded a paper containing a number of proposals including those referred to by the Deputy.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for securing the provision of public transport passenger services nationally. It also has a statutory remit in relation to effective integration of transport and land use planning across the State. Since 2012, the NTA has national responsibility for integrated local and rural transport, including management of the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) which now operates under the Local Link brand.

The NTA published the "Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018-2022" last year. Recognising the key role of local authorities in the planning of rural transport services, the Strategic Plan commits to ensuring that Local Link Offices are directly involved with their respective local authority in the development of relevant plans and strategies, in particular Local Transport Plans.

As the Deputy would be aware, the three Regional Assemblies are tasked to coordinate,

promote and support the strategic planning and sustainable development of the regions. The primary vehicle for this is the preparation and implementation of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES). The Strategies are statutorily underpinned by the Planning and Development Acts. Under the RSES, local authorities will be required to prepare Local Transport Plans. As part of the consultation process the three Regional Assemblies are undertaking for their respective Strategy, my Department has sought that each will ensure that Local Link Offices are formally consulted in relation to the development of local transport plans.

Rail Services

69. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if measures are in place to replace train tickets for commuters outside the short hop zone who may have had their tickets stolen; and if not, if measures will be considered. [6672/19]

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. However, I am not involved in the day-to-day operations of public transport.

The issues raised are operational matters for Iarnród Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Aviation Industry Regulations

70. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the work of the high-level project management board regarding the creation of a single national aviation regulator. [6349/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware from my previous reply in December, the Government has approved a proposal to separate the Irish Aviation Authority's air navigation service provision functions from its aviation safety and security regulatory functions, and merge these regulatory functions with the Commission for Aviation Regulation. The objective is to have a single aviation regulator responsible for economic, safety and security regulation and a standalone air navigation service provider. This is in line with best international practice.

As regards the current status of the work, I can advise the Deputy that a Steering Group comprising senior officials from my Department, the Chief Executive Officer of the IAA and the Aviation Regulation Commissioner is leading the preparatory work to implement the proposed changes including work on draft legislation. As previously outlined in December, the work of this Group is detailed and in some areas highly technical in nature. I expect the Steering Group will make recommendations to me in the first half of this year.

As I have explained before, the overall approach to the Government's aviation regulation reform agenda is wholly in accordance with established practice for structural reform processes within the Irish public sector. There will be appropriate staff consultation throughout the process. There has already been engagement with the main staff representative body – Fórsa – and in all eventualities the commitment is that staff will transfer to the new structures on no less favourable terms and conditions, unless otherwise negotiated.

Recognising that such reform has a number of complex components, I am mindful of the

need to manage the transition to the proposed new arrangements for aviation regulation in a careful and methodical manner. That includes in relation to the eventual enactment of supporting legislation. As I advised in December, while good progress is being made, there are still a number of stages to navigate on the way to the production of a draft Bill that can be put forward to the House for consideration.

This is an important project for the future of aviation regulation in Ireland. While the changes involved may be complex, they also provide a new opportunity for enhancing existing provisions. Throughout the change process, senior management in both organisations will ensure that business as usual continues for all external stakeholders.

Public Private Partnerships

71. Deputy Eamon Ryan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which public private partnership arrangements will be used in new road construction projects in the next five years. [6692/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Development Plan 2018-2027 provides that the potential use of Private Public Partnerships for large scale infrastructure investment should continue to be assessed, where appropriate.

Within the capital budget available to it, Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) is responsible (in accordance with the Roads Acts 1993-2015) for the planning, design, and construction of all national roads developments, in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have, therefore, referred the question to TII for a direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Rail Services Provision

72. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the population and employment figures needed in the Navan and Dunshaughlin areas of County Meath to commence a high-capacity rail link between Navan and Dublin; and if he has he sought details from Meath County Council in respect of planning approvals and projected applications for the areas in making the determination that forecasts do not justify the expenditure and taken this into consideration. [6698/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Deputy is aware that the National Transport Authority (NTA) has a statutory responsibility for the development and implementation of a *Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area* and such a *Strategy* was approved and published in 2016.

As part of its development, a detailed analysis of the “Navan Corridor” was conducted and is indeed available to view on the NTA’s website, at www.nationaltransport.ie. That study provides extensive detail on the forecasted demand and the design capacity offered by a full range of possible public transport modes, including heavy rail.

Based on that extensive analysis, the NTA’s *Strategy* stated that the level of travel demand between Navan, Dunshaughlin and various stations to Dublin city centre was insufficient to justify the development of a high-capacity rail link at that current time.

As the Deputy knows, the *Strategy* instead proposed a bus-based approach, with an en-

hanced bus service along the corridor and the development of a bus hub in Navan.

However, the *Strategy* and *Project Ireland 2040* both state the issue of a rail link to Navan should be kept under review, which will take into account the scale of new and planned development along the route, and that in the meantime the corridor previously identified for a Navan rail link should be protected from development.

The issue of settlement and employment strategies is a matter for the relevant regional and local authorities in line with the overarching requirements set by the *National Planning Framework*.

In the draft *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy* published by the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, and I note that Navan is designated as a “Key Town” and that such towns “shall act as economic drivers and provide for strategic employment locations to improve their economic base by increasing the ratio of jobs to workers.”

In line with the commitments given both in the NTA’s *Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area* and in the Government’s *Project Ireland 2040*, the issue of a heavy rail link to Navan will be reviewed by the NTA in line with its statutory obligation to review its *GDA Transport Strategy* every six years.

Brexit Supports

73. Deputy Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to provide specific additional funding to local authorities in the Border region such as counties Cavan and Monaghan; if regional routes that carry a heavy volume of traffic will be improved in view of the fact that improved road infrastructure is needed to reduce costs for business and commerce and the competitive challenges that will face many sectors in the region following Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6719/19]

74. Deputy Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has put specific proposals for funding to the European Commission, given the urgent need to upgrade road infrastructure in the Border region due to the additional challenges for business and commerce in the region following Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6720/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 73 and 74 together.

I share the concerns of the Deputy in relation to the potential adverse effects of Brexit on the Border region. The Government remains firmly of the view that the best and only way to ensure an orderly withdrawal and protect the Good Friday Agreement is to ratify the Withdrawal Agreement, agreed between the EU and the British Government.

In 2018, following the publication of the National Development Plan and the National Planning Framework, Minister Donohoe and I wrote a joint letter to Transport Commissioner Bulc and Regional Policy Commissioner Cretu emphasising the considerable challenges facing Ireland in the transport sector and setting out how the NDP and NPF will inform future investments into the regions, including the West, Border and North West regions which will be particularly impacted by Brexit. We made the point that investment in infrastructure has the potential to mitigate the implications of Brexit in these regions.

A proposal for a new Regulation for the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) - the funding

mechanism for TEN-T from 2021 - is also currently under consideration at EU level. A Partial General Approach was agreed in relation to this proposal at Transport Council last December, which would in principle mean that post 2020 calls for funding may be open to 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.

In relation to roads and the Border Region, the National Development Plan sets out the Government's ambition in this area. Chapter 4 of the NDP looks at how targeted investment can promote economic resilience in the border region in the context of Brexit. This Chapter touches on a range of measures including investment in transport links. The NDP includes references, among other projects, to the N2/A5 roads, the N14 from Manorcunningham to Lifford, the N52 Ardee Bypass, the N2 Slane Bypass, the N4 from Collooney to Castlebaldwin, and the N56 in Donegal.

Schemes on these routes are at various stages of development and Transport Infrastructure Ireland, in conjunction with the relevant local authorities, will be advancing the schemes on a phased basis within the overall capital budget available to it.

As regards regional and local roads, I have been pleased to be able to allocate significantly increased grant funding to local authorities over the last two years. In this context grant allocations to Cavan and Monaghan in 2019 are up over 40% compared to the 2017 allocation.

While the main focus continues to be on maintenance and renewal expenditure, some limited funding is available for Specific and Strategic road improvement grants. Any projects proposed by local authorities for consideration under the Specific or Strategic Grant Programmes are assessed by the Department on a case-by-case project basis and must comply with the requirements of the Public Spending Code and my Department's Capital Appraisal Framework.

Grant funding being provided to local authorities in border counties includes a grant to Cavan County Council to enable the Council to update previous appraisal work relating to an upgrade of the Cavan to Dundalk regional road route. The aim is to assess the extent to which the scheme or elements of it can be justified in terms of appraisal and advanced for further consideration.

Cycling Facilities Provision

75. Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to introduce similar segregated cycle paths on the north side of Dublin city in view of the success of the off-road cycle track parallel to the Grand Canal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6254/19]

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 cycling and walking infrastructure.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in the matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for a more detailed reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 days.

Taxi Licences

76. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the taxi advisory group is considering proposals to improve the availability of taxi services in rural Ireland; if revisions to the rural hackney scheme are being considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6693/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Under the Taxi Regulation Act 2013, the National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for regulating the small public service vehicles (SPSV) sector. This sector encompasses taxis, hackneys and limousine services, and the regulatory framework applies to the vehicles, the drivers, and the services to the travelling public that they provide. The overall objective of the legislation and the regulatory framework is to protect the consumer interest and to uphold safety for the passengers. The rules do not limit the number of operators; rather, they concentrate on ensuring standards of safety and service that will benefit the public.

The 2013 legislation, and NTA's subsequent implementation of it, was informed by the Taxi Regulation Review Report, that was published by the Government in January 2012. Among its recommendations, the Review suggested the introduction of a local area hackney licence, so as to address transport deficits that would not otherwise be addressed in certain rural areas.

The NTA made Regulations permitting the issue of such licences with effect from December 2013. The aim was to enable a special part-time hackney service to be provided in rural areas which are likely to be too small to support a full-time taxi or hackney operation, and which are also too far away from adjacent centres to be serviced by normal taxis or hackneys from those adjacent centres.

To address transport deficits in certain rural areas, the Local Area Hackney licence continues to be offered by the NTA. However, take-up has been low. Despite the fact that the costs of a Local Area Hackney licence are deliberately set low and the some of the standards that must be met are lower than for an normal taxi or hackney operation, only a very small number of such licences are in use. The NTA has looked at this, and identified that one of the main deterrents to the take-up seems to be the cost to an operator of the insurance needed to cover carrying passengers for reward compared to the restricted nature of the part-time service that can be provided under the licence.

The NTA is currently undertaking a review of key aspects of taxi, hackney and limousine operations with the intention of developing a five-year strategy for the whole small public service vehicle industry. This Strategy will guide regulatory development for the sector over that timeframe.

With the assistance and input of the Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles, the review is considering a variety of issues including vehicle licensing, vehicle standards, driver licensing, wheelchair accessible vehicles, fixed payment offences, and technological developments. As part of its work, the review is looking at the matter of local area hackneys and the scope for improving their effectiveness in addressing rural connectivity gaps.

The NTA plans to conduct a public consultation process in the first half of this year on the proposals emerging from the review process. This will give the public and public representa-

tives the opportunity to provide their views and to inform the outcome of the work. The outcome of the review will inform the NTA's regulatory strategies and operations, and if there are any recommendations on overall policy or legislation, then I will consider them fully with my Department.

Finally, Deputies will also be aware that the NTA also has a wider role affecting transport connectivity in rural areas, arising from its responsibilities for providing integrated local and rural transport. In the last few years, it has considerably developed the Rural Transport Programme - which it now operates under the "Local Link" brand - leading to expansion of the number of services provided, and with a substantial increase to the spending on the programme. NTA is currently conducting a pilot scheme to test evening and night-time services as part of the Rural Transport Programme. This pilot was recently extended and future arrangements will be informed by an evaluation of its experience.

Question No. 77 answered with Question No. 60.

Driver Test

78. Deputy Aindrias Moynihan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the number of driver testers will be increased in the Skibbereen, Mallow, Cork, Killarney and Tralee test centres; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6688/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

Electric Vehicles

79. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amendments being made with regard to traffic regulations to take account of the arrival of electric scooters, battery scooters and electric bicycles; his plans to introduce a speed limit in cycle lanes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6253/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy's question indicates, we live in a time of rapidly emerging transportation innovations. While welcome, this inevitably raises the question of the safety implications of these new technologies and how to best accommodate them in our public spaces. As Minister, my highest priority in all areas of transport must always be safety.

I indicated in response to a recent parliamentary question on eScooters that I shall in due course be asking the Road Safety Authority to consider the question of these vehicles and their safe use. I look forward with interest to the outcome.

Road Projects Status

80. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the Bonagee link road project in County Donegal; when the project will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6463/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Trans-

port, 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 construction of individual national roads is a matter for 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.

Sports Organisations

81. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the engagement he has had with an association (details supplied) regarding its compliance with the governance code endorsed by his Department; his views on recent changes at the organisation that will see board members that are serving terms in excess of ten years' duration seeking re-election for a further four-year term; the oversight his Department has in this regard; if he has the authority to impose penalties on non-compliant bodies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6712/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The governance of National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) is a matter for the NGBs themselves and Sport Ireland as the statutory body with responsibility for governance oversight of NGBs.

Minister Ross and I, as well as my predecessor Minister of State Patrick O'Donovan, have made it clear that all sporting bodies in receipt of public funding must work towards compliance with the Governance Code for the Community, Voluntary and Charity Sector. The Government's National Sports Policy 2018-2027 recognises the importance of good governance for the effective and efficient running of sport and it includes an action that Sport Ireland will oversee a process to have all NGBs and Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) adopt the Governance Code by the end of 2021. My Department and Sport Ireland have underlined that future funding for NGBs and LSPs will be conditional on compliance with the Governance Code.

I have had no engagement with the association mentioned by the Deputy regarding its compliance with the Governance Code. However, I understand that the association is on the journey to adoption of the Code and I welcome the recent changes it has made regarding term limits for Board members as a positive step on that journey.

I have referred the Deputy's question to Sport Ireland for consideration and direct reply with any further information.

Military Aircraft Landings

82. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the internal review of the Air Navigation (Munitions of War, Weapons and Dangerous Goods) Orders 1973 and 1989 has been completed; and if so, when it will be published. [6352/19]

83. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he is satisfied with the arrangements regarding the transit of weapons, troops and munitions on civilian aircraft. [6353/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 82 and 83 together.

My Department is responsible for the carriage of munitions of war on Irish registered civil aircraft and on civil aircraft transiting through Irish sovereign airspace, in accordance with the Air Navigation (Carriage of Munitions of War, Weapons of War and Dangerous Goods) Orders, 1973 and 1989.

The provisions of the order and the associated administrative arrangements have been largely effective over many years. The potential to improve all processing systems naturally exists, and this is the primary purpose of the internal review.

The internal review, which is examining the above orders from both an administrative and legislative perspective, is currently being finalised in consultation with Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. I understand the draft report includes a number of recommendations designed to deliver a more efficient and effective processing system, with a view to reducing the administrative burden on the Department.

Public Bike Schemes

84. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the contract renewal for the public bike share schemes in regional cities (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6690/19]

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 cycle and public transport infrastructure. However, I am not involved in the day-to-day operations of public transport, including the management of public bike schemes.

Noting the National Transport Authority's statutory responsibilities in relation to cycling and cycling infrastructure, I have referred your question to the NTA for a more detailed reply . Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Tourism Project Funding

85. Deputy Martin Kenny asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if consideration has been given to providing funding for the creation of activity tourism hubs in which persons and groups in rural Ireland offering such activities could come together and provide a joint offer to tourists within an area. [52143/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The Deputy will be pleased to note that investment in activity-based tourism and tourist attractions has been prioritised under the National Development Plan 2018-2027 in order to provide the type and quality of experience that visitors are seeking. Funding in the order of €110 million has been allocated to Fáilte Ireland for capital investment in tourism between 2018 and 2021 and it is intended that this level of funding will be maintained over the lifetime of the National Development Plan. This investment will support and grow tourism across Ireland in line with the further development and promotion of the regional tourism brand experiences.

Although my Department provides funding to Fáilte Ireland for investment in tourism, it has no role in the design or administration of the agency's funding programmes or in the development of specific types of amenities such as activity tourism hubs. Accordingly, I have asked Fáilte Ireland to provide the Deputy with further detail in regard to investment in this sector and on the types of projects eligible for assistance under its capital grants schemes. Please contact

my office if you do not hear within ten working days.

Road Safety

86. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the categories in which large vehicles are required to be equipped with a tachograph; the categories of such vehicles that are exempt; the road safety measures that will be introduced to improve safety regarding heavy goods and public service vehicles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6260/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Such a question falls within the remit of the Road Safety Authority and accordingly, it would normally be referred to the Authority for direct reply to the Deputy. However, I understand that such a reply issued from the RSA on 11 February 2019 to the Deputy in respect of this specific matter.

Sports Funding

87. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the date on which the large-scale sport infrastructure fund will be announced; the stage at which the assessment of the projects is at; and the number of projects likely to benefit from the fund. [6699/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The National Sports Policy was published on 25th July 2018 and provided for a Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF) with at least €100 million available over the coming years.

The fund was launched in November 2018 and is open to applications until 17th April 2019. The fund will initially focus on the requirements and development plans of National Governing Bodies of Sport and Local Authorities, all of which received letters inviting them to make applications.

Assessment of the proposals received will commence after 17th April. Until proposals are received and assessed it is not possible to suggest the number of projects that will benefit from the fund.

The details of the programme are available on the Department's website.

Road Network

88. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will consider funding for the extension of the M3 motorway to Cavan town and the east-west link; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6589/19]

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 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.

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Noting the above position, I have referred the question, concerning the M3 motorway, to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

With regard to funding for regional and local road projects, there are considerable financial demands on my Department for road improvement projects across the country. In relation to the East-West Dundalk to Cavan link, my Department has provided funding this year to allow the project appraisal to be updated.

Driver Test Waiting Lists

89. Deputy Aindrias Moynihan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps he is taking to reduce the waiting times for driver tests in the Skibbereen, Mallow, Cork, Killarney and Tralee test centres; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6687/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

Road Network

90. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the status of the N2 will be reviewed with a view to upgrading it to motorway status in view of the number of recent accidents on the route; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6590/19]

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 construction of individual national roads is a matter for 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.

Park and Ride Facilities

91. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 939 of 6 November 2018, the status of the provision of park and ride facilities for Galway city as recommended in the Galway transport strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6689/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I understand the National Transport Authority (NTA) wrote to the Deputy on 14 November 2018 regarding the issues raised in Parliamentary Question 939 of 6 November 2018.

I have therefore referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for any further update that may be available at this time.

Sports Capital Programme

92. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for investment in vital recreational infrastructure for local communities such as swimming pools, community centres and other sporting facilities; the extent to which recent budgetary allocations are sufficient to meet demand in the near future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6717/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) is the primary vehicle for Government support for the development of sports and physical recreation facilities and the purchase of non-personal sports equipment throughout the country. Under the 2017 round of the programme €62m was allocated to 1,837 sporting projects and my officials continue to assist these grantees in completing their projects and draw down their grants.

Sanction was received last year from the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to open a new round of the Programme with allocations of up to €40m. This new round 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 €162m in funding.

186 of these applications were for projects deemed invalid under the 2017 round of the programme but who subsequently submitted corrected documents. These applications were assessed first and approximately €7m in allocations to 170 projects were announced on the 17th January.

In relation to new applications, 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. Sufficient resources are available this year to cover all existing commitments under the programme in addition to the new allocations.

With regard to swimming pools, the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme (LASPP), as operated by my Department, provides grant aid to local authorities towards the capital costs of new swimming pools or the refurbishment of existing pools. To date 51 pools have been completed and four swimming pool projects remain in the current LASPP. The priority this year is on advancing these four projects and sufficient resources are available to cover these commitments.

In relation to the future funding of swimming pools and other larger projects, the National Development Plan confirmed the establishment of a new Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF) with at least €100m available over the coming years. The new scheme opened for applications on 19th November and the closing date for applications is the 17th April 2019. Full details of the scheme and application forms are available on my Department's website at <http://www.dttas.ie/sport/english/large-scale-sport-infrastructure-fund-lssif>. The aim of the fund is to provide Exchequer support for larger sports facility projects where the Exchequer investment would be greater than the maximum amount available under the SCP. Initially, the scheme has a particular focus on National Governing Bodies of Sport and Local Authorities. Swimming pool projects will also be considered.

Carbon Budget

93. Deputy John Curran asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the underspend from the 2018 carbon reduction programme will be carried forward and added to the €7.6 million allocation for 2019 (details supplied); the programmes and projects that will be supported under same in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6432/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Carbon Reduction Programme was established to fund measures that support decarbonising transport. As noted in my recent response to the Deputy's PQ (No. 1623), this funding only represents a single element in a wider range of transport mitigation efforts underway, including significant support for new and improved public and sustainable transport; a number of incentives to encourage a transition away from conventional fuels towards low and zero emitting alternatives; increasing the proportion of biofuels in the fuel mix; and working to improve EU efficiency standards for all vehicles produced. Collectively, these measures are assisting in decarbonising the sector. The most recent emission inventories indicated a small fall in transport emissions for the first time in four years.

In 2019 the Carbon Reduction Programme is allocated €7m to further support some of these measures and help maintain this downwards trend in transport emissions. Noting that the measures funded under this Programme are largely new, innovative and often associated with emerging technologies/research and, accordingly, tend to take more time to develop, establish and gain acceptance, there was an underspend in 2018. To continue and expand projects and programmes commenced last year €1.965m was carried over from 2018 to the Programme in 2019. Funding reallocated during 2018 was supportive of sustainable transport generally, with increased expenditure in 2018 recorded across both public transport and active travel projects and programmes.

It is envisaged that the 2019 allocation will support four main work streams. Firstly, the Low Emission Bus Trials, which commenced in 2018 and will run into Q2 this year, which will help to further inform purchasing decisions for transitioning the bus fleet to lower emitting alternatives. Secondly, supporting electric vehicle uptake through the Electric Vehicle Tolling Incentive Scheme and the Electric Small Public Service Vehicle Grant Scheme – based on recent electric vehicle sales I expect to see significant increase in demand in both Schemes in 2019. Thirdly, funding from the Carbon Reduction Programme will be used to cover the cost differential of purchasing low-emission public transport vehicles, beginning with nine hybrid double-deck buses for the Dublin Bus fleet and a small pilot programme in rural Ireland. Finally, in support of evidence building, the Programme will support much needed Irish-specific transport mitigation research; four projects have commenced and will be co-funded in 2019 examining subjects such as behavioural change and the decarbonisation of the freight sector in Ireland.

Tackling national emissions is an evolving challenge, affected greatly by population levels, economic activity and strongly influenced by behavioural change. In tandem, the mitigation measures and technologies currently available to us are constantly developing. In recognition of this, Ireland's responses to tackling challenge must be equally dynamic. Accordingly, the work streams for the Carbon Reduction Programme will evolve and be informed by the actions in the forthcoming *All of Government Plan to Tackle Climate Disruption* and the deliberations of the *Low Emission Vehicle Taskforce*.

Driver Test Waiting Lists

94. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the perceived considerable waiting periods nationally for driver tests and the impact this can have on persons living in rural areas. [6696/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I accept that current waiting times remain high but I am assured that measures being put in place by the Road Safety Authority (RSA) will have the desired effect of reducing waiting times for the public.

I approved the appointment of 67 additional driver testers, on a phased basis for a period of 12-18 months, to address any surge in driving test applications due to the new legislation in relation to unaccompanied learner drivers. The first cohort of these testers have been deployed to test centres to conduct driving tests, with the training of the remaining testers to be completed by end February 2019.

Road Projects Status

95. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the progress of the A5; the details of his engagement with his counterpart in Northern Ireland on the project; the funding that will be made available for the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6464/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The planning and implementation of the A5 upgrade project is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland authorities. In this context it will be for the Northern Ireland authorities to consider how to proceed in light of the outcome of judicial review proceedings regarding the scheme.

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

In the absence of the Northern Ireland Executive, the Deputy will be aware that I currently do not have a counterpart and the North South Ministerial Council has not been meeting. However, the Senior Officials Group comprising Northern and Southern officials, including from my Department, established to oversee implementation of the Fresh Start Agreement, has been continuing to meet. Similarly, my Department attends the ongoing meetings of the North West Strategic Gateway Group.

Light Rail Projects Status

96. Deputy Eamon Ryan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the next stage of the public consultation process for the metro with particular reference to alternative routes for the metro in south County Dublin. [6691/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the development and implementation of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, including MetroLink.

Noting their responsibility in relation to this matter, I have forwarded your query to the NTA for their consideration and direct reply. Please notify my office if you have not received a reply within 10 working days.

Road Safety

97. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of roadworthiness inspections on HGV operators carried out by the RSA and An Garda Síochána, respectively in each of the years 2016 to 2018; the number of such inspections carried out in respect of out-of-state operators and their countries of origin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6697/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Under the Road Safety Authority Act 2006 (Conferral of Functions) Order 2006 (S.I. No. 477 of 2006), the Road Safety Authority (RSA) has responsibility for the operation, oversight, development, quality assurance and delivery of commercial vehicle roadworthiness testing arrangements.

I have therefore forwarded this Question to the RSA for direct reply to the Deputy. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response has not been received within ten days.

Asylum Seekers

98. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the review of the policy by which asylum seekers cannot apply for driver licences; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6694/19]

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 one of a number of priority issues that my officials are currently dealing with.

Maritime Safety Regulations

99. Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views regarding safety procedures for maritime operations within the jurisdiction of the State; his plans to review same; and if it is planned to ratify the Torremolinos Convention. [5616/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Maritime safety is the key concern of the Irish Maritime Administration which is a part of my Department.

The breadth of maritime operations in Irish waters is vast. It ranges from recreational craft users through to the smaller passenger boat and fishing vessel operators, on up to larger passenger and cargo ships and fishing vessels and internationally trading ships, both passenger and cargo.

The Administration performs many roles in relation to maritime safety in the State, both of a preventative and a reactive nature.

For example, the Marine Survey Office carries out a wide variety of regulatory and enforcement functions concerning vessels, seafarers, ports and cargos in the areas of safety, security, pollution prevention, accessibility and living and working conditions (for Irish ships in Irish waters and worldwide; and for foreign ships while in Irish ports).

The Irish Coast Guard is responsible for the response to, and coordination of, maritime accidents which require Search & Rescue and Counter Pollution & Ship Casualty operations. It also has a role in marine communication, surveillance and emergency management in Ireland's

Exclusive Economic Zone.

Ensuring safe maritime operations and, in the unfortunate instances where things go wrong, an efficient and effective emergency response, is the top priority for the Administration. While these activities are constantly under review as part of its day to day work it is useful to take a step back and conduct a separate review from time to time or as the circumstances require.

For instance, following the tragic incidents involving the Coast Guard RIB, or Rigid Inflatable Boat, off Kilkee in 2016 and, separately, the Coast Guard Rescue 116 helicopter off the coast of Mayo in 2017, I have instigated a review into the national Search & Rescue Framework and the important work of the Review Group is on-going.

Furthermore, in 2017, the Maritime Safety Policy Division of my Department also issued a revised edition of the Code of Practice for the Safe Operation of Recreational Craft, which provides users of recreational craft with important, practical safety advice and recommendations.

Prior to this, in April 2015 my Department, following a wide consultation, published its Maritime Safety Strategy 2015-2019, and this document contains a list of actions that the Irish Maritime Administration is currently working on implementing.

In relation to your specific enquiry regarding the Torremolinos Convention, that convention, which was agreed at the International Maritime Organization in 1977, never entered into force and is no longer open for accession. The Convention represented the first attempt internationally to regulate the larger fishing vessel sector – this is fishing vessels of 24 metres in length and over. It was replaced in 1993 by the Torremolinos Protocol, which updated and amended the provisions of the prior Convention to try and encourage a greater number of ratifications from states. Ireland acceded to the Protocol in 2001 and has domestic legislation for such fishing vessels. However, similar to the prior Convention, the Torremolinos Protocol has also failed to reach the required number of ratifications to enter into force internationally.

Further amendments to the Protocol were adopted by the International Maritime Organization in 2012, namely the Cape Town Agreement or, to give it its full title, the ‘Cape Town Agreement of 2012 on the Implementation of the Provisions of the 1993 Protocol relating to the Torremolinos International Convention for the Safety of Fishing Vessels, 1977’. That Agreement has not yet entered into force. My Department is currently preparing proposals for Irish legislation on the matter which, if passed, will facilitate Ireland ratifying the Agreement in due course.

Bus Services

100. Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which planners for BusConnects have engaged and held consultations with affected residents along initial routes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6255/19]

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 the development of BusConnects.

As the Deputy is aware, extensive public consultations are taking place with regard to the project.

In relation to proposals to develop new bus lanes as part of the BusConnects programme, any property owner whose property is impacted by the development of the new bus lanes is offered a one-to-one meeting by the NTA and I would encourage any such property owner to meet with the NTA to discuss the proposals and their implications. In addition to that personalised consultation with individual property owners, the NTA also publishes detailed booklets in relation to each proposed “corridor”, establishes a community forum for each corridor and holds public information events in relation to the various corridors. The Deputy will, I am sure, acknowledge the extensive scope of this non-statutory consultation process.

I believe the consultation processes I have referred to above demonstrate the extensive engagement that has taken place and will continue to take place with communities. I would encourage as many people as possible to engage with these processes on this potentially transformative public transport initiative.

Public Transport

101. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the overcrowding across the public transport system; and the steps he is taking to address the matter. [6695/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I refer the Deputy to my reply to his previous question Priority Question No. 53 which I answered earlier.

Rural Transport Services Provision

102. Deputy Martin Heydon asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the planned review of the evening and weekend local link rural bus pilot scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6700/19]

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 securing the provision of public passenger transport services nationally. It also has national responsibility for integrated local and rural transport, including management of the Rural Transport Programme, which now operates under the Local Link brand.

As the Deputy will be aware, following engagement with key stakeholders in late 2017, I tasked the NTA to examine the potential to extend existing Local Link services into the evening and proposals I had received in this regard from the Deputy. Subsequently, the NTA approved funding for 65 new pilot evening and late night Local Link services, operating across all 26 counties, to run on a pilot basis for 6 months to end December last. Following a review of the services by the NTA, the pilot was extended until end quarter 1 2019, when the NTA will conduct a further review of the performance of the services and a decision taken as to future funding of these services.

I would like to acknowledge the help I received from the Deputy in getting this important initiative for rural Ireland off the ground and I look forward to working with him further when this pilot reaches a conclusion.

In light of the NTA’s responsibilities in this matter, I have referred the Deputy’s Question

to the NTA for further response. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Driver Test Waiting Lists

103. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if measures are being considered to reduce waiting times for driver tests in County Kildare and nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6673/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

104. Deputy Michael Moynihan asked the Taoiseach if the lack of the Northern Assembly was discussed when he met the British Prime Minister, Mrs. Theresa May, on 8 February 2019. [6676/19]

The Taoiseach: I met with the Prime Minister when she visited Dublin on 8 February and we briefed each other on our respective engagements in Belfast and Brussels that week. We discussed developments in Northern Ireland and our shared interest in seeing the devolved institutions restored as soon as possible.

Cabinet Committee Meetings

105. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Taoiseach if Cabinet committee D, infrastructure, met recently. [6683/19]

The Taoiseach: Cabinet Committee D last met on 31 January 2019.

The Committee works to ensure a coordinated approach to the delivery of work and the ongoing development of policy across the areas of infrastructure investment and delivery, housing, and climate action. It also provides political oversight in relation to Project Ireland 2040.

Significant work is underway across each of these areas through Government Departments and Agencies and a range of inter-departmental groups such as the Climate Action High Level Steering Group and the Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board. In addition, these matters are regularly considered at meetings of the Government itself.

Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

106. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Taoiseach if he has met church leaders recently. [7055/19]

The Taoiseach: On 25th August 2018 I met with Pope Francis during his visit to Dublin Castle. The meeting provided an opportunity for us to discuss several issues, though regrettably not in any great depth because of the short duration of the meeting.

On 22nd January 2018 I met with representatives of the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in a formal meeting under the structured dialogue process between Church and State. We discussed important social and economic issues facing Irish society as well as international issues. This was the second in a series of meetings that I will be holding with dialogue partners.

On 31 August 2017, I held a formal meeting under the structured dialogue process with representatives of the Catholic Church, led by Archbishop Eamon Martin.

Some of the issues we discussed at these meetings were challenging. They are issues on which people have deeply held views and which are matters of conscience. Our discussions were valuable, not just because they dealt with important issues, but particularly because they were conducted in an atmosphere of respect for the views of others, where everyone sought to be constructive.

Like public representatives generally, I meet church leaders informally from time to time in the course of attending official or public events.

In particular, with the recent Presidential Inauguration and the visit of Pope Francis, I attended several events that were also attended by representatives from various religious groups.

Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

107. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he met EU leaders when he was in Brussels; and if he held other meetings after or before he met Mr. Donald Tusk. [7057/19]

110. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his recent meetings in Brussels with Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker and Mr. Donald Tusk and, in particular, the issues raised in respect of Brexit and state aid rules. [7125/19]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 107 and 110 together.

On 6 February, I travelled to Brussels for a series of meetings with senior representatives of the EU institutions, including European Council President, Donald Tusk, and European Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker.

President Tusk and I discussed the latest political developments in London, and noted the approaching deadline for the UK's departure from the EU. We agreed that the Withdrawal Agreement is the best and only deal possible and that it cannot be reopened.

While we hope that the backstop will never be used, it is needed as a legal guarantee to ensure there is no return to a hard border on the island of Ireland, while protecting the integrity of the Single Market and the Customs Union.

In my meeting with President Juncker, at which he was accompanied by Union negotiator Michel Barnier and Commissioner Hogan, he also reiterated his firm view that the Withdrawal Agreement, including the backstop, is not for re-negotiation.

We agreed that, while we will continue to seek agreement on the orderly withdrawal of the UK, given the ongoing uncertainty in London, we will also further intensify our preparations for a no-deal scenario.

President Juncker confirmed that the Commission stands ready to assist Ireland in meeting the specific challenges we face as a result of Brexit – particularly in vulnerable sectors such as

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agriculture, agribusiness and fisheries. He also confirmed that programmes providing assistance for cross-border peace and reconciliation in the border region will be strengthened.

We agreed that Ireland and the Commission will continue to work closely together over the period ahead.

I thanked my interlocutors for their unwavering commitment and noted that, as a small country, this strong solidarity resonates deeply in Ireland.

Ministerial Advisers Data

108. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Taoiseach the number of advisers and special advisers employed by his Department in 2017 and 2018 and to date in 2019; the areas of expertise covered by such advisers; and the annual salaries associated with same. [6578/19]

The Taoiseach: Details of the Advisers and Special Advisers employed by my Department since I took up office on 14 June 2017 are as follows:

Name	Role	Start Date	End Date	Salary Scale
Brian Murphy	Chief of Staff	14 June 2017	n/a	Deputy Secretary
John Carroll	Head of Policy and Programme Implementation	05 July 2017	n/a	Assistant Secretary
Patrick Geoghegan	Special Adviser to the Taoiseach	14 June 2017	n/a	Assistant Secretary (equivalent)
Angela Flanagan	Special Adviser to the Taoiseach	14 June 2017	n/a	Principal Officer
Philip O'Callaghan	Special Adviser to the Taoiseach	14 June 2017	n/a	Principal Officer
Clare Mungovan	Special Adviser to the Taoiseach	08 Jan 2018	n/a	Principal Officer
Jim D'Arcy	Special Adviser to the Taoiseach	04 Sept 2017	n/a	Assistant Principal (Higher)
Nick Miller	Spokesman and Communications Adviser to the Taoiseach	14 June 2017	31 Oct 2017	Assistant Secretary
Feargal Purcell	Goverment Press Secretary	14 June 2017	31 Oct 2017	Assistant Secretary
Nick Miller	Goverment Press Secretary	01 Nov 2017	n/a	Assistant Secretary
Sarah Meade	Assistant Goverment Press Secretary	31 July 2017	n/a	Principal Officer
Catherine Halloran	Deputy Goverment Press Secretary	14 June 2017	n/a	Principal Officer

Name	Role	Start Date	End Date	Salary Scale
Mark O'Doherty	Special Adviser to the Government Chief Whip	14 June 2017	16 October 2018	Principal Officer
Ed Carty	Special Adviser to the Government Chief Whip	12 March 2018	16 October 2018	Principal Officer
Greg Harkin	Special Adviser to the Government Chief Whip	14 June 2017	15 Feb 2018	Principal Officer
Peter Feeney	Special Adviser to the Government Chief Whip	16 October 2018	n/a	Principal Officer
Peter Harper	Special Adviser to the Government Chief Whip	16 October 2018	n/a	Principal Officer

Name	Role	Start Date	End Date	Salary Scale
Tony Williams	Chief Strategist for the Independent Alliance	14 June 2017	n/a	Principal Officer
Donal Geoghegan	Political Coordinator for Independent Ministers	14 June 2017	n/a	Principal Officer

The Special Advisers working in my office provide briefings and advice on a wide range of policy matters, as well as performing other functions as I may direct from time to time. They also liaise with other Special Advisers in each Government Department so that I am informed on developments across Government.

The Government Press Secretary acts as a spokesperson for me, as Taoiseach, and the Government and is assisted by the Assistant Government Press Secretary in coordinating the media relations of all Government Departments.

The Deputy Government Press Secretary - who is also based in my Department - coordinates communications for all the Independents in Government.

Special Advisers working with Minister of State Helen McEntee and Minister of State Paul Kehoe are employed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Department of Defence respectively.

Appointments to State Boards

109. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Taoiseach the number of boards or agencies to which his officials have been appointed; if there are guidelines or protocols for members of staff being appointed to boards or agencies; and if so, when same was last updated. [6653/19]

The Taoiseach: I appoint members to the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) under the National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO) Act 2006 and the NESC (Alteration of Composition) Order 2010 - SI 603/ 2010.

In accordance with the legislation, two officials from my Department at Secretary General and Assistant Secretary level currently have the position of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson.

The National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO) is the body corporate for the NESC. Section 13 of the NESDO Act 2006 provides that the chairperson and deputy chairperson of the NESC are members of the NESDO.

I also appoint members to the National Statistics Board (NSB) under Section 18 of the Statistics Act 1993 which provides that the NSB shall consist of eight members, including an Assistant Secretary or equivalent or higher grade in the Department of the Taoiseach. One official at Assistant Secretary level in my Department, has been appointed to the National Statistics Board.

One Principal Officer in my Department has been nominated to the Council of Gaisce. Gaisce is governed by a board of directors, the Gaisce Council, whose appointments are made by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs under the terms of the Gaisce Council's Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies applies to all members of State Boards including any officials appointed.

Question No. 110 answered with Question No. 107.

Departmental Consultations

111. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the engagement between his Department and Kildare County Council regarding ongoing land management and maintenance of the Curragh plains. [6360/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My Department has met with Kildare County Council to discuss and explore the potential for collaboration on addressing issues and identifying opportunities for the improved management and presentation of the Plains. To this end, the Department has confirmed its support of Kildare County Council's application for funding from the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

The funding is sought for the purpose of appointing a multidisciplinary consultancy team in order to examine the current and future challenges arising for the Curragh Plains, in the context of the conservation and management of the Plains, the scope for branding, and the development potential of the area as a high value visitor and cultural amenity attraction.

Defence Forces Remuneration

112. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his views on the protests over pay and conditions by veterans and families of the Defence Forces. [6365/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I am aware of the views expressed and the issues raised in relation to protests by veterans and families of the Defence Forces. I note in particular the call for the restoration of pay.

The scheme of Conciliation and Arbitration (C&A) for members of the Permanent Defence Force provides a formal mechanism for the Permanent Defence Force Representative Associations, that is RACO (for commissioned officers) and PDFORRA (for enlisted personnel) to present claims and proposals relating to remuneration and conditions of service.

Similar to other sectors in the public service, the pay of Permanent Defence Force personnel was reduced as one of the measures necessary to stabilise national finances during the financial crisis. The recovery in the economy has provided the fiscal resources to provide for a fair and sustainable recovery in public service pay scales.

Pay is being restored to members of the Defence Forces and other public servants in accordance with public sector pay agreements. The focus of these increases is weighted in favour of those on lower pay.

Members of the Permanent Defence Force have received the pay increases due under the Lansdowne Road Agreement. In addition in 2017, following negotiations with PDFORRA, improved pay scales for general service recruits and privates, who joined the Permanent Defence Force post 1 January 2013, were implemented.

In 2016, the Government established the Public Service Pay Commission to provide objective advice to Government in relation to Public Service pay policy. Following the publication of the Public Service Pay Commission report in May 2017, the Government initiated negotiations on an extension to the Lansdowne Road Agreement.

The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020, which was accepted by members of the Permanent Defence Forces, through their representative associations, provides for increases in pay ranging from 6.2% to 7.4% over the lifetime of the Agreement. The focus of these increases is weighted in favour of those on lower pay. The increases due in 2018 and from 1 January 2019

have been paid to Permanent Defence Force personnel. Further increases in pay are scheduled for 2019 and 2020.

By the end of the current Public Service Pay agreement the payscales of all public servants (including members of the Defence Forces), earning under €70,000 per annum, will be restored to pre FEMPI levels. The restoration of the 5% reduction to allowances cut under FEMPI is also scheduled in the agreement.

New entrants who joined the Defence Forces since 2011, will also benefit from the measures which were recently announced in relation to interventions at points 4 and 8 of the relevant pay scales for all such new entrants to the public service. This measure, which I am pleased to say has recently been accepted by PDFORRA, will be effective for their members from 1 March 2019.

In accordance with the provisions of Public Services Stability Agreement 2018-2020, the Government has tasked the Public Service Pay Commission with conducting a more comprehensive examination of the specific recruitment and retention challenges in the Defence Forces, which the Commission identified in Chapter 6 of its report in May 2017. The Commission's work is on-going. The Government will give due consideration to the findings and recommendations that arise from the work of the Commission.

Defence Forces Resources

113. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the way in which partnerships have been encouraged between the Defence Forces and the private sector in County Kildare with a view to increased research, innovation and enterprise development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6368/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Government approved arrangements in July 2011, whereby Enterprise Ireland (EI) would support the Department of Defence and Defence Forces capability development through engagement with Irish-based enterprise and research institutes on the use and application of innovative civilian technologies in the military sphere. The Government allowed for greater engagement with EI and EI supported companies which could contribute to Defence Forces capabilities across the full range of its activities.

The Government's White Paper on Defence states that my Department will "identify opportunities for cooperative-collaborative engagement between the Defence Forces and Irish-based enterprise and research institutes, including third level colleges". In line with this, work is on-going to further develop the Defence Enterprise Initiative.

Projects proposed by research institutes and companies, where they are seeking to partner with, or involve, Defence Force participation are submitted to the Defence Enterprise Committee for consideration. The Defence Enterprise Committee consists of personnel from the Department of Defence, the Defence Forces and Enterprise Ireland. All proposed capabilities are vetted and agreed at the highest level in the Defence Organisation to ensure compatibility with the roles assigned to the Defence Forces by the Government.

It is important to point out that engagement is targeted towards companies and research institutes that have relevant technologies or are developing technologies which can support Defence Force capabilities and therefore does not target specific geographical locations. However, I am aware of two projects involving the Defence Forces and County Kildare based companies or research institutes, both of which have successfully secured funding from the EU's Horizon

2020 Programme.

My Department and the Defence Forces will continue to provide assistance to Enterprise Ireland and companies supported by this agency in 2019 and beyond, with a view to increased research, innovation and enterprise development in Ireland.

Military Medals

114. Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the family of a person (details supplied) was granted medals in recognition of that individual's service and sacrifice; and if not, if a medal will be granted. [6484/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I can confirm that a posthumous medal was not awarded to the family of the person in question. The matter is currently being examined in my Department on foot of representations made to me and it is hoped to bring the matter to a conclusion in the near future.

Defence Forces Personnel Data

115. Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the amount of sick leave taken by members of the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service in each year since 2000, by officer and enlisted personnel per service, in tabular form. [6513/19]

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

As per Defence Force Regulation A12, sick leave may be granted to a member of the Permanent Defence Force, on the recommendation of a Medical Officer, or if not practicable, on the recommendation of a civilian medical practitioner.

The total number of sick leave days taken by members of the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service, in each year since 2005*, by officer and enlisted personnel, as advised by the Military Authorities, are set out in tabular form below.

Year	Army Officer	Army Other Ranks	Air Corps Officer	Air Corps Other Ranks	Naval Service Officer	Naval Service Other Ranks
2018	1314	69290	314	7691	622	7502
2017	1309	63382	533	5912	475	6706
2016	1210	61966	517	4359	229	6872
2015	1354	54909	515	4328	358	6669
2014	1487	46837	510	4132	420	5488
2013	1502	48498	404	4223	387	5008
2012	1600	45448	200	3190	284	4830
2011	1799	50200	195	2592	359	5359
2010	1529	57507	404	3326	411	5648
2009	1805	52900	350	3392	281	5823
2008	1592	60173	259	6910	366	4686
2007	1307	59810	304	7801	221	7234

Year	Army Officer	Army Other Ranks	Air Corps Officer	Air Corps Other Ranks	Naval Service Officer	Naval Service Other Ranks
2006	1490	60556	229	12245	196	5934
2005	1660	53992	357	10853	397	4466

*All absences due to ill health are recorded on the Defence Forces Personnel Management System (PMS). However, sick leave data is not captured on this system prior to 2005. Accordingly, it is not feasible to compile the figures for the years 2000 to 2004 inclusive, due to the large amount of work required in extracting and calculating the totals manually.

Ministerial Advisers Data

116. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of advisers and special advisers employed by his Department in 2017 and 2018 and to date in 2019; the areas of expertise covered by such advisers; the annual salaries associated with same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6568/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I have two special advisers, who are employed in an un-established capacity at the civil service grade of Principal, who provide me with advice on policy and communication matters.

The salary scale associated with these posts is currently €85,823 - €105,552, which is the scale for Principals appointed on or after 6 April 1995.

Defence Forces Properties

117. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to develop lands in the area of the Defence Forces training centre on the Curragh to enhance relationships with the local communities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6625/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The lands in the area of the Defence Forces Training Centre form part of the Curragh Plains, a site unique in terms of its archaeological, environmental, historical and cultural heritage.

As custodian of the Curragh Plains, my Department is very aware of the competing challenges faced in relation to conservation of the land and its use by members of the public.

My Department is always open to considering requests from local community groups seeking access to the Curragh. Such requests are facilitated where possible, taking account of the constraints that exist in relation to the preservation of the Curragh and also of the needs of the DFTC as an operational military facility located within the Plains.

Appointments to State Boards

118. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of boards or agencies to which his officials have been appointed; if there are guidelines or protocols for members of staff being appointed to boards or agencies; if so, when same was last updated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6643/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I can confirm that an official from my Department has been appointed to each of the following three boards -

- the Interim Public Sector Procurement Reform Board
- the National Shared Services Office Advisory Board
- the Management Board of the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management

The provisions of Circular 12/2010, Protocol for Civil Servants Nominated to the Boards of Non-commercial State Bodies, which are also incorporated within the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, apply to officials of the Department of Defence. These are the most recent protocols that exist for officials being appointed to boards or agencies.

Defence Forces Pensions

119. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the reason a retired member of the Defence Forces (details supplied) has not received an increase in pension entitlement for the past decade; when a pension will be received by retired Army ranks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6743/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA) 2018-2020 sets out the policy on public service pension increases as adopted by Government for the duration of that agreement to end-2020, whereby some public service pensions qualify to be increased on foot of basic pay increases due under the terms of the PSSA.

Due to the 2010 public service pay cuts and the ‘grace period’ protections associated with those reductions, former public servants who retired before 1 March 2012 – such as the person in question – have their pensions based on higher ‘pre-cut’ salary levels. This has led to the situation whereby those who retired since 1 March 2012, on a like-for-like basis, generally receive lower pensions than their counterparts who retired before them.

Under Section 6.2 of the PSSA, a guiding principle of current pension increase policy is the need to adopt an equitable approach. This means that those who retired since 1 March 2012 must first ‘catch up’ with their counterparts – such as the person in question – who retired before them on higher pension rates.

There is an ongoing administrative exercise over the course of the PSSA to review and adjust public service pension rates in line with current policy. As regards military pensioners who retired since 1 March 2012, I am advised that, generally speaking, the benefit of the recent pay increases including the 1% from 1 January 2018 and 1% from 1 October 2018 under the PSSA has now been passed on (with arrears) to those post-1 March 2012 retirees, including any associated dependants. The next scheduled pay increase for public servants including members of the Defence Forces is 1.75% from 1 September 2019.

The pension increase policy out to end-2020 also provides that the benefit of the PSSA pay increases will be passed on to qualifying pre-March 2012 pensioners, but only where the pensions of those who retired since March 2012 with analogous retiring rank, pensionable service etc. have moved ahead of pre-March 2012 retirees. In that context, military pension rates will continue to be monitored and reviewed by my Department according as each pay increase is being implemented.

However, as matters currently stand, this person’s pension remains ahead of his counterparts

who have the same retiring rank and pensionable service etc., and who retired from the Defence Forces since 1 March 2012.

Defence Forces Recruitment

120. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 110 to 112, inclusive, of 28 November 2018 and No. 75 of 24 January 2019, the reason for the delay in answering the original three questions; the exact timeframe for reply in this regard; if all written parliamentary questions in respect of the Defence Forces are subject to similar delays in issuing responses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6754/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The information sought by the Deputy through his original questions in November is extensive. The Defence Forces continue to work on extracting the material sought from their records. Officials in my Department are in on-going contact with the military authorities in this regard.

I acknowledge the passage of time in replying to the deputy and can assure him that my officials remain engaged with the military authorities to ensure that the task of providing the data sought by the Deputy is prioritised by the Defence Forces.

Defence Forces Personnel Data

121. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of appointments in the Defence Forces training centre for civilian employees; the number of these positions unfilled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6963/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Civilian Employees are appointed to support the operational capability of the Defence Forces. There are currently 119 civilian staff employed in the Defence Forces Training Centre (DFTC) in the Curragh, and a number of recruitment campaigns are currently under way. A further 11 applicants have been successful in recent recruitment campaigns for the DFTC, and have yet to commence employment.

The recruitment of Civilian Employees for military installations is an ongoing process, based on a combination of the filling of consequential vacancies which have arisen due to promotions and retirements, and the filling of priority vacancies on the basis of identified requirements.

Army Barracks

122. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if funding has been made available for the refurbishment of catering facilities at Custume Barracks, Athlone; and when the project will commence. [6998/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The need to refurbish and upgrade the existing Dining Hall at Custume Barracks, for the purpose of providing a modern kitchen and dining facility to accommodate all ranks stationed at the Barracks, was identified as part of the ongoing Capital Building Programme designed to modernise and enhance the training, operational and accommodation facilities available to members of the Defence Forces.

To this end, I approved funding to award the main works contract last October 2018 with Bourke Builders (Ballina) Ltd for a Contract Sum of €4.19m. Construction work for this project started on 26 Oct 2018 and work is due to be completed by the end of 2019.

Air Corps Equipment

123. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the position regarding the replacement of CASA maritime patrol aircraft within the Air Corps. [6999/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My priority as Minister with Responsibility for Defence is to ensure that the operational capability of the Defence Forces is maintained to the greatest extent possible so as to enable the Defence Forces to carry out their roles as assigned by Government.

The White Paper on Defence provides for the replacement of the two CASA 235 Maritime Patrol Aircraft with consideration of their replacement with larger more suitable aircraft, which would enhance maritime surveillance and provide a greater degree of utility for transport and cargo carrying tasks. A public tender competition for the replacement of the CASA Maritime Patrol Aircraft is underway in my Department at present, following the publication of a Request for Proposals on the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) in May 2018. The cost of the aircraft will only be known once the tender competition is concluded.

The Deputy may wish to note that the White Paper also provides for the replacement of the current Air Corps Cessna fleet with three larger aircraft which will be equipped for Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR). Following an open tender competition, a contract was placed with Pilatus Aircraft Ltd in December 2017 at a cost of some €32m for the provision of three PC-12 fixed wing utility aircraft suitably equipped for ISTAR tasks which will replace the Cessna fleet. It is expected that the three aircraft will be delivered by 2020.

In accordance with the National Development Plan, the capital allocation for Defence has been increased to €106 million for 2019, an increase of €29 million. The NDP provides for a total of €541 million over the period 2018 to 2022. This level of capital funding will allow the Defence Organisation to undertake a programme of sustained equipment replacement and infrastructural development across the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service as identified and prioritised in the Defence White Paper and builds on the significant investment programme over recent years. The replacement of the Air Corps Cessna aircraft and the CASA 235 Maritime Patrol Aircraft are among the projects included.

Irish Aid

124. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the compliance of Irish Aid in regard to public sector equality duties and specifically if its volunteer rosters are equipped for disabled volunteers; if the rosters possess independent appeal processes that include disability in regard to volunteer membership; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6596/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, including its Development Cooperation and Africa Division, is fully compliant with its duties under article 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014, which provides that a public body shall in the per-

formance of its functions have regard to the need to: (a) eliminate discrimination; (b) promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services and (c) protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services. It should be noted that as volunteer roster members are neither members of the Department's staff, nor persons to whom the Department provides a service, the article 42 provision cited above does not apply. Nonetheless, consistent with the approach of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, in the event of any candidate with a disability requesting a reasonable accommodation at the time of application, such a request would be given full and thorough consideration.

As stated in the response to Parliamentary Question 58 of 7 February 2019, Ireland's policy on overseas volunteering is set out in the Volunteering Initiative, which promotes skills-based, sustainable volunteering overseas, working in partnership with third parties. The forthcoming launch of a new White Paper on International Development provides an opportunity to review our approach to overseas volunteering to ensure that it keeps pace with the evolving discourse on volunteering for development, and also with the development of best practice on promoting equality and diversity at home and abroad. The Department will consult with relevant stakeholders to take this work forward.

The arrangements for volunteer roster members, and for volunteer roster appeals processes have been set out in the responses to previous Parliamentary Questions, including No. 65 of 6 February 2019, No. 58 of 7 February 2019 and No. 60 of 23 January 2019.

Human Rights

125. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the steps being taken at EU and international level to address human rights concerns in Bahrain; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6406/19]

126. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if the EU or international community has formally investigated reports of torture in prisons in Bahrain; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6407/19]

127. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the action taken or that will be taken regarding the detention of human rights activists in Bahrain; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6408/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 125 to 127, inclusive, together.

The human rights situation in Bahrain is deteriorating, and is a matter of growing concerns. Despite the Bahraini Government stating its commitment to improving its human rights record, citizens in Bahrain are living in an increasingly restrictive society. In recent years there has been further erosion of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of opinion and expression.

Respect for human rights is an integral part of Ireland's foreign policy. We continually advocate for the right of civil society actors and human rights defenders to operate in a safe environment, without fear of reprisal for speaking out. Ireland, as a small country, amplifies its voice on human rights issues through multilateral engagement and through measured recommendations offered as part of constructive dialogue. Ireland has repeatedly raised Bahraini issues at the UN Human Rights Council.

For example, we have repeatedly highlighted concerns about the human rights situation in

Bahrain as part of our Item 4 Statements (“human rights situations that require the Council’s attention”) over the last few years. Ireland has expressed concern about the treatment of human rights defenders and the shrinking of civil society space in Bahrain. At the last HRC Universal Periodic Review of Bahrain’s human rights record in 2017, Ireland urged Bahrain to accept an open offer by the OHCHR to visit Bahrain.

Ireland urges all states to safeguard the human rights of prisoners and detainees and is committed to the prevention and eradication of torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Our voice has been prominent in highlighting this thematic issue. HRC Resolution 36/16, which Ireland co-sponsored, calls upon states to ‘investigate promptly, effectively and impartially all alleged human rights violations and abuses suffered by persons deprived of their liberty, in particular cases involving death, torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, to provide effective remedies to the victims, and to ensure that detention administrations cooperate fully with the investigating authority and preserve all evidence’. Ireland has also co-sponsored thematic Resolutions in the Human Rights Council concerning human rights in the administration of justice; and concerning torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

My Department will continue to monitor developments in Bahrain, and to call on the Bahraini Government to deliver on its stated commitment to make progress in relation to human rights. While Ireland has positive bilateral relations with Bahrain, this does not prevent us from raising our concerns through the appropriate channels. My Department has consistently raised issues of human rights in Bahrain directly with Bahraini officials, as well as at EU and international level, and we will continue to do so whenever opportunities arise.

Human Rights

128. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the Rohingya; the efforts being made by the EU and international community to address this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6409/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Since military security operations in Rakhine State escalated in August 2017, approximately 720,000 refugees, mostly Rohingya, have fled to Bangladesh. There have been reports of further violence emerging from Rakhine State in recent weeks.

In response, Ireland has sought to deploy political pressure with the aim of easing the crisis. We have done this through bilateral contacts in Myanmar, and through our membership of both the EU and UN. This included active support for the establishment of an Independent International Fact-Finding Mission (IIFFM) on Myanmar.

The report of the Mission, which was published in August 2018, found that human rights violations amounting to crimes against humanity and war crimes have been committed by members of the Burmese Military (Tatmadaw) and other security forces in Rakhine as well as in Kachin and Shan States. The IIFFM report also finds that there is sufficient evidence of crimes committed in Rakhine State being so grave that they warrant a competent court to determine the liability for the crime of genocide of those in the Tatmadaw chain of command.

Ireland has worked closely with EU and UN partners to respond to this crisis and one of the key issues we have focused on so far is the issue of accountability. At the 39th Session of the UN Human Rights Council, Ireland actively supported the creation of a resolution on Myanmar which mandates a new impartial independent mechanism to collect, consolidate, preserve and

analyse evidence of the most serious violations of international law committed in Myanmar since 2011. This is an important step in facilitating fair and independent criminal proceedings for these crimes. We will continue to advocate for this mechanism including at the upcoming 40th Session of the UN Human Rights Council.

Within the EU, Ireland has pressed for progress within Myanmar on these issues. The EU Foreign Affairs Council adopted Conclusions on Myanmar on 10 December 2018, which respond to the IIFFM report and call on Myanmar to hold those responsible for these crimes to account and to take meaningful action towards the creation of conditions conducive to a safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return of those displaced from Rakhine State to their places of origin. This new set of Conclusions builds on the earlier Council Conclusions on Myanmar of 26 February 2018, which provided for targeted restrictive measures against senior military officers of the Myanmar Security Forces responsible for these acts.

Ireland has also provided direct funding of €2.325 million since 2017 to the Rohingya crisis response, supporting vulnerable communities living in conflict-affected areas of Rakhine state and Rohingya refugee settlements in Bangladesh. Our support has focused on food, nutrition, shelter, water and sanitation. In addition, experts in water and sanitation and humanitarian co-ordination were deployed from Irish Aid's Rapid Response Corps and 37 tonnes of Irish Aid pre-positioned emergency relief supplies were dispatched for distribution by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Ireland has also provided substantial humanitarian support via the UN-administered Central Emergency Response Fund.

It is clear that, ultimately, the long-standing drivers of conflict in Myanmar need to be addressed. In regard to Rakhine State, the IIFFM recognises that the implementation of the findings of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State (The Annan Commission) provides a roadmap for sustainable and community-led peacebuilding in Rakhine State, and for the development of impoverished regions there. Ireland has strongly and repeatedly called for the full implementation of the Advisory Commission's findings and will continue to do so. Officials in my Department, including in the Embassy of Ireland in Thailand which is also accredited to Myanmar, will continue to monitor the situation.

Trade Promotion

129. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the efforts to double Ireland's global footprint by 2025; the actions taken to date; the actions that will be taken in the short to medium-term; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6410/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): In launching 'Global Ireland 2025', the Government committed to the most ambitious renewal and expansion of Ireland's international presence ever undertaken.

We have committed to a range of measures to advance our strategic international objectives. This includes deepening our network by strengthening our presence in key existing locations, and opening new offices. This will enable us to leverage the opportunities to grow our trade and inward investment, to further strengthen political relationships with our partners and promote our values, and to support Irish citizens and our diaspora abroad.

Work is advancing on the expansion and strengthening of Ireland's diplomatic network. Our new Embassy in Wellington, New Zealand, opened officially in August 2018. Since its opening the Embassy has been busy campaigning for Ireland's Security Council Campaign; has

hosted a number of events to engage with the political and business community; and has successfully supported a number of high level bilateral visits.

Ireland's new Consulate General in Vancouver opened in October 2018 and has been working closely with the local business community, the Vancouver Chapter of the Ireland Canada Chamber of Commerce and the Irish Community in the region.

An Embassy was established in Liberia in June 2018 (which replaced the Development Office in the country). This is an important first step in bolstering our existing political and economic connections in West Africa and seeking out new opportunities and links in the region.

Looking ahead, staff recently arrived on the ground in Bogotá, Amman, Mumbai and Santiago de Chile, and these Missions will officially open shortly. These new Missions will promote Ireland and Irish interests over the St. Patrick's Day period with each hosting a Ministerial visit. The next phase of expansion will focus on Cardiff, Los Angeles and Frankfurt in 2019, and Embassies in Kiev, Manila and Rabat shortly thereafter.

Global Ireland also recognises the importance of reinforcing our existing network to enable us to better shape and influence international events in our interests. At a time of considerable challenge for the European Union, I see it as imperative that we deepen our engagement with our EU partners. That's why we are augmenting our Embassies in Rome and Madrid, Warsaw and The Hague, as we have already done in Paris and Berlin. It will allow us to play a more active role in supporting and promoting a rules based international environment and will help us play our full role in addressing some of the global challenges that will impact us over the period ahead.

Emigrant Support Services

130. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the actions taken to address difficulties being experienced by returning Irish emigrants; the progress in implementing the recommendations from the report on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6411/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): This Government is committed to making it as easy as possible for Irish emigrants to return to live and work in Ireland. Reducing barriers to returning emigrants has important implications for national competitiveness; in a growing Irish economy facilitating the return of skills will be of importance in sustaining economic growth.

My colleague, the Minister of State for the Diaspora, Ciarán Cannon, chairs the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Irish Abroad which works to ensure that Government works in a joined up way to realise the objectives of Ireland's Diaspora Policy, including addressing issues affecting the Irish abroad and those seeking to return.

On foot of the work by the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Irish Abroad my Department commissioned an independent economic report on difficulties experienced by Irish people returning home. This report was completed in February 2018, considered by Government, and published on the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website.

Since the publication of the Indecon Economic Report on Addressing Challenges Faced by Returning Irish Emigrants, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has undertaken a number of steps, in conjunction with other Government Departments and State Agencies, to address the thirty recommendations made in the report. Most recently, Minister of State Cannon wrote

to relevant Ministers in December 2018 seeking a further update on progress on their individual areas of responsibility, which will be addressed at the next IDC meeting on 21st February.

My Department has already implemented several of the Indecon Report's recommendations in relation to information provision. An enhanced 'Returning to Ireland' section containing more information and advice for returning emigrants has been developed for our dedicated diaspora website, the Global Irish Hub. Officials are working closely with the Citizen's Information Board to ensure that returning emigrants have the best information and advice possible to assist them in making the return back to Ireland.

Currently, nineteen of the total thirty recommendations have been addressed. Departments are aware of further action to be taken in respect of 6 recommendations. The remaining 5 recommendations are being partially implemented, or are being considered as part of a wider issue rather than in the context of the recommendation alone.

All responses made in respect of these recommendations will inform a further Memorandum to Government, and will, at the request of Government, provide an update on the progress made since the publication of the Indecon Report.

Passport Applications

131. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the necessary documentation required when applying for a passport; and if an applicant whose passport is expired in excess of five years must provide a public services card with the application. [6445/19]

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 2008 Act"). The 2008 Act, provides among other things, that the Passport Service must be satisfied as to the identity of an applicant.

Since March 29th, 2016, the Passport Service has required all first time passport applicants, aged 18 and above, who are resident in Ireland to submit a copy of their Public Services card (PSC) with their passport application. In cases where the applicant's most recent passport has expired by more than 5 years, ie their last passport application was more than 15 years ago, the new passport application will have the same requirements as a first time passport application.

The requirement to submit a copy of the PSC has been an important step in protecting against fraud and identity theft and in upholding the integrity of the Irish passport.

Ministerial Advisers Data

132. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of advisers and special advisers employed by his Department in 2017 and 2018 and to date in 2019; the areas of expertise covered by such advisers; the annual salaries associated with same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6572/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I appointed four Special Advisers in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2017.

- Mr. Matthew Lynch is my Special Adviser on Cabinet, Oireachtas and Leader's Questions.

- Mr. Chris Donoghue is my Special Adviser and Communications Director.

- Ms. Caitríona Fitzpatrick was my Special Adviser and Political Director. She has recently concluded her role with the Department.

- Mr. Paul Fox is Special Adviser to the Minister of State for European Affairs

The Special Adviser to the Minister of State is on the Assistant Principal Officer salary scale. My Special Advisers are on the Principal Officer salary scale.

I did not appoint any further advisers in 2018 nor to date in 2019.

All appointments were made in line with “Instructions to Personnel Officers – Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil” which included “Guidelines on staffing of Ministerial offices” issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Every appointment in my Department is subject to the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour.

Appointments to State Boards

133. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of boards or agencies his officials have been appointed to; if there are guidelines or protocols for members of staff being appointed to boards or agencies; if so, when same were last updated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6647/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has no boards or agencies under its remit and consequently no officials from my Department have been appointed to any boards or agencies.

Syrian Conflict

134. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the conflict in Syria; the efforts being made at EU and international level to bring a political resolution to the conflict; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6808/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Syria conflict, which will have lasted eight years next month, has cost the lives of well over 400,000 people. Over 13 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria, over 6 million people are displaced internally, and a further 5.6 million have fled to neighbouring countries and the wider region. The Assad regime and its allies have repeatedly targeted civilians, through deliberate attacks, including chemical attacks, on civilian infrastructure such as homes, hospitals and schools, the use of “starve or surrender” techniques and the denial of humanitarian assistance, and forced displacement in the interest of demographic engineering. Other groups, most notably ISIS, have also perpetrated atrocities.

The situation in Syria remains grave, and there are particular fears with regards to the situation in Idlib, where conflict between the regime and opposition groups is continuing and could escalate; and in north-east Syria, where tensions between Kurdish groups and Turkey are rising. ISIS has yet to be fully defeated, and vigilance is needed to ensure that it does not re-emerge. I remain deeply concerned about the wellbeing of the Syrian people, both those inside Syria, including those who continue to suffer under an oppressive and murderous Government, as well as those in neighbouring countries, who are watching anxiously to see whether conditions will develop which will allow them to return home. Humanitarian needs remain extensive, and

a major donor conference will take place in Brussels next month to discuss how these can be addressed.

Those with influence on the Syrian regime have a responsibility to exert pressure to ensure that civilians are protected, and to encourage the Syrian Government to engage fully with the UN-led peace process.

Ireland and the EU firmly believe that nearly eight years of war have shown that military action cannot bring lasting peace to Syria. We strongly support the UN-led efforts to bring about a political resolution to the conflict, in accordance with the 2012 Geneva Communiqué and UN Security Council Resolution 2254. These parameters make it clear that this needs to be a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led process. The EU provides direct assistance to the Geneva peace talks and has launched, in coordination with the UN, an initiative to develop political dialogue with key actors from the region to identify common ground.

The UN Special Envoy's efforts are currently focused on establishing a constitutional committee, made up of Syrians of different political views, to chart the way forward for the country. The UN Special Envoy has been engaging directly with Russia, Turkey and Iran on this, and we believe that they have a responsibility to support and assist his efforts.

EU Foreign Ministers met with former UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, in the margins of the 2018 UN General Assembly, and the EU will continue engagement with the new UN Special Envoy Geir Pedersen, who took up his position at the end of 2018. At the recent EU-League of Arab States Ministerial meeting on 4 February, I raised the ongoing conflict in Syria with my EU and Arab counterparts. The tragedy in Syria will remain on the agenda for EU Foreign Ministers, and the Brussels conference next month will give the EU an opportunity to set out our plans to support the Syrian people.

Ireland is a strong and consistent donor to the Syria crisis response and our overall funding supports those in need inside Syria as well as Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in the region, including Jordan. At the 2018 Brussels Donor conference, Ireland pledged to contribute a further €25 million in 2018, bringing Ireland's total humanitarian assistance in response to the Syria crisis to over €116 million since 2012. This is our largest response to any single crisis and a clear indication of our concern for Syria and its people. Through its annual contributions to the EU Institutions, Ireland also supports the EU's humanitarian response in Syria.

I take this opportunity to reiterate my unreserved condemnation of the violence perpetrated against civilians that has characterised the Syrian conflict to date, most notably by the Government and its allies, and the appalling acts committed by ISIS.

Diplomatic Representation

135. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has considered reopening an embassy in Iran, particularly in the context of plans to double Ireland's global footprint by 2025; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6809/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Embassy of Ireland in Ankara is currently accredited on a non-residential basis to Iran. The Ambassador of Ireland in Ankara travels regularly to Iran in support of our broad policy objectives, including the development of political relations, trade relations and supporting the needs of Irish businesses operating or hoping to operate there.

Ireland is also represented in Iran by an Honorary Consul. Honorary Consuls are an important element of the State's global engagement and provide consular services and assistance, as well as a range of other supports, to citizens and to the Embassy in Ankara.

The Government is of course conscious of the political, economic and trade factors which might warrant the opening of a resident diplomatic mission in Iran. Iran is an important local and regional power, as well as a large potential market.

Further, and as part of the Global Ireland 2025, the Government is committed to significantly expanding our diplomatic, commercial and cultural networks globally, while also continuously reviewing the scale of Ireland's overseas network. In considering the expansion of our diplomatic representations overseas, a range of factors are taken into account, including our national political, economic, and trade priorities, as well as availability of resources. Regrettably resource constraints do not allow us to have resident representation in all locations that might objectively justify it having regard to those factors. Nonetheless, the question of a resident Mission in Iran will continue to form part of our on-going considerations under the Global Ireland initiative.

Human Rights

136. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the steps he has taken to specifically help the Yazidi; if he will consider providing specific funding to assist the Yazidi women and children that have escaped sexual slavery and abuse at the hands of ISIS; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6811/19]

137. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has given consideration to recognising formally the brutal campaign against the Yazidi by ISIS as genocide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6812/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 136 and 137 together.

I absolutely and unreservedly condemn the vile and criminal acts committed against Yazidis by the terrorist group ISIS in Iraq and Syria. I am appalled by the suffering which the innocent people caught up in these events have endured, especially women and girls who were the targets of sexual and gender-based violence. While the situation has improved with a successful fight back against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, challenges remain in terms of healing the trauma victims have endured, ensuring humanitarian aid reaches them, and ensuring displaced populations can return to their homelands once it is safe to do so.

In September 2015, Ireland addressed the UN Human Rights Council on the topic of a report by the UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria, which concluded that ISIS had committed the crime of genocide against the Yazidis. In our statement, we noted that the Human Rights Council and the membership of the United Nations have "*an inarguable duty to end these crimes and work to achieve justice and accountability for the victims*".

I regard the report of the Commission of Inquiry and its findings of genocide as authoritative. However, the responsibility for a legal determination of the crime of genocide is a matter for a legally competent and internationally recognised court. These atrocities took place in both Syria and Iraq and reported crimes in both States need to be investigated and prosecuted.

In this regard, I welcomed the UN Security Council Resolution of September 2017 requesting the creation of an independent investigative team to help to hold ISIS accountable for its ac-

tions in Iraq. The resulting body, known as UNITAD, has now been established, and is currently focusing on a number of core activities, such as the collection of existing evidence, conducting field-based investigations, and preserving evidence of acts that may amount to genocide and other grave crimes committed by ISIS in Iraq. Ireland fully supports the efforts of UN Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, in helping to bring the perpetrators of these heinous crimes to justice.

Ireland is of course a substantial humanitarian donor in Syria, having contributed over €116 million in funding since 2012. And Ireland has provided over €9.5 million in humanitarian assistance to Iraq since 2012, including €2 million to the UN Iraq Humanitarian Fund (IHF) in 2018. The Fund is managed by UN OCHA, and provides emergency assistance to those affected by conflict and displacement, including the Yazidi. In addition, Ireland contributes to the humanitarian response in Iraq via our contributions to the EU budget. The EU's humanitarian response provided over €40 million to Iraq in 2018. This funding is for a wide range of interventions targeted at the most vulnerable parts of Iraqi society. Last year this included assistance of €5 million towards emergency reproductive and mental health care for victims of violence.

Last week, officials from my Department met with an NGO which advocates on behalf of the Yazidi people to discuss the current challenges their community faces in Iraq and internationally, including the issue of justice and accountability for the terrible crimes that have been perpetrated against them. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Election Monitoring Missions

138. Deputy Séan Haughey asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the name and age of each observer appointed to the 2018 election observer roster; the county each lives in; if they were members of the previous roster; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6829/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade maintains and administers a roster of suitably skilled individuals who are available to participate in election observation missions overseas, organised in the main by the EU and the OSCE. A new roster was put in place in January 2019. This followed a Call for Volunteers which issued in July 2018.

Under the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Department cannot disclose the personal data of any member of the election observation roster without their specific, informed, unambiguous and freely-given consent. There is of course a public interest in disclosing the names of roster members. For this reason, as roster members are being trained, the Department is seeking the consent of individual roster members to allow us to disclose the list of names of the new roster by way of a response to a Parliamentary Question. This process is ongoing.

Data regarding the age or place of residence of members of the new roster has not been captured for statistical analysis. For insurance purposes, as roster members complete security vetting the Department will be capturing the age profile of the new roster. When this process is complete, the Department will consider the information which can be provided regarding the demographics of the new roster, subject of course to the GDPR. While security vetting is ongoing, based on the shortlisted candidates, slightly more than half of the new roster were not members of the last roster. With almost twice as many applications to available roster places, the intense competition will ensure that the quality of Ireland's election observation nominations remains high.

Passport Services

139. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the breakdown of the allocation in 2019 for the passport reform programme; the phases that will be delivered in 2019; the date in 2019 each will be delivered; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6862/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Passport Reform Programme (2016 - 2021) is delivering major upgrades to the passport service technology platforms and business processes as well as making significant customer service improvements to the Passport Service.

The Programme consists of over 30 individual projects and the award winning online passport renewal service has been the most significant project launched under the Programme to date.

In March 2017, Phase 1 of the online renewal service was launched which facilitates the online renewal of straightforward adult passports. In November 2018, Phase 2 of the project extended the service to the renewal of children's passports, introduced a passport card for children and expanded the cohort of adults eligible to renew online.

To allow for further reform and development of the Passport Service €6.6 m will be made available to the reform programme in 2019 which is focused mainly on 5 major projects.

1. Mailing Machines – to be completed this year at a cost of €1 million
2. Business Process Automation – to be completed this year at a cost of €150,000
3. Passport Integrated Processing System – due to start in Q4 this year at a cost of €1.5 million
4. Improvement to customer service systems – to be completed this year at a cost of €2 million
5. Upgrading document management system – due to start Q2 this year at a cost of €750,000

I can confirm that the funding available to the programme has not been impacted by any other funding allocation.

UN Funding

140. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if funding was provided in 2018 to support the work of the United Nations population fund in humanitarian settings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7037/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is a long standing supporter of UNFPA. We provide non-earmarked core funding to the agency on an annual basis and intend to continue this in 2019.

Between 1990 and 2015, maternal mortality was reduced by 44%, yet approximately 830 women die each day from preventable causes related to maternal and child health. Virtually all

maternal deaths occur in developing countries; more than half of maternal deaths occur in fragile and humanitarian settings. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) works in development and humanitarian contexts to deliver lifesaving sexual and reproductive health services in order to respond to the impacts of poverty, inequality, and humanitarian emergencies.

In 2018, my Department provided €3,500,000 to UNFPA, an increase of €700,000 on our 2017 core contribution. As the Tánaiste outlined in his speech at the launch of the UNFPA's State of the World Population Report in October 2018, Ireland is proud to be a consistent supporter of UNFPA. Since 2006 we have provided funding of around €55 million to the Population Fund, the majority of which is core funding. Ireland values the important work of UNFPA and is committed to core funding on the principle that this allows the agency to set their priorities and plan according to need which is, we believe, critical to the on-the-ground delivery of results in complex contexts.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is not currently providing additional funding to the UNFPA's Humanitarian Appeal and no decision to fund this specific programme in 2019 has been taken to date.

Ministerial Meetings

141. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the details of his visit to the United States of America, including meetings and engagements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7048/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I travelled to the United States from 5 - 7 February, for a series of engagements in New York and Washington, D.C.

In New York, I met with representatives of a number of UN Member States for wide-ranging discussions, including on Ireland's candidature for a seat on the UN Security Council for the term 2021 – 2022.

In Washington DC, I attended a Ministerial meeting of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, of which Ireland is a member. This was a good opportunity to meet with representatives of some of the 70 approx. countries in attendance, and to sit down with US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, for discussions over lunch.

Engaging with Secretary Pompeo, my meetings with the Congressional Friends of Ireland, as well as other meetings with Democratic and Republican leaders in Congress, were valuable opportunities to discuss priority issues, in particular in relation to Northern Ireland, Brexit, immigration, our economic relationship and foreign policy issues.

Additionally, I had the opportunity to meet with US Special Representative for International Negotiations, Jason Greenblatt, to discuss Middle East issues.

The centrepiece of the visit was a large event on Capitol Hill, with the Congressional Friends of Ireland, to mark the centenary of the First Dáil at the opening of the 116th Congress. I thanked the Friends of Ireland for their unwavering commitment to peace and reconciliation on the island of Ireland - a commitment which is as vital as ever.

I was also delighted to launch at this event the Government's new Strategy for the US and Canada, under the Global Ireland Initiative. This Strategy will see Ireland doubling its impact in both the US and Canada, through investment and engagement; deepening, broadening and

securing these hugely important relationships at every level for the future.

Ministerial Meetings

142. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on his lunch meeting with the US Secretary of State, Mr. Mike Pompeo; the issues that were discussed; the responses that were made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7085/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): In the context of my recent visit to the US, I attended a Ministerial meeting of the Global Coalition to Defeat-ISIS on Wednesday 6 February in Washington DC. The meeting was chaired by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and we had the opportunity for a useful and wide-ranging discussion over lunch.

As with all of my meetings with the US Administration and Congressional leaders, Northern Ireland was a central focus; specifically, the importance of protecting the Good Friday Agreement in the current Brexit context, and supporting peace and reconciliation. Secretary Pompeo acknowledged the importance of this task, and the important role successive US Administrations have played in supporting the peace process.

I outlined the Government's ambitions for the US-Ireland relationship, as set out in our new US and Canada Strategy, which includes protecting and growing our strong, reciprocal economic relationship; and ensuring our people can work and live more easily in both the US and Ireland.

Our discussion also covered some of the issues which arose in the course of the Ministerial meeting; Ireland's contribution to the aims of the Global Coalition; as well as a number of long-standing and emerging foreign policy priorities for both the Government and the US Administration.

Brexit Negotiations

143. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he is considering a long-time limit on the European backstop in view of the difficulties in the House of Commons. [6681/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Government is not considering a time limit on the backstop.

The backstop acts as an insurance policy to avoid a hard border in all scenarios, and a time-limit would be contrary to its purpose.

The EU27 have consistently, and unanimously, stated that they stand by the Withdrawal Agreement and that it is not open for renegotiation.

President Juncker reiterated this to Prime Minister May directly, during their meeting in Brussels on 7 February, and made clear that the EU is not in a position to agree to anything that is inconsistent with what has been agreed with the British Government in the Withdrawal Agreement, including on the backstop.

President Juncker did express his openness to add wording to the Political Declaration

agreed by the EU27 and the UK in order to be more ambitious in terms of content and speed when it comes to the future relationship between the European Union and the UK.

Trade Sanctions

144. Deputy Séan Crowe asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the fact that the Government of the United States of America may implement Title 3 of the Helms-Burton Act (details supplied); and if he will raise the matter with his US counterpart. [7137/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The 1996 Helms Burton Act is a US federal law which reinforces the US's long standing economic embargo against Cuba.

Since 1996, European persons or entities have remained potentially affected by the extra-territorial elements in Titles III and IV of the Act, but a 1998 Memorandum of Understanding between the EU and US has waived Title III every six months and, as a result, European persons and entities have been protected from the relevant provisions of the Act.

On 16 January 2019, the US State Department announced that the next waiver, effective from 1 February 2019, would have a duration of 45 days only, the first time since the Act's promulgation that the US has not waived Title III for six months.

This development has been noted by Ireland and our EU partners and I can confirm that the Helms-Burton Act was recently discussed at the EU Council Working Party on Transatlantic Relations (COTRA), at which Ireland was represented at official level. A presentation was given by the European External Action Service on this development and on the potential risks impacting the EU and its economic operators.

It is not clear at this stage what this move to a 45-day waiver period means for Irish and other EU entities that have operations in/with Cuba. My officials are in close contact with the EU Commission on this matter and are monitoring the situation closely.

I will engage with my US counterpart on the issue in due course, if required.

Brexit Issues

145. Deputy Brendan Griffin asked the Minister for Finance the customs arrangements (details supplied) in the event of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6460/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue, that they have had extensive engagement with businesses throughout the State over the last 18 months in the context of preparing for Brexit. That engagement has intensified since the last quarter of 2018 and is continuing.

I am aware that Revenue have written to all businesses who trade with the UK advising them of the steps they need to take to prepare for Brexit. Revenue's Trader Engagement Programme provides information and assistance on the EU customs requirements and formalities that apply to trade with and through a 3rd country which the UK will become for customs purposes after it leaves the EU. Revenue's engagement has included seminars for large economic operators, customs agents/brokers, software providers and business representative bodies. Seminars have taken place in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Wexford, Limerick and Sligo. Full details of the customs

procedures are available on Revenue's dedicated Brexit webpage.

In relation to transit arrangements, the UK submitted an instrument of accession to the Convention on Common Transit (CTC) on 30 January 2019. This means that goods moving from Ireland to another Member State via the UK post-Brexit can move under the customs transit procedure. As part of their preparations for Brexit, I am advised that Revenue has recruited additional Customs officers who will work on a 24/7 basis in the ports and airports. There will be sufficient resources in place to support businesses in complying with the necessary transit formalities.

Emigrant Support Services

146. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Finance if he will address the issue of returning emigrants being charged high car insurance due to the fact they have lost their no claims bonuses (details supplied). [6244/19]

149. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Finance the steps he is taking to ensure that the 28,000 returning Irish emigrants in 2019 will not be treated as first time drivers or novice drivers in the calculations of insurance companies (details supplied). [6304/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 146 and 149 together.

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

Notwithstanding this, the difficulties faced by returning emigrants in respect of motor insurance are being addressed as part of the Cost of Insurance Working Group's ongoing implementation of its recommendations. The Deputy may be aware that in fulfilment of one of the Working Group's recommendations, a protocol was agreed between Insurance Ireland and the Department of Finance under which insurance companies committed to accepting the driving experience returning emigrants gained while abroad, when the driver has had previous driving experience in Ireland.

The guiding principle of the protocol is to ensure that a returning emigrant is not treated differently to any other driver, subject to verification of their continued driving experience and the normal acceptance criteria of the company. Thus, a returning emigrant will not be disadvantaged from spending that time abroad. Furthermore, under the protocol, insurance companies will not distinguish between countries on the basis of which side of the road driving takes place therein.

Insurance Ireland submitted a report on the implementation of this recommendation to the Department in December 2017. This report confirmed that Insurance Ireland members have agreed to publish the wording of the agreed protocol on their company websites and other forms of social media, in addition to providing training for staff who can work through issues with

emigrants before they leave, whilst they are out of the country and when they return to Ireland. The stated intention is “to resolve any issues well before they arise and for the consumer to be aware of the considerations when moving abroad”. The wording of the agreed protocol is also available on the Insurance Ireland website. Following a review by the Department, insurers have been asked to ensure this information is displayed more prominently on their websites to ensure that it is accessible and visible for consumers. The Department will continue to monitor this situation.

The December 2017 report from Insurance Ireland also outlined some sample cases which demonstrate how the rolling-out of the protocol has already led to disputed cases being resolved to the benefit of returning emigrants, and provided figures indicating that the number of such cases being processed under the Declined Cases Agreement had been decreasing, a pattern which has endured since. The next report on the operation of the DCA, outlining the figures for 2018, is due to be submitted to my Department in this quarter. My officials will examine the breakdown of the number of cases in the report to determine if the downward trend is continuing and I will continue to monitor the implementation of the recommendation through my Department’s regular engagement with Insurance Ireland.

The Minister for the Diaspora and International Development, Mr Ciarán Cannon TD, has undertaken some further work in this area, through the Interdepartmental Committee on the Irish Abroad. This has included highlighting each individual motor insurance operator’s overall policy in respect of returning emigrants. The insurers which responded positively in relation to providing cover for this category are listed on the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website. These insurers have also indicated that they do, in one way or another, take into account claims-free driving experience earned abroad.

It is important to highlight that if a returning emigrant believes that they have received a high quote due to an insurance provider not accepting driving experience gained while abroad, they should contact the free Insurance Information Service operated by Insurance Ireland, which can be accessed at feedback@insuranceireland.eu or 01-6761820.

Finally, I am hopeful that the continued implementation of all the recommendations from the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance – in addition to those in the CIWG’s Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance and the two reports of the Personal Injuries Commission – can help to maintain and expand the positive trend which has seen private motor insurance premiums decrease by 22.16% over the last two-and-a-half years.

Fuel Allowance Expenditure

147. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated cost of an increase in fuel allowance for those who qualify in order to neutralise the impact of a €5, €10, €15 and €20 increase in the carbon tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6267/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Fuel Allowance is a means-tested payment under the National Fuel Scheme to help with the cost of home heating during the winter months. It is paid to people who are dependent on long-term social welfare payments and who are unable to provide for their own heating needs. Only one Fuel Allowance is paid to a household. The current weekly rate is €22.50 and is paid for 28 weeks from the first week of October until the second week of April.

According to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, the average number in receipt of the national fuel allowance is 369,800.

Questions - Written Answers

In 2018 the ESRI undertook research on the environmental, social and economic impacts of potential carbon tax increases. To examine the distributional impacts, households were assessed by income deciles from poorest to richest. The ESRI's estimated weekly monetary impacts of carbon tax increases of €5, €10, €15 and €20 respectively are as set out in the table below in relation to the two lowest household income deciles (HH1 being the lowest).

-	Monetary Impacts	Monetary Impacts	Monetary Impacts	Monetary Impacts
Carbon Tax Increase	€5	€10	€15	€20
Impact on HH1	€0.45	€0.91	€1.38	€1.87
Impact on HH2	€0.62	€1.26	€1.92	€2.60

The full report can be accessed at: <https://www.esri.ie/system/files?file=media/file-uploads/2018-10/RS79.pdf>

Decisions on tax policy take place every year as part of the annual budgetary process and decisions in relation to carbon tax policy will be informed by available research and analysis, which includes the social and economic impacts of any increases in the carbon tax as well as measures to mitigate such impacts. The Environmental Taxes paper prepared annually for the Tax Strategy Group contains analysis on the carbon tax and this helps inform subsequent budget decisions.

Mortgage Interest Rates

148. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Finance if tracker mortgages will be investigated in cases in which the applicant had an appeal refused by the independent appeals panel of the lender and is unhappy with the appeal outcome; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6292/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Central Bank Tracker Mortgage Examination Framework provides that lenders are to set up an independent appeals process to deal with affected customers who are dissatisfied with any aspect of the redress and compensation offer they received from lenders. The Framework also provides that affected customers can accept the offer for redress and compensation from lenders and, if they are unhappy with the offer, still appeal. Redress and compensation offers cannot be reduced by virtue of a customer lodging an appeal.

Appeals form an important part of the overall Examination process as they ensure an independent and transparent consideration of issues raised by affected customers about any aspect of the redress and compensation they have been offered. In particular, affected customers who have suffered severe detriment, and feel that their personal circumstances have not been sufficiently taken into account, may wish to bring that information forward for consideration by the appeals panel within a set period of time from receipt of their redress and compensation offers.

Where a customer who has appealed and does not accept the findings of the Appeals Panel in place under the Tracker Examination Framework, they still retain the option to bring a complaint to the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman (FSPO) and/or to initiate court proceedings within a specified period of time.

While the Central Bank has no role in adjudicating on appeals under the Tracker Examination Framework, the Central Bank advises that it is monitoring the progress and outcomes from

appeals and expects lenders to consider the outcomes of appeals, including whether they have any wider customer relevance.

Question No. 149 answered with Question No. 146.

Tax Code

150. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the betting tax review; when the review will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6317/19]

154. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance when the review on the betting tax will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6399/19]

167. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Finance the reason the review of an alternative proposal on betting tax has been delayed until July 2019 in view of the fact that it was originally to be reviewed in the first quarter of the year. [6544/19]

168. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the closure of betting shops since January 2019; and if his attention has been further drawn to the fact that betting shops are remaining open pending his review of an alternative proposal on betting tax and that the delay in this regard threatens further significant closures. [6546/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 150, 154, 167 and 168 together.

The increase in the betting duty rate from 1 per cent to 2 per cent, and the betting intermediary duty rate from 15% to 25%, came into effect on 1 January 2019. It is too early to draw any conclusions on the impact of these increases.

I have sympathy for small bookmakers who may have ongoing difficulties competing with large retail and online bookmakers. However, I could not apply the increase in betting duty to some bookmakers and not others. Ultimately many taxes on goods or services are passed through to the end consumers and bookmakers will need to make commercial decisions on such matters.

The Deputies will appreciate that decisions in relation to betting duty need to reflect broader public interest considerations. Receipts from betting duty represented less than 1 per cent of all excise receipts in 2017 and this is also likely to be the case in for 2018. In addition, unlike other excisable commodities, there is no VAT applied on betting transactions. I have outlined why I consider the betting sector needs to make a fair contribution to the Exchequer.

In any discussion on betting duty, we must acknowledge the raised public consciousness of the problem of gambling in society. While problem gambling can result in the problem gambler, and their family, bearing the severest of economic and of course personal costs, the social costs of problem gambling can extend to their employers and to public institutions in the health, welfare and justice systems, such costs ultimately borne by taxpayers. Recent research published by the UK Gambling Commission and others provide an indicative list of these social costs, including loss of employment, experience of bankruptcy and/or debt, loss of housing/homelessness, crime associated with gambling, relationship breakdown/problems and health-related problems.

I have outlined my view that the social costs of problem gambling needs to be better re-

flected within the betting duty regime.

During the course of the Finance Bill process I agreed to review an alternative proposal put forward by the betting sector following the announcement of increases in betting duty in Budget 2019. My officials are currently considering this proposal, including the compatibility of a core element with EU rules, and will set out analysis and options in relation to betting duty at the Tax Strategy Group (TSG) meeting in July. The TSG Papers will be published on the Department's website shortly afterwards.

European Investment Bank Loans

151. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Finance the details of applications for European Investment Bank, EIB, funds made since 1 January 2015; the details of each project; the amount applied for; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6319/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Department of Finance has no role in the day to day activities of the European Investment Bank (EIB). Applications are a matter between the Bank and individual clients.

However, I have been advised by the EIB that, in accordance with the EIB Transparency Policy, the Bank publishes details of all projects financed by or to be financed by the Bank. Details of all Irish projects financed (or to be financed) by the EIB since 1973 are therefore available at the following links:

Projects to be financed – <http://www.eib.org/en/projects/pipelines/index.htm>

Financed projects – <http://www.eib.org/en/projects/loan/list/index>

These project summaries generally include the name of the project, the project promoter or financial intermediary (for intermediated loans), the location of the project, the sector it represents, a project description, its objective(s), its environmental and, if relevant, social aspects, procurement data, proposed EIB finance and the total project cost.

However, it should be noted that a limited number of projects are not published on the website before Board approval and, in some cases, not before loan signature based on the exceptions to disclosure as provided for in the Bank's Transparency Policy (including, for example, protection of commercial interests).

Revenue Documents Issuance

152. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Finance when a person (details supplied) in County Derry can expect a notice of claim to be processed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6323/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that it received a 'notice of claim' from the person in question on 23 October 2018.

Revenue subsequently reverted to the person on 28 January 2019 with a compromise settlement offer to which a reply has not yet been received. If the proposed terms are accepted by the person and payment made, Revenue has assured me that the vehicle will be released.

Central Bank of Ireland Staff

153. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Finance the way in which the selection process for the role of Governor of the Central Bank is carried out; the salary for the role; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6329/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Governor Lane was appointed following a process organised by my Department which involved a public call for expressions of interest in tandem with the hiring of a specialist international executive search firm (Merc Partners).

Any future selection process for the role of Governor of the Central Bank will also be rigorous and comprehensive.

The remuneration, allowances and conditions of the Governor of the Central Bank are determined by the Central Bank Commission, as per Section 19(1) of the Central Bank Act 1942 (as amended).

Question No. 154 answered with Question No. 150.

Stamp Duty

155. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Finance if the direct relationship attracts stamp duty at a lower percentage than if the land was being transferred to a stranger in circumstances in which a father is transferring land to his son; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6404/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that a reduced rate of stamp duty applies to transfers of farmland between a father and son (and certain other blood relatives) subject to certain conditions. A rate of 1% applies instead of the standard 6% rate. This reduced rate is referred to as consanguinity relief.

To be eligible for the relief, the person to whom the land is transferred must either farm the land or lease it to someone who farms the land for a period of at least 6 years. The person farming the land must do so on a commercial basis and with a view to the realisation of profits. The person farming the land must also spend at least 50% of his or her normal working time farming or be the holder of one of the agricultural qualifications set out in Schedule 2, 2A or 2B to the Stamp Duties Consolidation Act 1999.

Insurance Costs

156. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the status of recommendation No. 6 of the report on the cost of employer and public liability insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6419/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Recommendation six of the Cost of Insurance Working Group's Report on the cost of employer and public liability insurance seeks to amend section 8 of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004 to ensure that defendants are notified of a claim lodged against them at an earlier date than currently required i.e. a reduction from two months to one month. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the recommendation was implemented at the end of 2018 through Section 13(2) of the Central Bank (National Claims Information Database) Act 2018, which provides for the amendments to Section 8 of the 2004

Act. This was signed by the President on 28 December 2018 and the Act was commenced in full on 28 January 2019. This will be reflected in the Cost of Insurance Working Group's next update report, due to be published in the coming weeks.

By way of further information to the Deputy, the amendment to Section 8 of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004 deals with the letter of claim and the potential consequences of a failure to serve a notice in writing on the alleged wrongdoer within a prescribed period from the date of the cause of action, which was previously two months. The Cost of Insurance Working Group took the view that Section 8 should be amended to enhance the effectiveness of this statutory requirement.

The key aim of the amendment is to reduce the notification period for the serving of a letter of claim from two months to one month. Its rationale is to align the time period with data protection legislation which provides that data shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for the purposes for which it is obtained – generally no more than one month. However an exception to this rule is where information or CCTV footage is held in the context of an investigation such as a personal injuries claim. Consequently by requiring a plaintiff to notify a defendant within one month of an alleged incident under Section 8, the defendant is being given the opportunity to identify within the data protection time limits any relevant CCTV footage they may have of the incident, and keep it beyond the one month period for investigation purposes where they believe the claim is questionable. This earlier notification period will also help a defendant prepare their defence in a range of other ways such as being able to put together more accurate employee witness statements where this is relevant. In addition, the Working Group believed that the previous wording of Section 8 needed to be strengthened in order to ensure it was used more effectively by the Courts. In this regard, the amendment means that instead of a court having the option to draw inferences from the failure to serve a letter of claim on the alleged wrongdoer within the prescribed period of time though the use of the word “may”, that it should be required to do so as a matter of course through the use of the word “shall”.

The amendment to Section 8 of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004 is seen as very important for small and medium businesses in particular, as when implemented they should make it easier for businesses and insurers to challenge cases where fraud or exaggeration is suspected. I might add that the amendment of Section 14 of the same Act to allow for the court to draw inferences from non-compliance with the requirement to lodge a verifying affidavit within 21 days after the lodgement of the service of the pleading concerned, as recommended in Recommendation 14 of the Report on the cost of employer and public liability, was also provided for within the Central Bank (National Claims Information Database) Act 2018. This means that both Recommendations 6 and 14 have both been fully implemented and I believe these amendments form important steps in the reform of the overall personal injuries framework.

Mortgage Interest Rates

157. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Finance the rights a consumer has to seek a lower interest rate on a mortgage as the consumer’s loan-to-value ratio decreases; the obligations on lenders to inform borrowers of these options; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6446/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Central Bank of Ireland has made further changes to the Consumer Protection Code 2012 (the Code), effective from 1 January 2019, to help consumers make savings on their mortgage repayments, to provide additional protections to consumers who are eligible to switch, and to facilitate mortgage switching through enhancing the transparency of the mortgage framework.

For consumers on variable rate mortgages (other than on a tracker rate), provision 6.5(g) of the Code now requires lenders at least annually to, inter alia, notify consumers as to whether they can move to a cheaper interest rate as a result of a move in their Loan-to-Value interest rate band (subject to the provision of an up-to-date valuation and any other requirements that may apply) and, if the consumer is permitted to move between Loan-to-Value interest rate bands, to invite the consumer to contact the lender to discuss the matter further.

If the consumer is not permitted to move between Loan-to-Value bands, the consumer is nevertheless to be notified that he/she may be able to avail of lower Loan-to-Value interest rate bands from another lender based on an up-to-date valuation.

More generally the Code also requires lenders at least annually to provide variable rate mortgage holders (excluding tracker mortgage borrowers) a summary of other mortgage products offered by the lender that could provide savings for the consumer at that point in time, a statement that consumers should keep their mortgage arrangements under review as there may be other options that could provide savings for the borrower and to provide a link to the relevant section of the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission website (<https://www.ccpc.ie/consumers/financial-comparisons/mortgage-comparisons/>) relating to switching lenders or changing mortgage type.

Mortgage Interest Rates

158. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the policy of each State-backed bank on changing the interest rate applied to a mortgage loan as the loan-to-value ratio decreases; when this policy was adopted; if borrowers are entitled to a backdating of this lower rate to the date the lender introduced such a policy; if a valuation of the property is required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6447/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, pricing decisions and commercial strategies are the responsibility of the board and management of the banks which must be run on an independent and commercial basis. The banks' independence is protected by Relationship Frameworks which are legally binding documents which I as Minister, cannot change unilaterally. These frameworks which are publicly available, were insisted upon by the European Commission to protect competition in the Irish market.

That being said officials in my department received the following response from AIB:

“AIB Mortgage customer contracts, since 16/02/09, when LTV mortgages were introduced, state customers are not permitted to move down LTV bands when the LTV on their property reduces.

The approach in EBS and Haven is the same. Where property prices reduce and LTVs increase, we do not move customers to a higher LTV band and these circumstances occur usually at a time customers could least afford a rate increase, such as the period 2007 through to 2012.

“In 2018, as part of an enhancement to our Mortgage Proposition, AIB, including EBS and Haven, took the decision to change its policy and waive its right not to permit downward LTV band movement during the mortgage life cycle. LTV band movement is, however, subject to a customer providing a supporting up-to-date valuation from a panel valuer and the customer requesting the change. To be clear, the Bank will not move customers up to a higher LTV band in the event of a fall in house prices.”

“Prior to this policy change LTV Band movement was permitted in limited circumstances

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for customers with LTV Mortgages. However, it is important to note that AIB mortgage customers who originated on an SVR Mortgage have always been permitted to move to a LTV Band, subject to the provision of a supporting valuation from an approved panel valuer, and they are advised of this capability annually in their mortgage statement.”

“The required changes to facilitate the revised policy were put in place in 2018 and it took effect in AIB on December 17th 2018 and in EBS/Haven on January 1st 2019. All AIB variable rate customers were advised of the change in their annual mortgage statement sent in January. EBS variable rate customers will be advised in their annual statements in February with Haven customers advised in early March. The websites have been updated from the time the change took effect to alert customers to the change in policy.”

“LTV band movement is a customer driven action and supporting information has been provided to aid customers who are considering whether or not they may be eligible for a lower LTV rate.

The LTV Band change for customers will take effect from the time the up-to-date valuation and request is received.”

Officials in my department received the following response from PTSB:

“In 2015 Permanent TSB changed the default variable interest rate model for mortgages from the traditional Standard Variable Rate (SVR) model to a Managed Variable Rate (MVR) model. Under the MVR model, the rate of interest which applies to a variable rate mortgage is linked to the LTV of the mortgage at the time of application. Mortgages with a lower LTV ratio enjoy lower rates of interest than mortgages with a higher LTV.”

“The MVR model is not dynamic in respect of LTVs. The rate of interest is variable and the LTV is calculated at the time of application only.”

“Based on current rates and depending on the LTV of the relevant mortgage, the MVR offers a saving of between 0.20% and 0.80% on the headline rate of interest charged to customers compared to the Standard Variable Rate.”

“Existing customers of Permanent TSB are eligible to apply to move to an MVR mortgage. This allows them to take advantage of any decrease in the LTV of their mortgage since it commenced. This extends to customers currently on an SVR mortgage, customers who had taken out an MVR prior to 2015 and customers on Fixed Rates subject to the normal terms and conditions that apply.”

“Since 2015, Permanent TSB has written to existing eligible customers on a number of occasions to make them aware of the MVR model, to advise them of their options to apply to move to MVR and to explain the steps to be taken to do so. While a valuation of the property is required, Permanent TSB offers customers a voucher to pay for such a valuation. To date approximately 30% of eligible customers have moved to the MVR model.”

Motor Insurance Costs

159. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Finance the status of efforts to reduce the cost of car insurance; the number of recommendations and associated actions from the report on the cost of motor insurance which have been completed to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6503/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The seventh quarterly update on the progress of the Cost of Insurance Working Group (CIWG) was published last November and shows that of the 59 separate applicable deadlines within the Action Plan of the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance set to the end of Q3 2018, 45 relate to actions which have now been completed.

It is envisaged that the next quarterly Progress Update will be completed by the end of this month and concentrate in particular on outlining the definitive position in relation to all of the 33 recommendations from the Motor Report as the last of the deadlines within its Action Plan passed at the end of 2018. When published, the next quarterly Progress Update will thus update the information supplied in response to a recent Parliamentary Question submitted by the Deputy (4215/19).

At this juncture, I would just like to highlight some relevant recent legislative developments since the last quarterly Progress Update was released.

The Personal Injuries Assessment Board (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2018 has completed its passage through the Dáil and is before Second Stage in the Seanad today (12 February). Once enacted, this will strengthen PIAB by addressing operational issues to ensure greater compliance with the PIAB process and encourage more claims to be settled through the PIAB model. In particular, the Bill deals with the issues of non-attendance at medicals and failure to provide details of special damages or loss of earnings.

Meanwhile, the Central Bank of Ireland published the Non-Life Insurance (Provision of Information) (Renewal of Policy of Insurance) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 in December, which will improve the level of premium information available to consumers as well as extending the renewal notification period.

And, perhaps most notably, the Central Bank (National Claims Information Database) Act was commenced on 28 January. The aim of the database is to improve the level of transparency and the availability of information in the insurance sector by facilitating a more in-depth analysis of annual trends in motor insurance claims.

More details in respect of these pieces of legislation will be included in the eighth Progress Update, which will be available on the Department's website.

Finally, I am hopeful that the continued implementation of all the recommendations from the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance – in addition to those in the CIWG's Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance and the two reports of the Personal Injuries Commission – can help to maintain and expand the positive trend which has seen private motor insurance premiums decrease by 22.16% over the last two-and-a-half years.

Flood Risk Insurance Cover Provision

160. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the percentage of property owners that have secured flood insurance since OPW flood schemes were put in place as a result of the flood relief works; the number or percentage of property owners that have secured flood insurance without excess; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6525/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am conscious of the difficulties that the absence or withdrawal of flood insurance cover can cause to homeowners and businesses, and that is one of the reasons the Government has been prioritising investment in flood defences over the last number of years.

However, you should be aware that the provision of insurance is a commercial matter for insurance companies, which has to be based on a proper assessment of the risks they are willing to accept. This assessment will in many cases include insurers own presumptions based on their private modelling and research. Consequently, neither the Government nor the Central Bank can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products or have the power to direct insurance companies to provide flood cover to specific individuals or businesses. This position is reinforced by the EU framework for insurance which expressly prohibits Member States from doing so.

Government policy in relation to flooding is focused on the development of a sustainable, planned and risk-based approach to dealing with flooding problems. This in turn should lead to the increased availability of flood insurance. To achieve this aim, there is a focus on:

- prioritising spending on flood relief measures by the Office of Public Works (OPW) and relevant local authorities;
- development and implementation of plans by the OPW to implement flood relief schemes; and,
- ongoing communication between the OPW and the insurance industry, in order to reach a better understanding about the provision of flood cover in marginal areas.

The above approach is complemented by a Memorandum of Understanding between the OPW and Insurance Ireland, which provides for the exchange of data in relation to completed flood defence schemes which should provide a basis for the increased provision of flood insurance in areas where works have been completed. In this regard, the Insurance Ireland/OPW working group, which the Department of Finance attends, now meets on a quarterly basis to support the information flow and improve the understanding of issues between both parties.

In order to improve the quality of the data and to get a greater idea of the impact of any new flood defence scheme, the OPW and the Department of Finance are currently working with the insurance industry to measure baseline flood cover ahead of schemes being completed. This aims to provide a ‘before’ and ‘after’ of flood insurance cover for each community to be protected in the future. The OPW has advised me that data relating to four schemes has been provided to Insurance Ireland, to pilot the comparative analysis of the levels of flood cover before and after schemes have been completed.

Finally, since agreement of the Memorandum of Understanding in 2014, the OPW has provided data on 18 completed flood defence schemes, to the insurance industry. Insurance Ireland has informed me that the most recent Insurance Ireland survey indicates that of the completed defence schemes, 90% of policies in areas benefitting from permanent flood defences include flood cover, while 75% of policies in areas benefitting from demountable defences include flood cover. Taken together, 82% of policies in the areas benefitting from these flood defences included flood cover in 2017.

Flood Risk Insurance Cover Provision

161. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the number of instances of flood victims being denied flood insurance post a claim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6526/19]

162. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance if the record of claims regarding flood and burst pipe insurance of an organisation (details supplied) between 2013

to 2018, inclusive, and to date in 2019, by the number of burst pipes and fluvial and coastal flooding figures, respectively, will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6527/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 161 and 162 together.

Insurance Ireland has advised me that they do not collate, publish or communicate any data relating to claims information at a granular level from their members. They have pointed out that property insurance policies cover a range of perils such as fire, storm, theft, water damage, and it is not possible to isolate the number of burst pipes, fluvial or coastal flooding claim figures. They have however collated some general data on severe weather events (storm and flood) in an aggregated form. According to their latest data, the aggregate cost to insurers of adverse weather events for the period 2013-May 2018 is approximately €311 million.

Additionally, Insurance Ireland has advised that they do not collect data relating to claims information or underwriting decisions of members, including instances of flood victims being denied flood insurance post a claim.

Government policy in relation to flooding as the Deputy is aware is focused on the development of a sustainable, planned and risk-based approach to dealing with flooding problems. This in turn should lead to the increased availability of flood insurance. To achieve this aim, there is a focus on:

- prioritising spending on flood relief measures by the Office of Public Works (OPW) and relevant local authorities;
- development and implementation of plans by the OPW to implement flood relief schemes; and,
- ongoing communication between the OPW and the insurance industry, in order to reach a better understanding about the provision of flood cover in marginal areas.

The above approach is complemented by a Memorandum of Understanding between the OPW and Insurance Ireland, which provides for the exchange of data in relation to completed flood defence schemes which should provide a basis for the increased provision of flood insurance in areas where works have been completed. The Insurance Ireland/OPW working group, which the Department of Finance attends, meets on a quarterly basis to support the information flow and improve the understanding of issues between both parties.

It is also worth noting, that a consumer can make a complaint to the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman (FSPO) in relation to any dealings with a Financial Services or Insurance provider during which they feel they have been unfairly treated. In addition, individuals who are experiencing difficulty in obtaining flood insurance or believe that they are being treated unfairly may contact Insurance Ireland which operates a free Insurance Information Service for those who have queries, complaints or difficulties in relation to insurance.

Tax Yield

163. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the amount of revenue collected by year from stamp duty on non-life insurance policies from 2008 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6528/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the Stamp Duty received from the levy on non-life insurance policies from 2008 to present is set out in the following table.

Year	Yield €m
2008	80.10
2009	86.39
2010	109.47
2011	106.40
2012	104.16
2013	98.73
2014	103.35
2015	107.95
2016	135.67
2017	164.49
2018*	159.56
2019 (January)*	18.54

*Figures for 2018 and 2019 are provisional.

EU Directives

164. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance his views on the effectiveness of regulation of insurance across the EU and Solvency II directive 2009 in view of the number of insurance firms that have collapsed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6529/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Solvency II Directive (2009/138/EC), which entered into force 1 January 2016, sets out new, more comprehensive EU-wide requirements on capital adequacy and risk management for insurers. It was transposed into Irish law via the European Union (Insurance and Reinsurance) Regulations 2015 (S.I. No. 485 of 2015).

Solvency II represents a significant change to the regulatory framework for insurance and introduced for the first time a harmonised regime for insurance regulation across the EU. It has brought a number of significant changes for the insurance industry, including better alignment of capital to risks, better risk management and governance and increased transparency. Since its entry into force on 1 January 2016, Member States, EIOPA and national supervisory authorities are working towards greater consistency in the application of these new standards across the EU. This should mean that, over time, insurers are better regulated thus reducing the possibility of consumer loss or market disruption.

In order to ensure it remains fit for purpose, Solvency II will be subject to a review in 2020 which will provide an opportunity to adapt the regime in light of changes in market conditions and insurer business models.

The provision of cross-border insurance is an essential part of the Single Market and Ireland in particular is a beneficiary of this regime through its significant cross-border life industry. However, it is acknowledged that there are obvious difficulties which arise when an insurer fails, as we have seen in this country over the last number of years. That said however, it is important to point out that Solvency II is not a ‘no-failure’ regime as it would not be possible to build a viable system that provides a cast iron guarantee that no insurer would ever fail. Any

such regime would require very large capital requirements which would be likely to make insurance prohibitively expensive.

Consequently, I believe it is important that EU supervisors properly and consistently supervise the insurers that they authorise, and that there is greater communication between supervisors across the EU about their respective companies conducting cross-border business. The Deputy should also be aware that as part of the ongoing review of the European supervisory architecture, there is a proposal to further improve cross-border co-operation and communication through the strengthening of Cross-Border Collaboration Platforms. These already operate on an ad-hoc basis, however this proposal would ensure a more formal structure is put in place where an insurer is doing a lot of cross-border business. This would therefore give the supervisors of countries into which insurance is written a greater insight into how the business is being conducted.

Finally, whilst currently in the event of failure of an insurer there is no harmonised insurance guarantee regime nor a recovery and resolution or guarantee schemes across the EU, there have been a number of reports and initiatives in this area in recent years including a recent EIOPA opinion and project work. In addition, there is a proposed amendment to the Motor Insurance Directive which would oblige member states to set up Insurance Guarantee Schemes to cover the cost of insolvent motor insurers including any cross-border business they conduct. If progress can be made on these proposals, it is likely over time to provide a greater level of protection to policyholders and claimants in the event of a failure of an insurance company.

Central Bank of Ireland Enforcement Actions

165. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding the fine imposed by the Central Bank on a company (details supplied); the reason for the fine; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6530/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Minister for Finance, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on specific enforcement measures taken by the Central Bank of Ireland, the position of them or the reason for them. The Deputy will appreciate that I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation, whereas the day to day supervision of insurance undertakings is a matter for the Central Bank of Ireland. This enforcement measure is a matter for the Central Bank of Ireland.

However, to be helpful, I believe the information that the Deputy may be looking for is contained in a press release issued by the Central Bank of Ireland on 20 December 2018 regarding the specific enforcement measure taken by the Central Bank, and this is available at:

<https://centralbank.ie/news/article/enforcement-action-rsa-insurance-ireland-dac-fined-3.5m>

Revenue Commissioners Staff

166. Deputy James Browne asked the Minister for Finance the number of Revenue Commissioners officials due to be posted to Rosslare Europort following a recent recruitment campaign; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6533/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In September 2018, the Government granted approval for phased recruitment of an additional 600 Revenue staff to meet the chal-

lenges posed by Brexit. Budget 2019 provided Revenue with the funding needed for 270 of the additional 600 staff to be recruited during 2019 to manage an orderly UK withdrawal.

Following the Government decision to give greater priority to the preparations for a no-deal Brexit in December 2018, it was agreed to accelerate Revenue's recruitment plans.

Revenue are on track to have appointed over 400 additional staff to customs and related roles for Brexit during the period September 2018 to 29 March 2019.

30 of these additional 400 staff are being assigned to Rosslare Europort. These additional staff will bring the total Revenue staff in Rosslare EuroPort to approximately 50 by 29 March 2019.

In the event of a no-deal Brexit, a further 200 staff will be recruited between April and December 2019. Resources will be deployed based on the evolving business needs and to tackle any risks as they emerge.

Question Nos. 167 and 168 answered with Question No. 150.

Economic Data

169. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Finance the level and projected levels of general expenditure from 2010 to 2024, inclusive, or the latest available date by current and capital (details supplied) in tabular form. [6560/19]

170. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Finance the level and projected levels of general revenue from 2010 to 2024, inclusive, or the latest available date by tax and non-tax revenue (details supplied) in tabular form. [6561/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 169 and 170 together.

Firstly, it is worth noting that projections for the General Government (GG) revenue and expenditure for 2018 to 2023 can be found in table 11 of the Economic and Fiscal Outlook, published as part of Budget 2019. The figures are reproduced below for the Deputy's convenience. As the Deputy will appreciate, projections beyond 2023 have not been complied by my Department. All nominal GG revenue and expenditure figures provided as follows are displayed in millions.

Table 1 as follows sets out the Central Statistics Office's (CSO) outturns for the period 2010 to 2017 in respect of GG revenue and GG revenue expressed as a percentage of GNI*, GDP and GG expenditure. The CSO will publish its first official estimate for 2018 in April.

In addition, the table also includes EU-15 and EU-28 comparisons of GG revenue as percentage of GDP. The latter data, up to and including 2017, is available on Eurostat's database.

Table 1: general government revenue outturns

-	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
GG revenue, € million	55,376	57,746	59,498	61,502	66,012	70,901	73,655	76,540
GG revenue, per cent of GNI*	42.9	45.6	47.1	44.9	44.4	43.9	41.9	42.2
GG revenue, per cent of GG expenditure	50.8	72.5	80.8	84.8	90.4	93.4	98.0	99.1

-	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
GG revenue, per cent of GDP	33.0	33.7	34.0	34.2	33.8	27.0	27.0	26.0
EU-15 GG revenue, per cent of GDP	43.9	44.4	45.1	45.8	45.5	45.0	45.1	45.3
EU-28 GG revenue, per cent of GDP	43.5	44.0	44.6	45.3	45.0	44.6	44.6	44.8

Source: CSO, Eurostat

Table 2 sets out the projections in respect of GG revenue, and GG revenue expressed as a percentage of GNI*, GDP and GG expenditure for the period 2018 to 2023, as per Budget 2019, Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Table 2: general government revenue projections

-	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
GG revenue, € million	80,830	85,235	88,900	92,600	96,645	100,675
GG revenue, per cent of GNI*	41.3	41.1	40.7	40.7	40.7	40.6
GG revenue, per cent of GDP	25.1	25.0	24.7	24.6	24.6	24.6
GG revenue, per cent of GG expenditure	99.6	99.9	101.2	101.8	104.5	106.1

Source: Department of Finance

Table 3 sets out the CSO's finalised outturn for the period 2010 to 2017 in respect of GG expenditure and GG expenditure expressed as a percentage of GNI*, GDP and GG revenue. Likewise, the table also includes EU-15 and EU-28 comparisons of GG expenditure as percentage of GDP. This data up to and including 2017 is available on Eurostat's database.

Table 3: general government expenditure outturns

-	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
GG expenditure, € million	109,088	79,622	73,612	72,529	73,057	75,915	75,121	77,269
GG expenditure, per cent of GNI*	84.6	62.9	58.2	53.0	49.2	47.0	42.7	42.6
GG expenditure, per cent of GG revenue	197.0	137.9	123.7	117.9	110.7	107.1	102.0	101.0
GG expenditure, per cent of GDP	65.0	46.5	42.0	40.3	37.4	28.9	27.5	26.3
EU-15 GG expenditure, per cent of GDP	50.3	49.0	49.4	49.2	48.4	47.4	46.8	46.3
EU-28 GG expenditure, per cent of GDP	49.9	48.5	48.9	48.6	47.9	46.9	46.3	45.8

Source: CSO, Eurostat

Table 4, as follows, sets out the projections in respect of GG expenditure, and GG expenditure expressed as a percentage of GNI*, GDP and GG Revenue for the period 2018 to 2023, as per Budget 2019 Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Table 4: general government expenditure projections

Questions - Written Answers

-	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
GG expenditure, € million	81,845	85,310	87,840	90,985	92,480	94,865
GG expenditure, per cent of GNI*	41.4	41.1	40.2	40.0	39.0	38.3
GG expenditure, per cent of GDP	25.2	25.0	24.4	24.2	23.6	23.2
GG expenditure, per cent of GG revenue	100.4	100.1	98.8	98.3	95.7	94.2

Source: Department of Finance

Ministerial Advisers Data

171. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the number of advisers and special advisers employed by his Department in 2017 and 2018 and to date in 2019; the areas of expertise covered by such advisers; the annual salaries associated with same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6571/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I wish to inform the Deputy that Ministerial appointments in the Department of Finance are made in line with “Instructions to Personnel Officers - Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil” which include “Guidelines on staffing of Ministerial offices” issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The salary scale for Special Advisers to a Minister are as follows:

Principal Officer (Standard) PPC Pay Scale (as of 1st October 2018)

Payscale

€85,823	€89,356	€92,862	€96,395	€99,375	€102,465	€105,552
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The information on Special Advisers in my Department, requested by the Deputy are shown in the following table.

Minister or Minister of State	Name of Special Adviser	Commencement date of Special Adviser	Cessation date of Special Adviser
Paschal Donohoe, Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure & Reform	Deborah Sweeney	Appointed 06/05/2016	N/A
Paschal Donohoe, Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure & Reform	Stephen Lynam	Appointed 06/05/2016	16/03/2018
Paschal Donohoe, Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure & Reform	Ed Brophy	Appointed 12/02/2018	N/A
Michael D'Arcy, Minister of State (with special responsibility for Financial Services and Insurance)	Barry Harrington, Civil Servant	Appointed 12/02/2018	N/A
Deputy Michael Noonan, former Minister for Finance	Mary Kenny	Re-appointed 10/03/2016	14/06/2017
Deputy Michael Noonan, former Minister for Finance	Sean Kinsella, Civil Servant	Appointed 13/06/2016	14/06/2017

From the list of Advisers above the Advisers currently being paid by the Department of Finance are:

Name	Minister/Minister of State	Salary
Mr Ed Brophy	Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure & Reform	€99,375 = 5th point Principal Officer (Standard) PPC
Ms Deborah Sweeney	Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure & Reform	€99,375 = 5th point Principal Officer (Standard) PPC. The cost of this post is shared equally with the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform.
Mr Barry Harrington	Minister of State D'Arcy	€83,498 = 5th point Assistant Principal (Higher) PPC

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

- (a) assist the Minister or Minister of State, as the case may be, by –
 - (i) providing advice,
 - (ii) Monitoring, facilitating and securing the achievement of the Government objectives that relate to the Department, as requested by the Minister or the Minister of State, as the case may be, and
 - (iii) Performing such other functions as may be directed by the Minister or the Minister of State, as the case may be that are not otherwise provided for in this Act and do not involve the exercise of any specific powers conferred on the Minister or the Minister of State as the case may be or any other office holder by or under any other Act.

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

Revenue Commissioners Enforcement Activity

172. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if Revenue Commissioners enforcement officers are subject to physical security checks upon entering, leaving and-or re-entering the premises and-or facilities and-or lands to which they are permanently assigned; the number of enforcement officers by location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6591/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that, in general, Enforcement Officers are not subject to physical security checks entering or leaving the premises where they are based from time to time. In the case of Enforcement Staff operating in airports, staff may be subject to physical security checks when entering and re-entering the critical part of the security restricted area i.e. the airside area of the airport. If scanning technology raises an alarm when Enforcement Officers are entering this area, the Officer may be stopped and subject to physical examination by an Airport Security Officer. Checks do not take place on officers leaving the Restricted Area.

The number of Revenue Enforcement staff by location is outlined in the table below:

Location	Enforcement Posts
Munster	58
Connacht/Ulster	29
Leinster excluding Dublin	36
Dublin (Airport)	201 (80)

Location	Enforcement Posts
Total	324

Revenue Commissioners

173. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Finance if he has given consideration to the introduction of a category of vulnerable taxpayers or persons to be defined in the Revenue Commissioners guidelines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6614/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that it operates in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of vulnerable customers within its casebase of 2.4 million customers, when carrying out its statutory functions.

Revenue's customer service charter specifies that all customers will be treated courteously, with consideration and in a non-discriminatory way in their dealings with Revenue.

There are also numerous statutory provisions within the Taxes Acts providing for particular treatment for persons with particular needs.

Revenue has specific operational practices to meet the needs of identified groups of customers with particular needs including:-

- customers who have difficulty in accessing services because of a disability,
- customers who lack the facilities or capacity to engage online, and
- customers who lack capacity to manage their own tax affairs

In each operational area Revenue has appointed access officers who provide, or arrange for, assistance and guidance to persons with disabilities to access its services.

Revenue's customer service staff in call centres and public offices assist customers generally, and specifically those who are unable to use online services.

In relation to customers who may have a lack of capacity to manage their own tax affairs, Revenue engages with representatives of "ward of court" cases. Revenue assisted in the development of the Assisted Decision-Making Capacity Act 2015, working to ensure that it can deliver a full range of services to persons whose needs are provided for in that legislation.

As with all public services, Revenue's treatment of any individual is subject to scrutiny by the Office of Ombudsman and the organisation is, of course, subject to parliamentary oversight. In the circumstances I do not see a need for further definition of vulnerable persons in the tax code. However I am advised that if the Deputy has identified a particular group of vulnerable taxpayers whose needs are not met by existing services, Revenue's customer services team will be happy to engage him to see if there is scope for further improvement.

Appointments to State Boards

174. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance the number of boards or agencies his officials have been appointed to; if there are guidelines or protocols for members of staff being appointed to boards or agencies; if so, when same were last updated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6646/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): A number of officials from my Department are serving on boards of international institutions and banks. However, I take it that the Deputy's question relates to officials appointed to domestic boards and agencies.

Eight officials from my Department are currently serving on nine domestic boards or agencies. Four have been appointed to six boards on an ex-officio basis, with two of these officials each serving on two boards in such a capacity. One is also serving as the interim Chair of a newly established State body.

An official was appointed to a Board in line with the relevant legislation which provides that one of the two ordinary members of that Board must be nominated for appointment by the Minister for Finance and must be an officer and representative of the Department of Finance.

Three further officials have been appointed to the Boards of two bodies under the aegis of my Department. In 2017, I approved the appointment of two officials to the board of a body which is currently being wound down. While awaiting the legislation to dissolve this body, these two appointments were made to manage matters during the period up to formal dissolution. Following his nomination by me as Minister for Finance, one further official was appointed to a Board in accordance with the Guidelines for Appointments to State Boards, which were published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in November 2014.

Insurance Compensation Fund

175. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the number of claimants that are yet to receive their compensation in full as a result of the failure of a company (details supplied); the number of these that have settled their claims; the number that have yet to settle; the date of the next payout from the Insurance Compensation Fund; the number of claimants due to be paid from the next payout; the estimated amount that will be paid out at that date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6684/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Setanta Insurance ("Setanta") was placed into liquidation by the Malta Financial Services Authority on 30 April 2014. As it was a Maltese incorporated company, the liquidation is being carried out under Maltese law.

The Deputy will be aware that the Insurance (Amendment) Act 2018 (Act 21 of 2018) was enacted in July 2018. The Act inter alia provides for revised arrangements for the on-going administration of the Insurance Compensation Fund (ICF), including for the relevant applications to the President of the High Court.

The most recent tranche of payments to Setanta claimants took place in late November 2018. To date, 670 personal injury claimants have been compensated in full.

The liquidator of Setanta has informed me that since the last application was submitted, a further 125 personal injury claimants have now been agreed and these will be included in the next submission to the Fund bringing the total number of personal injury claimants who have agreed settlements to 795. There are a further 411 personal injury claimants who have yet to settle their claims.

The latest information from the liquidator estimates that the total value of the next tranche will be approximately €7 million.

Currently, no date has yet been fixed for the presentation of the next tranche of payments to the High Court. However, I am informed by the State Claims Agency that the preparatory work

will commence shortly with a view to arranging a court date during March which will allow payments to issue by late March or early April.

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

Tax Credits

176. Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 171 of 27 November 2018, the reason for the delay in the Revenue Commissioners reply. [6727/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that it has now completed a comprehensive review of the person's tax situation.

Following the review, additional tax credits were allocated to the person in respect of 2013 and a refund will issue in the coming days. Revenue is satisfied that the person's tax credits in respect of all other years were correctly allocated and there are no further refunds due.

Revenue has also confirmed to me that it has already made direct contact with the person and explained their tax credit entitlements to them.

VAT Exemptions

177. Deputy Brendan Griffin asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding medical supplies exemption; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6738/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The VAT rating of goods and services is subject to the requirements of EU VAT law, with which Irish VAT law must comply. In accordance with the EU VAT Directive, Irish legislation provides for an exemption from VAT for professional medical care services recognised as such by the Department of Health and Children.

Those medical care services are generally supplied by health professionals who are enrolled, registered, regulated, or designated on the appropriate statutory register provided for under the relevant legislation in force in the State or equivalent legislation applicable in other countries. Medical care services may also be supplied by a doctor to a patient through an incorporated entity. In general, such services, which normally consist of the diagnosing, treating or alleviating an ailment, are exempt from VAT.

However, some services offered by providers in the medical services sector are not exempt. For example, where a service provider has contracted with another person to be available to treat patients, the provision of this service is subject to VAT at the standard rate. The Revenue Commissioners regards this service as constituting a supply of the service of the provision of staff, which is subject to VAT at the standard rate, currently 23%.

The Revenue Commissioners has commenced a project to review the tax affairs of medical locums who have incorporated a business and are employed by Personal Service Companies (PSCs) or Managed Service Companies (MSCs). The review to date has focussed on the tax affairs of a number of such companies, and their directors, where the main source of income is a contract for the provision of medical services through an intermediary and where, in most cases,

the directors are the only employees of the company. A number of tax compliance interventions have commenced in respect of companies and directors operating in the medical locum sector, and further interventions will be initiated in the weeks and months ahead. In September 2018, Revenue notified both the Irish Hospital Consultants Association and the Irish Medical Organisation of this compliance project.

I cannot comment on the example provided by the Deputy as there is not enough information to determine the nature of the supply for VAT purposes.

Tracker Mortgages

178. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Finance if the attention of the Central Bank has been drawn to customers being contacted by banks that are offering to buy out tracker mortgages by replacing them with a fixed or standard variable mortgage plus an upfront cash payment; the views of the bank on such a practice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6802/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Central Bank of Ireland advises that, depending upon a customer's personal circumstances, any such practice as outlined by the Deputy would have to comply with certain requirements of the Consumer Protection Code and be in the customer's best interests.

In particular, the following requirements of the Consumer Protection Code will be relevant:-

Provision 6.9(b) requires that where a regulated entity offers a personal consumer the option to move from a tracker interest rate to an alternative rate on their existing loan, the lender must provide the personal consumer with the following information on paper or another durable medium;

- i) indicative comparisons of the cost of the monthly loan repayments at the personal consumer's current tracker interest rate and each of the alternative rate(s) being offered;
- ii) an indicative comparison of the total cost of the loan if the personal consumer continues with the existing tracker interest rate and the total cost of the loan for each alternative rate(s) and terms being offered (any assumptions used must be reasonable and justifiable and must be clearly stated); and
- iii) details of the advantages and disadvantages for the personal consumer of the tracker interest rate compared to each of the other rate(s) being offered.

Furthermore, the following warning statement should also appear with the information above, in circumstances where a personal consumer will not be able to revert to a tracker interest rate if they move to an alternative rate:

Warning: if you switch to an alternative interest rate, you will not be contractually entitled to go back onto a tracker interest rate in the future.

Provision 6.12 also requires that, where a regulated entity offers an incentive to a personal consumer on an existing mortgage, the regulated entity must provide the personal consumer, on paper or on another durable medium, with the information needed to consider the incentive offered. This information must:

- a) quantify the implications for the personal consumer of availing of the incentive including an indicative cost comparison of the total cost of the existing mortgage if they do not avail of

the incentive and the total cost of the mortgage if they avail of the incentive;

- b) clearly set out the length of time during which the incentive will be available;
- c) clearly set out any assumptions used, which must be reasonable and justifiable;
- d) set out the advantages and disadvantages to the personal consumer of availing of the incentive;
- e) include other key information which the personal consumer should have available to them when considering the incentive; and
- f) include a statement that the personal consumer may wish to seek independent advice prior to availing of the incentive.

In addition, for those mortgages which will fall within the scope of the Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears, provision 41 of that Code also provides that the lender must not require the borrower to change from an existing tracker mortgage to another mortgage type as part of any alternative repayment arrangement offered by the borrower except in the circumstances set out in provision 46 where the alternative repayment arrangement is affordable for the borrower and is a long term sustainable solution which is consistent with Central Bank of Ireland policy on sustainability.

The Central Bank has also indicated that if the Deputy has any relevant information which he wishes to bring directly to its attention on this matter, it will consider such information in the context of its supervisory activity.

Financial Services Regulation

179. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if a company (details supplied) is regulated by the Central Bank as an owner of credit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6823/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I understand from the Central Bank that Glenbeigh Securities 2018-1 Designated Activity Company is not regulated by the Central Bank as an owner of credit.

The Consumer Protection (Regulation of Credit Servicing Firms) Act 2018 requires owners of the legal title to credit to become authorised as credit servicing firms. The Act gives owners of the legal title to credit 90 days from the commencement of the Act to apply for authorisation, i.e. by 21 April 2019. A loan owner must keep the existing authorised credit servicing firm in place until their application for authorisation is approved or refused.

At the time PTSB announced the transaction in question, it confirmed the following:

“The transferred NPL portfolio will continue to be serviced by PTSB for a period of up to six months. At the end of this period, 1) Pepper Finance Corporation (Ireland) DAC trading as Pepper Asset Servicing will act as the Master Servicer on behalf of Glenbeigh Securities; and, 2) legal title to the loans will be transferred to Pepper Finance Corporation (Ireland) DAC.”

The Deputy may be aware that Pepper Finance Corporation (Ireland) DAC trading as Pepper Asset Servicing is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland and all statutory codes of conduct relevant to these loans will continue to apply, meaning that all existing consumer protections will remain in place.

Money Laundering

180. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of times the Central Bank has compelled the production and-or provision of information pertinent to monitoring anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism requirements pursuant to sections 66 to 68 and 77 of the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010 and section 27 of the Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013 in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6827/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Central Bank is the competent authority responsible for monitoring credit and financial institutions compliance with the requirements set out in Part 4 of the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010, as amended ('the CJA 2010').

In this regard, authorised officers are appointed pursuant to the CJA 2010 and the Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013, to carry out supervisory engagements with credit and financial institutions in order to fulfil the statutory role of monitoring compliance with Part 4 of the CJA 2010.

Authorised officers appointed under the aforementioned Acts regularly exercise the powers conferred upon them as authorised officers to compel the "production and or provision of information" when carrying out supervisory engagements with credit and financial institutions.

I have been informed by the Central Bank that these powers are exercised so frequently and are such a common feature of how the Central Bank undertakes its supervisory activities, that the Central Bank does not collect statistics in relation to the number of times they have been used to compel "production and or provision of information".

VAT Rate Reductions

181. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding VAT; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6975/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The VAT rating of goods and services is subject to EU VAT law, with which Irish VAT law must comply. In general, the VAT Directive provides that all goods and services are liable to VAT at the standard rate (which in Ireland is 23%) unless they fall within Annex III of the VAT Directive, in respect of which Member States may apply either one or two reduced rates of VAT.

In addition, the VAT Directive allows for historic VAT treatments to be maintained, under certain conditions, on certain goods and services which are not provided for in Annex III. Ireland has retained the application of the 13.5% reduced rate to the supply of fuel for domestic use which otherwise would be subject to the 23% standard rate of VAT. This includes wood pellet heating systems, which also apply at the 13.5% VAT rate instead of the 23% standard rate.

While some domestic fuels are more energy efficient and environmentally friendly than others, EU VAT law does not allow lower VAT rates to apply to different fuels on this basis.

Energy Regulation

182. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance the revenue protection measures

in place to ensure that all compressed natural gas complies with the relevant statutory requirements - blending and excise and carbon tax rates - in the same way as customs officials test for marked fuel oil; and the way in which he plans to ensure that gas intended for the heating market is not used for road transport purposes. [7002/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Taxation of natural gas is based on the purpose for which the fuel is used. Natural gas that is supplied to consumers for non-propellant fuel use, such as for heating, is subject to Natural Gas Carbon Tax (NGCT). The current rate of NGCT is €4.10 per megawatt hour. Suppliers of natural gas for non-propellant use are liable to account for and pay NGCT and must register with Revenue in advance of making supplies to consumers.

Natural gas supplied for use as a propellant, referred to as “vehicle gas” or Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), is subject to Mineral Oil Tax on Vehicle Gas (MOTVG). MOTVG is provided for by Section 38 of the Finance Act 2016. These legislative provisions were introduced to provide a framework for taxation of vehicle gas in advance of the development of nationwide infrastructure for compressed natural gas filling stations.

The current rate of MOTVG is €9.36 per megawatt hour. This includes both a carbon charge of €3.70 and a non-carbon charge of €5.66. Liability to MOTVG arises when vehicle gas is supplied to a vehicle fuelling facility. The supplier who supplies the vehicle fuelling facility is liable to account for and pay MOTVG and must register with Revenue.

Under MOTVG legislation vehicle gas suppliers are obliged to only supply vehicle gas to vehicle fuelling facilities that have specialised meters fitted by the Transmission System Operator (Gas Networks Ireland). These meters must exclusively serve as the measuring and recording mechanisms for vehicle gas supplied to vehicle fuelling stations. In addition to these control mechanisms, MOTVG legislation also prevents vehicle fuelling stations from receiving vehicle gas from a supplier unless the station has been fitted with specialised meters and all vehicle fuel received at the station is measured and recorded by the meter fitted for that exclusive purpose. In this way there are strict controls in place for both the supply and receipt of vehicle gas.

The controls that are in place in relation to mineral oils, such as marking of reduced rate oils, are not applicable to natural gas. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that Mineral Oil Tax Regulations governing the blending of fuel oils are not applicable to blending of natural gas with, for example, biogas. Marking and blending statutory provisions similar to those that apply for mineral oils are unwarranted for natural gas that is supplied through the natural gas network by a limited number of suppliers.

The Revenue Commissioners are satisfied that legislative provisions for NGCT and for MOTVG are robust. They will continue to monitor the situation as the Compressed Natural Gas market expands and will focus audit and compliance interventions on risk areas should they emerge. It is also open to the Deputy to make direct contact with Revenue if he wishes to seek further information or advise of any specific concern he may wish to raise in this area.

Betting Regulations

183. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Finance the status of his review of the implementation of a 100% increase in turnover tax for the bookmaker and betting industry announced in budget 2019; if the review includes up-to-date research and analysis of the impact the tax is having on the financial viability of the bookmaking industry and on subsequent job losses; the timeframe for completion of the review; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [7012/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The increase in the betting duty rate from 1 per cent to 2 per cent, and the betting intermediary duty rate from 15% to 25%, came into effect on 1 January 2019. It is too early to draw any conclusions on the impact of these increases.

Receipts from betting duty represented less than 1 per cent of all excise receipts in 2017 and this is also likely to be the case in for 2018. In addition, unlike other excisable commodities, there is no VAT applied on betting transactions. I have outlined why I consider the betting sector needs to make a fair contribution to the Exchequer.

In any discussion on betting duty, we must acknowledge the raised public consciousness of the problem of gambling in society. While problem gambling can result in the problem gambler, and their family, bearing the severest of economic and of course personal costs, the social costs of problem gambling can extend to their employers and to public institutions in the health, welfare and justice systems, such costs ultimately borne by taxpayers. I have outlined my view that this needs to be better reflected within the betting duty regime.

During the course of the Finance Bill process I agreed to review an alternative proposal put forward by the betting sector following the announcement of increases in betting duty in Budget 2019, and I acknowledge that small independent bookmakers may have difficulty competing with larger bookmakers with retail and/or online operations. My officials are currently considering this proposal, including the compatibility of a core element with EU rules, and will set out analysis and options in relation to betting duty at the Tax Strategy Group (TSG) meeting in July. The TSG Papers will be published on the Department's website shortly afterwards.

Insurance Data

184. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of insurance claims filed in each of the years 2015 to 2018; the overall amount paid out on claims by insurance type; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7016/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): At the outset, it is important to note that as Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation and my Department does not collect the type of information being sought by the Deputy. I understand that the Central Bank of Ireland does not routinely collect the type of information being sought either.

While the Deputy's query relates to insurance claims generally, I note that the Central Bank of Ireland does collect certain relevant data in relation to motor insurance claims specifically. In this regard, I would refer the Deputy to a Parliamentary Question which I responded to him on, on 24 July 2018 which detailed information provided to me by the Central Bank of Ireland at that time in respect of the amount paid out on motor insurance claims in the years 2013 – 2017. The updated data for 2018 is not available yet.

In addition, the Deputy will be aware that the Oireachtas recently passed the legislation to provide relevant powers to the Central Bank of Ireland to establish the National Claims Information Database. The Deputy may like to note that the Central Bank (National Claims Information Database) Act 2018 was commenced by the Central Bank (National Claims Information Database) Act 2018 (Commencement) Order 2019 (S.I. 2 of 2019) on Monday 28 January 2019. The Central Bank plans to collect claims data for the National Claims Information Database from insurance undertakings in the first half of 2019, with a view to publishing its first

annual report under the legislation in the second half of the year. It is expected that the Central Bank will collect and publish motor insurance claims information in respect of the last 10 years, including the number of claims reported and settled, the amounts paid on claims, the incurred cost on claims (i.e. the amount paid plus the outstanding amount to be paid, if any), and the actuarial estimate of the final cost of claims i.e. ultimate costs.

While the National Claims Information Database will focus on private motor insurance initially, the underpinning legislation has been developed in such a way as to allow its scope to increase over time. In this regard, the Cost of Insurance Working Group recommended in its Report on the Cost of Employer liability and Public liability Insurance that by the end of this year, the Central Bank produce a report on the merits and feasibility of collecting employer liability and public liability insurance data for inclusion in the National Claims Information Database.

Mortgage Repayments

185. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to an issue following the completion of the Project Glas sale with mortgage payments not being processed by a company (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7034/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I can confirm that the matter as described had not been drawn to my attention, prior to the Deputy's question.

Officials in the Department referred the matter to PTSB and received the following answer:

"The migration of the relevant mortgages between the two platforms is now completing, resulting in some short and once-off administrative delays in the processing of payments happening just before/after the migration completed. All such payments are currently being applied to the relevant accounts as having been made on the date on which they were initiated and there will be no detriment to customers."

Film Industry Tax Reliefs

186. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to delays in the processing of section 481 applications by the Revenue Commissioners (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7083/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The purpose of the film corporation tax credit, found in section 481 Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, is to contribute to the development of a successful and dynamic audio-visual industry in Ireland contributing to the promotion of culture in the State, which can be referred to as the cultural dividend of the scheme.

Significant changes to the film tax relief were introduced in 2015, changing it from an investor based tax relief to a corporation tax credit. The Deputy will be aware that my Department, in line with their Guidelines for Tax Expenditure Evaluation, carried out a 3-year cost benefit analysis of the film corporation tax credit during 2018. That analysis found that the net economic cost to society, the cost of the cultural dividend of the scheme, was €72m for 2016.

Since 2015 the film corporation tax credit, which is a notified and approved State Aid, has operated on the basis of companies submitting a film budget to Revenue. Based on the anticipated expenditure in Ireland set out in that budget, Revenue will issue a certificate for a maximum interim corporation tax credit and the company amends its corporation tax return and

claims a payment of that amount. Once the film is completed, the company submits details of the actual amounts spent on making the film in Ireland. Revenue must review the details of the actual expenditure and will issue a final certificate. Upon receiving that certificate, the company amends its corporation tax return and claims a payment of the balance over any interim credit claims.

I was advised by Revenue in 2018 that there was an issue with the design of the scheme for Film Relief. The scheme requires upfront certification by Revenue which, means that the normal tools to discourage incorrect claims (being interest, penalties, publication and prosecution) are not available. Accordingly, a considerable amount of Revenue time is being taken up addressing incorrect claims. Revenue has informed me that there has often been protracted correspondence with claimant companies who do not have sufficient records to support their claims, and this in turn leads to inevitable delays.

The level of Revenue examination of these applications must match the risk to the Exchequer given the rising cost of the credit, with the tax credit value of applications received in 2018 alone totalling €95 million.

As the Deputy will be aware, in Finance Act 2018, I brought forward changes to the way in which companies claim the film corporation tax credit to address these two difficulties. Those changes, once commenced, will put all claims on a self-assessment footing, with companies' compliance assessed by Revenue in the same way as compliance with all other tax reliefs. Revenue is bringing forward the Regulations which are necessary to support the Finance Act 2018 amendments. Those Regulations must be made with the consent of both myself and my colleague, the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and I understand that officials in both departments are currently reviewing the proposed regulations. As soon as those regulations are prepared, I will commence the Finance Act 2018 amendments which will convert all film corporation tax credit claims currently in progress into self-assessment claims.

Government Expenditure

187. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Finance the annual gross increases in general expenditure required between 2020 to 2024 to reach the EU15 average level of general expenditure as a percentage of GDP; if he will provide these annual expenditure increases as a percentage of GDP and a percentage of GNI; and the impact on projected general government balance in tabular form. [7101/19]

188. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Finance the annual gross increases in general revenue required between 2020 to 2024 to reach the EU15 average level of general revenue as a percentage of GDP; if he will provide these annual revenue increases as a percentage of GDP and a percentage of GNI; and the impact on projected general government balance in tabular form. [7102/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 187 and 188 together.

Levels of general government revenue and expenditure for the EU-15 are available from Eurostat up to 2017 (2018 outturn will be available in April). Projections beyond this point are not available. Similarly, projections for general government revenue and expenditure for Ireland beyond 2023 have not been compiled by my Department.

As I have outlined previously, GDP figures for Ireland are distorted and of limited use. Instead, modified GNI, or GNI*, an alternative metric published by the CSO, provides a more

appropriate analogue for international comparison.

General government revenue for the EU-15 as of 2017 was 45.3 per cent of GDP. To increase Ireland's general government revenue to an equivalent 45.3 per cent of GNI* would amount to an average of an additional €10.8 billion in revenue each year, until 2023 (assuming that nominal GNI* moves in line with the Budget day projections).

In a similar manner, general government expenditure for the EU-15 as of 2017 was 46.3 per cent of GDP (hence the deficit for the EU-15 was 1 per cent of GDP). An equivalent 46.3 per cent of GNI* would imply an average expenditure increase of €16.2 billion each year to 2023.

In both cases this is in addition to the current plans as set out in the Economic and Fiscal Outlook published in Budget 2019.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Government is committed to investment that improves the sustainability of our public finances and our economic capacity. Under the National Development Plan, Ireland's planned public capital investment will reach approximately 4 per cent of GNI* by 2023, among the highest in the EU. An average level of 4 per cent of GNI* is expected to be maintained out to 2027.

This substantial growth in public investment will meet the needs of the economy and remain consistent with the requirements of overall economic and fiscal sustainability.

However, aiming to increase general government revenue and expenditure by such significant amounts so as to equate with overall EU rates would be inappropriate. Government fiscal policy is guided by what is right for the economy at this point in the cycle, not by arbitrary benchmarks based on the overall budgetary patterns of fifteen countries with disparate fiscal and economic situations.

National Treasury Management Agency Staff

189. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff at the National Treasury Management Agency excluding the National Asset Management Agency that received pay in 2018 including retention payments and other benefits by ranges (details supplied); the number employed by the National Treasury Management Agency at the end of 2017 and 2018, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7104/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The year end headcount of the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) excluding staff assigned to the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) is set out in the table below.

Year	Headcount
2017	526
2018	556

The table below shows the number of NTMA staff (excluding those assigned to NAMA) by relevant band. The numbers include staff members who left the NTMA during 2018 in addition to those employed at the end of the year. Therefore the table shows the base salary and/or remuneration at year end and the base salary and/or remuneration upon leaving employment for all staff on or above €100,001 in 2018.

NTMA Only (excluding NAMA)

Relevant Band	Salary Only	Total Remuneration
€100,001 - €150,000	85	91
€150,001 - €200,000	45	49
€200,001 - €250,000	4	12
€250,001 - €300,000	2	3
€300,001 - €350,000	3	5
€350,001 - €400,000	1	2
In excess of €400,000	1	1
Total	141	163

Note:

Total remuneration includes base salary and any taxable benefits paid including performance related payments, paid in 2018 in respect of 2017. The inclusion of taxable benefits may move individuals into the next relevant band.

NAMA Staff Data

190. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff at the National Asset Management Agency that received pay in 2017 by ranges (details supplied); the number employed by the agency at the end of 2017 and 2018, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7105/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The year-end headcounts for 2017 and 2018 of National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) staff assigned to the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) are set out in the following table:

2017-2018

Year	Headcount
2017	264
2018	238

Salary information for year-end 2017 is included on page 115 of the NAMA 2017 Annual Report. The table below shows the number of NAMA officers by relevant salary band for 2018. The numbers include staff members who left NAMA during 2018 in addition to those employed at the end of the year. Therefore, the table shows the base salary and/or remuneration at year end and the base salary and/or remuneration upon leaving employment for all staff on or above €100,001 in 2018.

2018 NAMA Only

Relevant Band	Salary Only	Total Remuneration
€100,001 - €150,000	83	77
€150,001 - €200,000	10	13
€200,001 - €250,000	4	5
€250,001 - €300,000	0	2
€300,001 - €350,000	0	0
€350,001 - €400,000	0	0
In excess of €400,000	1	1

Relevant Band	Salary Only	Total Remuneration
Total	98	98

Notes:

- Remuneration includes salary and taxable benefits, if any. The inclusion of taxable benefits may move individuals into the next relevant band.

- Remuneration does not include any payments relating to the redundancy programme i.e. statutory redundancy, ex-gratia redundancy and retention payments.

NAMA Staff Remuneration

191. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the amount paid out by the National Asset Management Agency in voluntary redundancy payments in 2018; the number of staff that took voluntary redundancy in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7106/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I draw the Deputy's attention to page 113 of NAMA's Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2017 which sets out Note 10.1 - Staff costs. I am advised that an amount of €0.8m was incurred in respect of 10 members of staff who departed under the 2017 Voluntary Redundancy Scheme. Two employees left in 2017 and a further eight were placed on garden leave in 2018 in advance of their departure.

The figures in respect of the 2018 Voluntary Redundancy Scheme will be published in mid-2019 in NAMA's Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2018.

Revenue Commissioners Resources

192. Deputy John Curran asked the Minister for Finance the expenditure and allocations attributable to the drugs programme that were made by the Revenue Commissioners custom service in each of the past five years; the projects and programmes supported by the funding in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7119/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Revenue is an integrated tax and customs administration. I am advised by Revenue that it has maintained staffing levels of approximately 2,000 staff across the State in the past five years who are engaged in activities that are dedicated to targeting and confronting non-compliance. These activities include anti-smuggling and anti-evasion, investigation and prosecution, audit, assurance checks, anti-avoidance, returns compliance and debt collection.

The following table provides estimates of the staff and resources in Revenue dedicated to anti-smuggling and prosecutions including resources for the discharge of its role in relation to illegal drugs.

Estimates

Year	Staff Headcount	Salary and Admin costs €000s
2014	469	23,747
2015	444	23,009

Year	Staff Headcount	Salary and Admin costs €000s
2016	479	24,307
2017	461	24,277
2018	457	24,371

As part of its risk focused approach to the discharge of its role in relation to illegal drugs importations, harbours and inlets along the coastline are monitored and evaluated by Revenue on an ongoing basis from the point of view of the potential for smuggling. This work is supplemented by Revenue's Customs Drug Watch Programme, aimed at encouraging members of the public, coastal and local maritime communities to notify Revenue of suspect or unusual movements at sea or around the coast by way of a confidential 24/7 Drugs Watch, free phone facility.

Revenue is active in targeting and combatting drugs smuggling and is fully committed to tackling this criminal activity and those responsible for it. I am advised by Revenue that it has an enforcement presence at all key airports and ports and at other strategic locations and that it places particular emphasis on developing an intelligence-based focus at both national and regional level, deploying resources to areas of highest risk. Enforcement strength at particular locations is regularly augmented with additional personnel on a risk-assessment basis, or when particular operations are taking place against illegal activity.

Revenue works closely with other agencies in the State, including An Garda Síochána and the Health Products Regulatory Authority, in acting against the illegal drugs trade, and plays a key role as well in the implementation of aspects of the National Drugs Strategy. The relevant authorities in the State also work closely with their counterparts in Northern Ireland to target organised crime groups that are involved in a range of criminal activities, including the illegal drugs trade. I understand that this work to tackle cross-jurisdictional organised crime is being supported and reinforced by the establishment, in the framework of "A Fresh Start: The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan", of the Joint Agency Task Force, which includes Revenue. In addition, Revenue is involved actively in international fora, including the EU's Customs Cooperation Working Party, Europol and the World Customs Organisation, in working together with other administrations, agencies and services to counter the trafficking of drugs and drugs precursors.

Flood Risk Assessments

193. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if risk assessments have been carried out in areas that were previously prone to flooding but are now OPW-defended zones; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6523/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In 2012, the Office of Public Works designated 300 areas or communities believed to be at significant flood risk and through the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme carried out the largest ever flood risk study in Ireland to date.

The CFRAM programme included a risk assessment of areas defended by OPW flood defence schemes, took account of the risk assessment that informed the design of the scheme in those areas and included an assessment of the potential impact from climate change.

Flood Risk Insurance Cover Provision

194. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of properties in zones defended by the OPW that have full flood insurance coverage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6524/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Deputy will acknowledge that the Office of Public Works has no responsibility for oversight or regulation of the insurance industry in relation to flood risk insurance, or to insurance matters generally. The Government's strategy is that in return to its investment on flood defence schemes in the most at risk communities, households and businesses should be able to access flood insurance.

The Office of Public Works has a very specific role in the exchange of information with the insurance industry in relation to completed flood defence schemes, to an agreed standard of protection desired by the industry.

A Memorandum of Understanding agreed on 24 March 2014, between the Office of Public Works and Insurance Ireland, the representative body for the insurance companies in Ireland has a specific focus on agreeing a basis on which information can be provided to the insurance industry on flood relief schemes completed by the OPW.

The Memorandum came into effect on 1 June, 2014 with an initial tranche of data provided by the Office of Public Works to Insurance Ireland in respect of twelve completed flood defence schemes; showing the design, extent and nature of the protections offered by these works. Details of a further five schemes were provided in January 2015 and details of the Waterford Flood Defence Scheme was provided in 2017.

Since that time the level of flood insurance cover for homes and small businesses for areas protected by OPW flood defence schemes has on average increased from 77% to 82% with the level of flood insurance cover reported to be up to 90% in areas benefitting from fixed defences.

The Department of Finance and the OPW meet with Insurance Ireland to address issues in relation to this transfer of data. The OPW and the Department of Finance are currently working with the insurance sector to baseline flood cover ahead of schemes being completed. This aims to provide a 'before' and 'after' of flood insurance cover for communities being protected in the future; and give a baseline to be able to address any concerns about the levels of cover being reported. In 2018, data relating to four schemes has been provided to Insurance Ireland, as the first set of data to pilot a comparative analysis of the levels of flood cover before and after schemes have been completed.

It is important to note that while the Memorandum requires that insurers take full account of information provided by the OPW on completed flood defence schemes, it does not guarantee the availability of flood risk cover in the locations for which information has been provided by the OPW. The provision of insurance cover, the level of premiums charged and the policy terms applied are a matter for individual insurers.

Drainage Schemes

195. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the River Nenagh in areas (details supplied) in County Tipperary will be cleaned in view of the fact that in moderate rainfall it floods land in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6552/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Office of Public Works (OPW) is responsible for the maintenance of Arterial Drainage Schemes and

catchment drainage schemes designated under the Arterial Drainage Acts of 1945 and 1995.

The section of the Nenagh River at Tiermoyle, Latteragh forms part of the Nenagh Arterial Drainage Scheme and is under the auspices of OPW.

OPW's scheduled maintenance programme for 2019 includes works on this channel. The works are scheduled to be undertaken in the next few months during the appropriate environmental window.

Forensic Science Ireland Laboratory

196. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the breakdown of the allocation in 2019 for the forensic science library; the date in 2019 building will commence; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6877/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Office of Public Works is undertaking the Forensic Science Laboratory not the Forensic Science Library.

The Government is committed to delivering Project Ireland 2040 within the overall multi-year resource envelope that has been set out. For 2019, the capital allocation has increased by €1,325 million or just over 22% above the 2018 allocation as stated in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019. With regard to implications arising from the National Children's Hospital project, the Government is currently considering how the additional cost pressures will be accommodated within the multi-year envelope, with a minimum of disruption to the planned rollout and delivery of important infrastructure projects under Project Ireland 2040, which I am pleased to report are proceeding at a strong rate.

Enabling works for this complex were complete in 2018. The Office of Public Works has commenced the procurement for the main contractor for the Forensic Science Laboratory development which were published on 24 December 2018 and are due to be returned 29 March 2019. The procurement of reserved specialists will be coordinated with this. It is expected that construction for this project will commence on site in Quarter 3 2019.

National Children's Hospital Expenditure

197. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason the Revised Estimates published on 19 December 2018 took no account of the cost overrun on the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6947/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The issue of the cost overrun in the National Children's Hospital, NCH, went to Government on 18 December 2018. Following on from that decision, my Department has been engaging with the Department of Health and with other Departments in relation to how the increased costs of the National Children's Hospital project in 2019 will be managed within the overall agreed capital allocation for 2019, in light of the multi-year management of the broad range of capital projects, amounting to upwards of €7 billion this year.

As this process is ongoing, the effect of the decision could not be included in the revised estimates 2019, which was published on 19 December 2018.

I am bringing proposals to Government in this regard and decisions will be announced in due course. The overall intention is to proceed with our very ambitious agenda of strategic infrastructure investment throughout the course of 2019 and subsequent years, with the minimum of disruption to the rollout and delivery of key projects. Any reallocations will be published in further revised estimates for 2019 for relevant Departments, in due course.

National Monuments

198. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to extend the season during which access is provided to Sceilg Mhichíl, County Kerry from 1 April with the season ending at the end of October to facilitate more persons visiting the island and to reduce pressure on the island during the summer months and to facilitate more persons earning a livelihood from the island; his further plans to provide toilets for visitors to the island using the old lighthouse there; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7021/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Sceilg Mhichíl site generally opens to the public in mid-May, weather permitting and assuming the Island has been made safe and ready to receive visitors, and closes at the end of September -beginning of October. Access to the Island is highly variable due to weather and sea conditions and may not be feasible until later than the generally scheduled opening.

The Office of Public Works has repeatedly stated that to extend the visitor season at the Sceilg Mhichíl site beyond these dates would create unacceptable safety, logistical and operational difficulties for the maintenance and guide operation in the first instance and might also create a greater risk to the fragile built and natural heritage for which the Island is famous. Ensuring the greatest level of visitor and staff safety, at a location where there has been two fatalities in recent years, is of paramount importance during the visitor season. Necessary safety preparations are undertaken on site by OPW staff each year prior to the admittance of visitors to the island. It should also be noted that OPW previously extended the season to the end of October on a three year trial basis from 2011 to 2013 to assess the feasibility of maintaining a visitor service at that time of year but was unable, because of deteriorating weather and sea conditions, to maintain the island open to the end of that month in any of those years and was in each case forced to close early.

Work is underway currently on a new ten year management plan for the World Heritage Site and it is expected that the length of the season will be addressed directly within that. The process to develop the management plan includes a public consultation element which has been underway for the past several weeks and will allow for the full expression of views on all matters relating to the World Heritage Site.

The question of providing a public toilet at Sceilg Mhichíl has been under review for some years. However, the technical challenges of working within the particular environment of the island are considerable and it has not yet been possible to find a viable solution. The former lighthouse property is currently being assessed for potential use in this regard to determine if a suitable facility can be developed there.

Office of Government Procurement

199. Deputy Thomas Byrne asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if public tenders that require photographic images must be provided in hard copy in addition to digital format; and his views on whether this leads to increased cost for tenderers and therefore

the State. [6236/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Office of Government Procurement, OGP, is responsible for developing and setting out the overarching policy framework for public procurement in Ireland. This framework enables a more consistent approach to public procurement across the public sector by setting out the procurement procedures to be followed by public bodies. While the OGP sets out the policy framework, responsibility for adhering to these procedures rests with the individual contracting authorities.

Contracting authorities are encouraged to promote electronic procurement. However, there is no specific requirement in the procurement rules that require photographic images to be provided in hardcopy in addition to digital format. This is a matter for individual contracting authorities who determine the appropriate requirements for their competitions having regard the key principles of equal treatment, non-discrimination, proportionality and transparency.

Office of Public Works

200. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the offices of Intreo, Garda vetting and penalty points in Thurles, County Tipperary, require extra office space (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6248/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Commissioners of Public Works are not in receipt of any request for extra office space in Thurles for, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection's Intreo office, An Garda Síochána's National Vetting Bureau office or An Garda Síochána's Fixed Charge Processing office.

Flood Risk Insurance Cover Provision

201. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his attention has been drawn to the fact that insurance companies are using the OPW website and the flood report on the site to refuse flood insurance at a location (details supplied) and are ignoring the note that the information is not for commercial use; if confirmation will be provided on the website that the estate has not been subject to flooding since its construction 25 years ago; his views on the fact that property owners living in the estate are unable to sell their property due to the report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6393/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Deputy will acknowledge that the Office of Public Works has no responsibility for oversight or regulation of the insurance industry in relation to flood risk insurance, or to insurance matters generally including where flood insurance may impact on property sales.

The Government's strategy is that in return to its investment on flood defence schemes in the most at risk communities, households and businesses should be able to access flood insurance.

The Office of Public Works has a very specific role in the exchange of information with the insurance industry in relation to completed flood defence schemes, to an agreed standard of protection desired by the industry. A Memorandum of Understanding, MOU, agreed on 24 March 2014, between the Office of Public Works and Insurance Ireland, the representative body for the insurance companies in Ireland has a specific focus on agreeing the basis on which information can be provided to the insurance industry on areas defended by flood relief schemes completed by the OPW.

Questions - Written Answers

Under the MOU, the OPW requirement is that insurers who are party to the agreement take full account of information provided by the OPW on completed flood defence schemes, when assessing exposure to flood risk. The MOU does not guarantee the availability of flood risk cover in the locations for which information has been provided by the OPW. The MOU recognises that the provision of insurance cover, the level of premiums charged and the policy terms applied are a matter for individual insurers based on the risk they are willing to take on a case by case basis.

The flood maps developed by the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management, CFRAM, Programme are community based maps on the future risk of flooding in an area, for the purpose of developing community based flood risk management measures. They are not developed based on historic flooding information alone, or to designate individual properties at risk from flooding and cannot be relied upon for commercial purposes. This has been outlined to the Insurance Industry that has informed the OPW that it relies upon its own flood models to make its commercial decisions.

The OPW has published information available to it in relation to past flood events and this is currently accessible, where available and applicable, through individual flood maps on *flood-info.ie*. The presence of this information in any given area is indicative of a risk of flooding but individual properties may not have flooded in the past or may not be at risk of future flooding due to local conditions e.g. elevated floor levels, the use of individual property protection measures or for other reasons.

Any person with an insurance-related query or complaint can contact Insurance Ireland's Insurance Information Service 01 676 1914 or *feedback@insuranceireland.eu*. In addition, the Financial Services Ombudsman, 01 567 7000 or *info@fsfo.ie*, deals independently with unresolved complaints from consumers about their individual dealings with all financial service providers.

Civil Service Accountability

202. Deputy Alan Kelly asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his officials and civil servants across the public service are subject to circular 12/2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6427/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Department of Finance Circular 12/2010: Protocol for Civil Servants Nominated to the Boards of Non-commercial State Bodies outlines the steps to be taken when a civil servant nominee to the Board of non-commercial State bodies has an unanswered concern where there is a significant public policy issue at stake which is not being satisfactorily addressed by the Board. The provisions of Circular 12/2010, which are also incorporated within the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, apply to officials of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and to all civil servants serving on Boards of non-commercial State bodies.

Ministerial Meetings

203. Deputy Alan Kelly asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the dates, attendees and purposes of all meetings he or his special advisers had with a person (details supplied) in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [6519/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy

will be aware, the person in question is a senior official in my Department. Consequently, like any senior official, he would meet with myself, the Minister of State, advisers and other senior officials in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in the normal course of his work.

The Deputy may wish to note that my diary for the period in question is a matter of public record and is available on my Department's website.

My special advisers had three meetings with the senior official in question in the time period specified, on 9 May 2016, 1 March 2018 and 3 July 2018, to discuss a range of departmental matters.

Departmental Correspondence

204. Deputy Alan Kelly asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will publish all correspondence between a person (details supplied) or his office or officials with the Minister, his special advisers, the Secretary General of his Department or the Secretary General's office in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date on 2019. [6520/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, the person in question is a senior official in my Department. Consequently, like any senior official, he would be in contact with myself, the Minister of State, advisers and other senior officials in my Department in the normal course of his work. On that basis, I do not plan to publish correspondence as set out in the question.

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2014, any individual can make a valid request for access to official records held by Government Departments or other public bodies as defined by the Act. However, there are some exemptions to the information releasable under Freedom of Information, for example commercially sensitive information, that would need to be taken into account.

Ministerial Advisers Data

205. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of advisers and special advisers employed by his Department in 2017 and 2018 and to date in 2019; the areas of expertise covered by such advisers; the annual salaries associated with same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6576/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform(Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I wish to inform the Deputy that non-civil service appointments in my Department are made in line with "Instructions to Personnel Officers - Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil", which include "Guidelines on staffing of Ministerial offices" issued by my Department.

Details of special advisers contracted by my Department since 2017 are outlined in the table below:

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	Name	Commencement Date	Cessation Date
2017	Deborah Sweeney	Appointed 06/05/2016. Reappointed 15/06/2017.	N/A
2017	Stephen Lynam	Appointed 06/05/2016. Reappointed 15/06/2017.	16/03/2018

Questions - Written Answers

	Name	Commencement Date	Cessation Date
2018	Niamh Callaghan	Appointed 17/05/2018.	N/A

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

- (a) assist the Minister or Minister of State, as the case may be, by –
 - (i) Providing advice,
 - (ii) Monitoring, facilitating and securing the achievement of the Government objectives that relate to the Department, as requested by the Minister or the Minister of State, as the case may be, and
 - (iii) Performing such other functions as may be directed by the Minister or the Minister of State, as the case may be that are not otherwise provided for in this Act and do not involve the exercise of any specific powers conferred on the Minister or the Minister of State as the case may be or any other office holder by or under any other Act.

The annual costs associated with these advisers are as follows:

Name	Salary
Deborah Sweeney	5th point Principal Officer (Standard) PPC scale
Stephen Lynam	3rd point Principal Officer (Standard) PPC scale (resigned March 2018)
Niamh Callaghan	1st point Principal Officer (Standard) PPC scale

Current Principal Officer (Standard) PPC Pay Scale (N87 – 1st October 2018)

€85,823	€89,356	€92,862	€96,395	€99,375	€102,465	€105,552
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The appointments of Advisers are kept under review given the breath of my responsibilities across two Departments.

[Public Service Management Act 1997]

[Personnel Officers re Ministerial Appts.]

Public Expenditure Data

206. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of public projects undertaken by a company (details supplied) in the past ten years that have involved overruns of the original estimated cost. [6597/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Capital expenditure is sanctioned through the line departments or bodies given a delegated sanctioning role by those departments. These ‘sanctioning authorities’ are responsible for monitoring the projects and dealing with cost overruns that arise within their capital sanctions. The Public

Spending Code published by my Department sets out the principles which apply in relation to project appraisal, value for money etc., and which continue to apply throughout the implementation phase.

Once tenders are received a sanctioning authority must review the tender report and give permission for a contract to be awarded with an established construction budget. It is a matter for the contracting authority who has awarded the contract to manage its performance thereafter and report on budgetary matters to the sanctioning authority concerned.

The extent of cost increases on individual capital projects is a matter for each sanctioning authority and the details are not held centrally.

National Children's Hospital

207. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if all communications between his Department and the Department of Health regarding the national children's hospital in 2017 and 2018 and to date in 2019 will be published. [6610/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department has already released correspondence with the Department of Health through a Freedom of Information request. Under the FOI Act 2014 any individual can request access to official records held by Government Departments. However, there are some potential limits to the information releasable, for example in relation to commercially sensitive information, that may need to be taken into account.

Appointments to State Boards

208. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of boards or agencies his officials have been appointed to; if there are guidelines or protocols for members of staff being appointed to boards or agencies; if so, when same were last updated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6651/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In response to the Deputy's question, officials from my Department have been appointed to 21 boards or agencies.

The provisions of Circular 12/2010, Protocol for Civil Servants Nominated to the Boards of Non-commercial State Bodies, which are also incorporated within the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, apply to officials of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and to all civil servants serving on Boards of non-commercial State bodies. These are the most recent protocols that exist for members of staff being appointed to boards or agencies.

National Children's Hospital

209. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the circumstances surrounding the appointment of an official in his Department to the national paediatric development board; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6655/19]

210. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of his officials that have been appointed to the National Paediatric Hospital Develop-

ment Board since its creation in 2007; the dates these officials were appointed to the board; if he was required to approve these appointments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6658/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 209 and 210 together.

The establishment of the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board, NPHDP, and the appointment of its members is a matter for the Minister for Health.

The Chief Procurement Officer was appointed in a personal capacity to the NPHDP in 2013 for a five year term by the then Minister for Health. He was re-appointed in 2018 by the current Minister for Health. As Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, I was not required to approve this appointment.

The Department of Health, as the accountable Department for the Children's Hospital Project, established the reporting and governance arrangements for the project through which the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board provides regular updates to it on the project.

As Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, I have responsibility for public procurement policy. However, my Department does not procure public works contracts and has no role in supervising the procurement process of the national children's hospital project. It is the relevant sanctioning and contracting authority that has responsibility for the management of the tendering process for a public works contract and the administration of the contract once it is awarded.

National Children's Hospital

211. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the date he was first informed of the cost overruns at the national children's hospital; if he was informed by his officials or officials from another Department; if it was from within his Department, the division that informed him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6667/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I've been involved in a number of discussions around the Children's Hospital over the last few years. The first full assessment of the cost overrun and the reasons for it was received by my Department in the form of a report from the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board submitted by the Department of Health on the 19 November. My Department reviewed the report and met with the Department of Health to discuss it on the 23 November and made a formal submission to me on 26 November.

Government Construction Contracts Committee

212. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the purpose of the contracts committee; the person or body that sits on the committee; the Departments represented; the positions or levels they hold in each Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6726/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Government Construction Contracts Committee, "GCCC", was established under Section 11 of Circular 40/02, "Public Procurement Guidelines – revision of existing procedures for approval of certain contracts in the Central Government sector", which *inter alia* re-configured the existing

arrangements for the Government Contracts Committee.

The GCCC is a forum for the discussion and development of public policy in the tendering and contracting of all aspects of construction projects, apart from the PPP form of contract.

The OGP provides the functions of Chair and Secretariat to the GCCC. The membership of the GCCC, given below, includes representatives from the main capital spending bodies and departments with a significant involvement in public sector construction related activities. In order to draw on the considerable experience in procurement within the public sector, the committee also includes bodies from outside the central government sector.

Relevant departments and bodies nominate representatives to sit on the committee and they have either technical, e.g. civil and building engineering, architectural, quantity surveying, or project management, and/or administrative backgrounds. Representative departments and bodies may change their individual nominees on the GCCC from time to time. Special advisors/consultants or other guests may be invited to participate in the work of the Committee as may be required from time to time.

All public works projects that are delivered under the Exchequer-funded element of the Government's capital plan must be procured in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Capital Works Management Framework, CWMF. The CWMF is mandated by circular and was developed to provide an integrated set of contractual provisions, guidance material, technical templates and procedures which cover all aspects of the delivery process of a public works project from inception to final project delivery and review to assist contracting authorities in meeting their ongoing procurement requirements. The public works contract is a key component of the CWMF and is a lump sum, fixed-price contract which is to be used on all public works projects.

It is possible for public bodies to seek a derogation from the use of the standard forms of contract from the GCCC. This process may be used for complex or large projects which have specific requirements which do not naturally fit with the standard 'lump sum' contracts and has been availed of by a number of sanctioning authorities.

A derogation, if agreed, does not approve the approach or strategy of the contracting authority, but simply acknowledges that the circumstances are such as to warrant a different approach than the standard. It is a matter for the contracting authority and the sanctioning authority to satisfy themselves as to the adequacy of the approach with regards to compliance with procurement rules and project appraisal in accordance with the Public Spending Code.

The current details of the GCCC at 12 February 2019 as requested by the Deputy are set out below.

Name	Technical/Administrative Position in Organisation	Department/Office
David O'Brien	Senior Construction Adviser (Chair to GCCC)	Office of Government Procurement
Eileen Dalton	Assistant Principal (Secretariat to GCCC)	Office of Government Procurement
Jim Deane	Principal Officer, Procurement Policy	Office of Government Procurement
Grainne Connolly	Engineer, Marine Engineering Division	Dept. of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Noel Clancy	Chief Engineer, Marine Engineering Division	Dept. of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Questions - Written Answers

Name	Technical/Administrative Position in Organisation	Department/Office
Noel Ó Murchú	Engineer, Marine Engineering Division	Dept. of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Deirdre Creaney	Assistant Principal, Property Management Branch	Dept. of Defence
Neil Murphy	Head of Quantity Surveying Services	Dept. of Defence
Larry McEvoy	Manager (Professional & Technical), Planning and Building Unit	Dept. of Education & Skills
Derek Kavanagh	Quantity Surveying Adviser - Housing Advisers & Building Standards	Dept. of Housing, Planning and Local Govt.
David O'Grady	Engineering Inspector Roads Division	Dept. of Transport, Tourism and Sport
Ciaran McCaffrey	Senior Manager, Capital Funding	HEA
Eleanor Masterson	Deputy Chief Architectural Adviser	HSE
Peter Finnegan	Principal Quantity Surveying Adviser	HSE
Gerard Cahillane	NDFA Head of Finance and Operations	NDFA
David Corrigan	Head of Project Management	NDFA
Aidan Quinn	Principal Quantity Surveyor, Quantity Surveying Services	OPW
Colette Davis	Assistant Principal, Flood Project Management Services	OPW
Gerard Kennedy	Assistant Principal, Intermediate Projects	OPW
Gerard Harvey	Assistant Principal Architect	OPW
Geraldine Fitzpatrick	Chartered Engineer FIEI, Head of Roads Capital Programme	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
Patrick Duffy	Regional Manager	Transport Infrastructure Ireland

Capital Expenditure Programme Review

213. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if a review of capital projects for 2019 has commenced in view of the capital overrun at the national children's hospital; if there has been consultation with his Department in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6856/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department has been engaging with the Department of Health and with other Departments in relation to how the increased costs of the National Children's Hospital project in 2019 will be managed within the overall agreed capital allocation for 2019, in light of the multi-year management of the broad range of capital projects, amounting to upwards of €7 billion this year.

I am bringing proposals to Government in this regard and decisions will be announced in due course. The overall intention is to proceed with our very ambitious agenda of strategic infrastructure investment throughout the course of 2019 and subsequent years, with the minimum of disruption to the rollout and delivery of key projects.

Departmental Budgets

214. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the €50 million to be found within the health vote and the €50 million to be found in other Departments as a result of the overspend on the national children's hospital will come from the capital expenditure envelope and not the current envelope. [6860/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Government is committed to delivering Project Ireland 2040 within the overall multi-year capital resource envelope that has been set out. For 2019, the capital allocation has increased by €1,325 million or just over 22% above the 2018 allocation as stated in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019. With regard to implications arising from the National Children's Hospital project, the Government is currently considering how the additional cost pressures will be accommodated within the multi-year capital envelope, with a minimum of disruption to the planned rollout and delivery of important infrastructure projects under Project Ireland 2040, which I am pleased to report are proceeding at a strong rate.

National Museum

215. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the breakdown of the allocation in 2019 for the National Museum of Ireland and Natural History Museum; the date in 2019 the OPW plans to replace the roof of the building; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6909/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Government is committed to delivering Project Ireland 2040 within the overall multi-year resource envelope that has been set out. For 2019, the capital allocation has increased by €1,325 million or just over 22% above the 2018 allocation as stated in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019.

With regard to implications arising from the National Children's Hospital project, the Government is currently considering how the additional cost pressures will be accommodated within the multi-year envelope, with a minimum of disruption to the planned rollout and delivery of important infrastructure projects under Project Ireland 2040, which I am pleased to report are proceeding at a strong rate.

It is not possible at this stage to state whether works might be undertaken to the museum roof this year as the overall construction programme has not yet been finalised and the exact sequence of the interventions has not been decided.

Office of Public Works Projects

216. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the breakdown of the €123 million allocation in 2019 for the Hawkins House project; the date in 2019 the project is expected to begin; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun on the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6910/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Government is committed to delivering Project Ireland 2040 within the overall multi-year resource envelope that has been set out. For 2019, the capital allocation has increased by €1,325 million or just over 22% above the 2018 allocation as stated in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019. With regard to implications arising from the National Children's Hospital project, the Government is currently considering how the additional cost pressures will be accommodated within the multi-year envelope, with a minimum of disruption to the planned rollout and delivery of important infrastructure projects under Project Ireland 2040, which I am pleased to report are proceeding at a strong rate.

There is a provision of €2.5 million included in the OPW Capital Allocation for new works in 2019 for the Hawkins House project. However, this provision relates solely to the demolition of the existing building on the site. The allocation of €123 million referred to in the Deputy's question relates to an Office of Public Works 2017 submission to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform seeking capital funding under the National Development Plan. No specific allocation was made to OPW for the redevelopment of the Hawkins House site in response to that submission. The OPW is currently carrying out an options appraisal on the future of the Hawkins House Site. I anticipate that this process will be completed over the coming months and will inform a decision on the future of the site. The outcome of this exercise will be significantly influenced by the availability of sufficient capital funding for building new office accommodation and projected demand for civil service office accommodation in the area.

Office of Public Works Projects

217. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the breakdown of the €46 million allocation in 2019 for the Leeson Lane redevelopment; the date in 2019 the project is expected to begin; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun on the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6911/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Government is committed to delivering Project Ireland 2040 within the overall multi-year resource envelope that has been set out. For 2019, the capital allocation has increased by €1,325 million or just over 22% above the 2018 allocation as stated in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019. With regard to implications arising from the National Children's Hospital project, the Government is currently considering how the additional cost pressures will be accommodated within the multi-year envelope, with a minimum of disruption to the planned rollout and delivery of important infrastructure projects under Project Ireland 2040, which I am pleased to report are proceeding at a strong rate.

Planning permission for this project was granted on 10th October, 2017. At present the detailed design and tender documentation are being developed and are expected to be published at the end of Q1/ early Q2 2019 with a view for construction to commence in Q3/ Q4 2019 or early 2020.

Flood Relief Schemes Funding

218. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the breakdown of the €37 million allocation in 2019 for the Enniscorthy flood relief scheme; the date in 2019 the project is expected to commence; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun on the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6912/19]

220. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the breakdown of the €24 million allocation in 2019 for the Arklow flood relief scheme; the date in 2019 the project is expected to begin; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun on the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6914/19]

221. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the breakdown of the €30 million allocation in 2019 for the Skibbereen flood relief scheme; the date in 2019 the project will be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun on the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6915/19]

222. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the breakdown of the €23 million allocation in 2019 for the Bandon flood relief scheme; the date in 2019 the project will be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun on the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6916/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 218 and 220 to 222, inclusive, together.

The current position on these flood relief schemes is set out in the table below.

Scheme	Current Status
Arklow	Wicklow County Council is progressing flood protection measures for the town of Arklow with funding provided by the Office of Public Works. Consultants have been commissioned to undertake engineering and environmental studies and to assess and develop a viable, cost-effective and sustainable flood relief scheme for the Avoca River. An Environmental Impact Assessment Report is currently being prepared and once completed an application for planning permission will be sought from An Bord Pleanála.
Enniscorthy	Wexford County Council is progressing flood protection measures for the town of Enniscorthy with funding provided by the Office of Public Works. It is expected that a formal Exhibition of the proposed scheme will be held in late March/early April 2019. Following this and presuming general public acceptance of the scheme proposals, formal Confirmation to proceed with the scheme will be sought from the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, with construction commencing probably in early 2020.
Skibbereen	The Skibbereen Flood Relief Scheme is under construction and is expected to be completed in mid 2019.
Bandon	The Bandon Flood Relief Scheme is under construction and is expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2019.

The funding required for the completion and/or further progression of the projects concerned will not be impacted by the cost overrun on the National Children's Hospital.

The Government is committed to delivering Project Ireland 2040 within the overall multi-year resource envelope that has been set out. For 2019, the capital allocation has increased by €1,325 million or just over 22% above the 2018 allocation as stated in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019. With regard to implications arising from the National Children's Hospital project, the Government is currently considering how the additional cost pressures will be accommodated within the multi-year envelope, with a minimum of disruption to the planned rollout and delivery of important infrastructure projects under Project Ireland 2040, which I am pleased to report are proceeding at a strong rate.

Office of Public Works Projects

219. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the breakdown of the €30 million allocation in 2019 for the children's science museum and the National Concert Hall; the date in 2019 the project is expected to commence; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun on the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6913/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Government is committed to delivering Project Ireland 2040 within the overall multi-year resource envelope that has been set out. For 2019, the capital allocation has increased by €1,325 million or just over 22% above the 2018 allocation as stated in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019. With regard to implications arising from the National Children's Hospital project, the

Government is currently considering how the additional cost pressures will be accommodated within the multi-year envelope, with a minimum of disruption to the planned rollout and delivery of important infrastructure projects under Project Ireland 2040, which I am pleased to report are proceeding at a strong rate.

The proposed redevelopment of the National Concert Hall and the new National Children's Science Centre forms part of the Cultural Quarter Development programme planned for the National Concert Hall campus at Earlsfort Terrace Dublin 2. The Office of Public Works has commenced the procurement of consultants for the overall National Concert Hall campus development. It is planned to carry out the works on a phased basis and it is expected that the first phase will commence on site in 2020. This will be preceded by the obtaining of the necessary statutory approvals, detailed design and tender process, which is expected to be progressed during 2019.

Questions Nos. 220 to 222, inclusive, answered with Question No. 218.

Flood Prevention Measures

223. Deputy Brendan Griffin asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if officials from his Department will inspect coastal erosion at a location (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6978/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised that the Office of Public Works approved funding to Kerry County Council of €75,000 in March 2018 under its Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection scheme for a Coastal Erosion & Flood Risk Management Study for Dingle Bay East-Castlemaine Harbour. The area mentioned in the Deputy's question is included in this study. Kerry County Council is currently progressing the procurement of a consultant for this study.

Flood Prevention Measures

224. Deputy Brendan Griffin asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 164 of 5 December 2018, if a representative from the OPW will contact a person (details supplied) in County Kerry regarding flood defence works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6982/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Kerry County Council carried out a pre-feasibility study for the Sneem area, the recommendation of which was to carry out further more detailed river modelling to assess the feasibility of the measures identified in the pre-feasibility study. Working in co-operation with Kerry County Council, the Office of Public Works (OPW) have agreed to undertake this study and assessment, which will be completed in the summer of 2019.

Please be advised that an OPW Engineer was in contact with Mr. O'Sullivan in January regarding the flooding of properties at Atlantic Gateway Developments. The OPW will directly contact Mr. O'Sullivan again prior to completion of their assessment.

Should a suitable scheme be identified, it will be open to Kerry County Council to apply for funding under the OPW-operated Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme. This Scheme's eligibility criteria, including a requirement that any measures are cost-beneficial as published on the OPW website, apply to all applications.

National Development Plan

225. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the progress to date on infrastructural projects in County Meath listed in the national development plan; and the amount spent on consultants and construction projects, respectively, in respect of same. [7013/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In my role as Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform I am responsible for setting the overall capital allocations across Departments and for monitoring monthly expenditure at a Departmental level. Decisions on how and where those allocations are invested by Departments are a matter, in the first instance, for my Ministerial colleagues. The key role in leading development at county level rests with the relevant local authority.

However, my Department publishes a major capital projects tracker on the website of the Department, which sets out details of the key projects and programmes being implemented under the NDP, including the location of the projects where possible. The tracker currently focuses on projects and programmes with a value of greater than €20 million. Therefore, while it does not provide an exhaustive list of all capital expenditure, the list of projects serves to highlight the diverse range of infrastructural demands competing for the resources of the State.

The tracker can be found at the following URL:

<https://www.per.gov.ie/en/investment-projects-and-programmes-tracker/>

It is currently possible to search the project tracker by location and, for example, obtain a list of the projects on the tracker that are being delivered in a particular county. However, my Department is currently developing a mapping function for projects on the capital tracker in consultation with Ordnance Survey Ireland. This function will be available shortly and will make it easier to locate projects being delivered in a particular location, which will be an important step in increasing public awareness of the projects being delivered under Project Ireland 2040 and the National Development Plan 2018-2027.

Student Universal Support Ireland

226. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) was refused the SUSI grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6256/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As part of a comprehensive customer service and communications strategy provided by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) to ensure that all necessary avenues are open to applicants to receive the information they need, a dedicated email and phone line service is provided by SUSI for Oireachtas members. This was established to meet an identified need for applicants who choose to engage the assistance of their public representatives in making enquiries about their grant applications.

This service complements the established channels provided by SUSI, which include online application-tracking, a dedicated website, a telephone helpdesk, email and social media, including Facebook and Twitter.

Enquiries may be emailed direct to SUSI at oireachtas@susi.ie. Staff in SUSI are responding to email queries within a matter of days.

If the student in question considers that he has been unjustly refused a student grant or that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, he may appeal this decision to SUSI within the statutory time limit of 30 days of his decision letter.

Where an individual applicant has an appeal turned down in writing by SUSI and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted online by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board within the required timeframe of 30 days.

Schools Building Projects Status

227. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of planned school building works at a school (details supplied). [6279/19]

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.

Schools Building Projects Status

228. Deputy Sean Sherlock asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a school building project (details supplied) in County Cork; and when construction will commence. [6305/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): My Department has requested additional information from the Patron of the school in question regarding the ownership of the proposed site.

On receipt of this information the project will be given further consideration and a decision will be conveyed directly to the school authority.

Autism Support Services

229. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to have a third ASD unit provided at a school (details supplied) for the 2019-20 school year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6310/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has a statutory function to plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs, including Autism, in consultation with the relevant education partners and the Health Service Executive (HSE). This includes the establishment of special class and special school placements in various geographical areas where there is an identified need.

There are 5 special schools and 49 special classes attached to mainstream schools in Co.

Limerick. Of these, 5 are ASD early intervention classes, 22 are primary ASD classes and 14 are post-primary ASD classes. The number of ASD special classes in Co. Limerick has increased from 2 in 2013/2014 to 41 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.

Schools may apply to the NCSE to open a special class where a need has been identified in their area i.e. a number of students have professional reports indicating they require the support of a special class.

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 and
- 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 in the area referred to by the Deputy.

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

Autism Support Services

230. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to introduce ASD units at secondary school level (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6312/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has a statutory function to plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs, including Autism, in consultation with the relevant education partners and the Health Service Executive (HSE). This includes the establishment of special class and special school placements in various geographical areas where there is an identified need.

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.

Since 2011, the NCSE has increased the number of post-primary special classes from 72 in 2011 to 322 across the country now. This is a natural consequence of the earlier growth in primary ASD special class numbers.

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

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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.

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

Student Data

231. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of young persons in the school cycle who do not avail of transition year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6338/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): There were 44,950 students in Transition Year in September 2017, compared to 62,549 in Third Year in September 2016, meaning that 17,599 (28%) of those pupils did not avail of Transition Year.

The proportion of pupils availing of Transition Year has shown a marked increase over the past number of years, rising from 50 per cent in 2008 to over 70 per cent currently.

Further information on the trends in Transition Year uptake is available in the attached table.

Academic Year	Third Year	Transition Year	TY As % of previous 3rd Year
2007	55,857	27,759	-
2008	55,298	28,347	50.7%
2009	56,034	28,635	51.8%
2010	56,832	30,534	54.5%
2011	58,910	32,673	57.5%
2012	59,990	34,721	58.9%
2013	60,551	37,020	61.7%
2014	59,966	39,346	65.0%
2015	60,905	40,452	67.5%
2016	62,549	42,891	70.4%
2017	63,526	44,950	71.9%

Student Data

232. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of persons over 18 years of age who are undertaking the leaving certificate for the first time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6339/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examina-

tions.

In view of this I have forwarded the Deputy's query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to him.

School Accommodation Provision

233. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of children up to 12 years of age in catchment areas (details supplied) in County Wicklow; the number of available primary school places in the area; the projected school places in each of the years 2020 to 2024, inclusive; if additional provision for school places will be required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6346/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The information is not available in the format requested by the Deputy. Detailed information relating to enrolment levels in all primary and post-primary schools nationwide is available on the Department's website at the following link: <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Data-on-Individual-Schools>

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.

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.

There are currently two primary schools in the Kilcoole school planning area with a combined 2017/18 enrolment of 932 and one post-primary school with a 2017/18 enrolment of 689. There are currently eight primary schools in the Greystones school planning area with a combined 2017/18 enrolment of 3,195 and two post-primary schools with a combined 2017/18 enrolment of 1,110.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Government 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 areas referred to by the Deputy as follows:

- a new 8-classroom primary school to serve the Kilcoole/Newtownmountkennedy school

planning area to be established in 2019; and

- a new 800-pupil post-primary school to be established in 2021 to serve the Kilcoole & Greystones school planning areas as a regional solution.

School Staff

234. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the case of a person (details supplied) will be examined and revised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6347/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Officials in my Department will contact the teacher referred to by the Deputy in relation to the taxation issues outlined.

Schools Building Projects Status

235. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a major building project for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6362/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The major building project for this school is at an advanced stage of architectural planning, Stage 2b – Detailed Design, which includes the applications for Planning Permission, Fire Cert and Disability Access Cert and the preparation of tender documents. All statutory approvals have been obtained.

A legal challenge to the pre-qualification process for the main contract from one unsuccessful contractor has recently been struck out and a new invitation to pre-qualify will issue shortly on the e-tenders platform.

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

Regarding the site, legal representatives for both parties are working together with a view to concluding the conveyancing. There has been significant progress recently on foot of close and intense engagement from all parties. All parties continue the work to ensure the acquisition completes at the earliest possible date and at this point it is still not anticipated that the completion of conveyancing will impact on the timelines for delivery of the building project.

Schools Building Projects Status

236. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans for the proposed extension of a school (details supplied); the status of the project; the timeline for completion of the works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6363/19]

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.

Schools Building Projects Status

237. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans for the proposed extension of a school (details supplied); the status of the project; the timeline for completion of the works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6364/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The process of Pre-Qualification of contractors for the project in question is under way. The Pre-qualification process culminates in the compilation of shortlists of suitable candidates for each respective discipline.

The draft pre-qualification report was submitted to my Department for review in January 2019. The Department has issued comments to be actioned by the Design Team with regard to finalising the process.

When this review is complete the project will then be progressed to tender stage, which normally takes between 7 and 8 months to complete.

This project is included in the Department of Education and Skills' six-year construction programme.

Site Acquisitions

238. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Education and Skills if land has been secured for a new school building (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6366/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy is aware, 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. Due to commercial sensitivities surrounding site acquisitions in general, I cannot comment further at this point in the process, though I can assure the Deputy that my Department will make every effort to progress the matter.

Schools Building Projects Status

239. Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy asked the Minister for Education and Skills if funding has been approved for the redevelopment of a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6386/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The delivery of an extension including PE Hall and 2 Classroom Special Education Needs Base and refurbishment of existing building for the school to which the Deputy refers has been devolved for delivery to Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board (ETB).

The next step for the project is for the ETB to appoint a Design Team who will bring the project through the design and construction phases.

Questions - Written Answers
Schools Building Projects Status

240. Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the applications for additional accommodation and development by a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6387/19]

259. Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the applications for additional accommodation and development at a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6661/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 240 and 259 together

I can confirm to the Deputy that my Department has received an application, for capital funding, from the school in question.

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

Schools Refurbishment

241. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 381 of 15 January 2019, the prequalification fulfilments of the Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board, in view of the fact that the prequalification document was completed and sent to his Department in 2016; and the reason for the delay. [6486/19]

242. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 381 of 15 January 2019, the steps he is taking to fast-track the provision of a new school building at a school (details supplied). [6487/19]

248. Deputy Darragh O'Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the extension and refurbishment of a school (details supplied) will proceed to the tender and build stage; if the school will be granted rapid build status; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6555/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 241, 242 and 248 together.

As the Deputies may be aware, the project to which they refer has been devolved for delivery to the local Education & Training Board (DDLETB). That remains the case.

My Department acknowledges that the delivery of this project has taken longer than originally envisaged. Most recently, a number of issues, primarily of a legal nature, have arisen in respect of the process for the pre-qualification of contractors as referred to by the Deputy. I can inform the Deputies that, having considered these issues and liaised with my officials in that respect, DDLETB is now proceeding with a revised pre-qualification process.

Once this prequalification process is completed, the project will proceed to tender stage.

School Curriculum

243. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will ad-

dress a matter raised in correspondence (details supplied) on the provision of time for eating and hygiene as part of the school day; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6496/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): At primary level, circular 11/95 “Time in School” paragraph 3 states that a typical school day for Junior classes is 4 hours and 40 minutes and Senior classes 5 hours and 40 minutes with appropriate recreation i.e. 30 minutes. Under the Rules for National Schools, forenoon and afternoon breaks of five minutes each are allowed.

Where a recreation interval or break of a longer duration than the foregoing are taken (for example when children are allowed to have lunch in the classroom prior to the official commencement of the recreation interval) the length of the school day must be extended correspondingly.

Under the provisions of the Education Act, 1998, the Board of Management is responsible for the day to day running of a school. The arrangement within the recreation interval for pupils to eat their lunch is a matter for each Board of Management to determine and my Department has not issued guidelines to schools in this regard. Schools are required to supervise pupils during school time including during breaks and lunch breaks.

Time allocated for hygiene at primary is covered within the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Curriculum which is allocated a minimum of 30 minutes a week at all levels of primary school. SPHE provides specific opportunities to enable the child to understand himself or herself, to develop healthy relationships and to establish and maintain healthy patterns of behaviour. It is a particular concern of the curriculum to develop in the child respect and care for his or her body. It also enables the child to acquire the knowledge and attitudes that help to promote a healthy lifestyle. As part of this the child should be enabled to recognise and practise basic hygiene skills such as: personal hygiene practices, hygienic eating habits, developing basic skills in dressing himself/herself and caring for clothes, taking proper care of teeth.

The primary curriculum is currently undergoing a process of review and redevelopment, which includes SPHE and the time allocated. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) will publish a draft overview of a redeveloped primary curriculum in autumn 2019. This draft will be the basis for an extensive consultation which will feed into the overall shape and direction of a redeveloped curriculum.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

244. Deputy Eoin Ó Broin asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) is not receiving adequate educational supports to meet special needs; and when adequate educational supports will be provided. [6500/19]

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

In considering applications for SNA support for individual pupils, the NCSE take account

of the pupils' needs and consider the resources available to the school to identify whether additionality is needed or whether the school might reasonably be expected to meet the needs of the pupils from its current level of resources.

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

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

Brexit Preparations

245. Deputy Eugene Murphy asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps he has taken to safeguard ongoing educational programmes and educational co-operation with other EU states regarding students on exchange programmes in the event of a no-deal Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6506/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Student exchange programmes are part of the Erasmus + programme, which is one of the key instruments to promote learner mobility. As such, the overall response to the impact of Brexit on the programme is the responsibility of the EU. The European Commission last week published a draft Regulation to ensure that students who are actually on mobility in the UK if a No Deal Brexit happens will be enabled to complete their mobility as planned. The Council and the Parliament will now have to approve this proposal in time for the end of March, if it is needed.

Clearly, once the UK exits from the EU, the loss of partnerships with UK education and training providers will impact on Ireland. In order to mitigate this loss, my Department has been encouraging education and training providers, through the Higher Education Authority and Leargas who are designated National Agencies in Ireland, to build further partnerships and opportunities in the remaining EU States.

School Staff

246. Deputy Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to address the issues raised by a union (details supplied) on the conditions attaching to the employment status of school secretaries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6540/19]

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 Care-takers 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.

Schools Building Projects

247. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a meeting will be convened with a group (details supplied) in respect of a school project in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6548/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy is aware the delivery of the Campus project has been devolved to Kildare and Wicklow Education & Training Board (KWETB).

It is understood that the project will be going to tender very shortly with a view to getting on site early in the Summer and is still on target for occupation in September 2020. There is now a clear path to completion of the project and KWETB have been providing regular updates to the school authorities. Information on the progression of the project is available through those communication channels. In that context, my Department considers that a meeting is not necessary at this time.

Question No. 248 answered with Question No. 241.

Ministerial Advisers Data

249. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of advisers and special advisers employed by his Department in 2017 and 2018 and to date in 2019; the areas of expertise covered by such advisers; the annual salaries associated with same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6569/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Special Advisers functions are to advise and assist their respective Ministers in addressing their ministerial brief. The following tabular statements contain the information sought by the Deputy for the years requested.

2017

Mr. Richard Bruton, T.D.

Minister for Education & Skills

Questions - Written Answers

Name	Grade	Duties	Salary 2017
Patrick Cluskey	Special Adviser	Education Media matters	€81,004 pa
Conor Quinn	Special Adviser	Education Policy	€94,521 pa

Ms. Mary Mitchell O Connor, T.D.

Minister of State

Name	Grade	Duties	Salary 2017
Roy Dooney	Special Adviser	Education Policy	€94,521 pa
Lynda McQuaid	Special Adviser	Education Media matters	€94,521 pa

John Halligan, T.D.

Minister of State

Name	Grade	Duties	Salary 2017
Michelle Clancy	Special Adviser	Education Media matters	€65,093 pa

2018

Mr. Joe McHugh, T.D.,

Minister for Education & Skills

Name	Grade	Duties	Salary 2018
Mark O Doherty	Special Adviser	Education Policy	€94,535 pa
Ed Carty	Special Adviser	Education Media matters	€85,823 pa

Ms. Mary Mitchell O Connor, T.D.

Minister of State

Name	Grade	Duties	Salary
Roy Dooney	Special Adviser	Education Policy	€99,375 pa
Lynda McQuaid	Special Adviser	Education Media matters	€99,375 pa

Mr. John Halligan, T.D.

Minister of State

Name	Grade	Duties	Salary
Michelle Clancy	Special Adviser	Education Media matters	€71,289 pa

2019

Mr. Joe McHugh, T.D.,

Minister for Education & Skills

Name	Grade	Duties	Salary
Mark O Doherty	Special Adviser	Education Policy	€94,535 pa
Ed Carty	Special Adviser	Education Media matters	€85,823 pa

Ms. Mary Mitchell O Connor, T.D.

Minister of State

Name	Grade	Duties	Salary
Roy Dooney	Special Adviser	Education Policy	€99,375 pa
Lynda McQuaid	Special Adviser	Media matters	€99,375 pa

John Halligan, T.D.

Minister of State

Name	Grade	Duties	Salary
Michelle Clancy	Special Adviser	Media matters	€71,289 pa

School Transport Eligibility

250. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding school transport for children (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6587/19]

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

In general, children are eligible for school transport where they reside not less than 3.2 kilometres from and are attending their nearest national school.

A minimum number of 10 eligible children residing in a distinct locality, as determined by Bus Éireann, are required before consideration may be given to the establishment of a school transport service.

Parents of children wishing to apply for school transport may do so on Bus Éireann's website at www.buseireann.ie.

Bus Éireann has advised that applications have not been received for the children referred to by the Deputy.

State Examinations

251. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the junior cycle English 2017 report by the chief examiner was issued to all management authorities in the second level school sector; if so, the date on which the report was issued; the means of communication used to issue the report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6588/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations.

In view of this I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.

Schools Building Projects Status

252. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school (details supplied) applied for the prefab replacement programme; if so, the status of the application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6594/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The school to which the Deputy refers was approved additional accommodation under my Department's Additional Accommodation Scheme 2013 to provide 5 additional mainstream classrooms for the replacement of prefabs.

The responsibility for the appointment of a Design Team for this project has been devolved to Dublin Dun Laoghaire Education & Training Board. The tender process for the appointment of the Design Team is now complete.

The final documentation is currently being reviewed and it is expected that the appointment letter will issue by the ETB as soon as this process is completed. The progression of the project at that point will be a matter for the Board of Management in conjunction with the appointed Design Team.

Special Educational Needs Staff

253. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a request has been made by a primary school in Wexford for an additional special needs assistant or additional special needs resources for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6598/19]

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

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

the pupils from its current level of resources.

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

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

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

254. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Education and Skills the provisions in place to ensure that individual education plans will be provided (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6615/19]

255. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to increase the availability of the July provision to more children with Down's syndrome; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6632/19]

256. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Education and Skills if individual education plans will be provided for teenagers with Down's syndrome; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6633/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 254 to 256, inclusive, together.

Schools have a legal duty to provide an appropriate education to all students, including young people with special educational needs, and obviously they need to plan to ensure this happens.

Planning is a normal part of a teacher's work and planning tools, like the student support file, have been created as a resource to help schools provide for their students.

A new model for allocating special education teachers to schools was introduced in 2017.

Under this model, children can receive additional teaching support based on their learning needs, rather than on a diagnosis of disability.

Parents of children who have Down syndrome have certainty that their children can receive as much additional teaching support as required in school, taking account of school based assessments of their learning needs.

There is no constraint on the amount of additional teaching time that may be allocated to pupils with Down syndrome, based on their diagnosis, or because they may previously have been in the mild general learning difficulty category.

My Department's July Provision Grant Scheme provides funding for an extended school year for students with severe or profound intellectual disabilities and students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The scheme was developed to reduce potential regression in learning associated with these specific categories of special education needs over the summer holidays. The scheme does not make provision for children with other categories of Special Education Needs, for example, Down Syndrome.

The National Council for Special Education's Policy Advice on Educational Provision for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders was published in July 2016.

The NCSE review found that in general parents value July provision because it provides

day-time respite for families and a structured day for students.

However, the NCSE review found a number of problems with the scheme as currently organised.

These include concerns that the scheme may be inequitable because it is not provided to all students with complex special educational needs.

The Council recommended that the relevant Government Departments consider how an equitable national day activity scheme could be developed for all students with complex special educational needs.

The proposed scheme would provide a structured, safe, social environment for all students with complex special educational needs, which might include some children with Down syndrome.

The Department of Education and Skills has convened an Implementation Group with representatives of the NCSE, NEPS, the Inspectorate and representatives from other relevant Departments and agencies to ensure that the Report's recommendations are fully and appropriately considered.

There are no plans to change the July provision scheme coverage until this work is complete.

Appointments to State Boards

257. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of boards or agencies to which his officials have been appointed; if there are guidelines or protocols for members of staff being appointed to boards or agencies; if so, when same were last updated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6644/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): For the Deputy's information, Department officials serve on six of the eighteen boards of non commercial agencies under the aegis of my Department.

Criteria for board appointments to bodies under the aegis of my Department is typically informed by the legislative provisions of enabling and relevant Acts of the Oireachtas which gives authority to the State Bodies.

As the Deputy will be aware, Government Departments are typically directed by guidance circulars and office notices issued centrally from the Departments of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform (D/PER), as appropriate. Protocols documents concerning appointments to State Boards offer advice on the roles and responsibilities of Board members including specific guidance to Civil Servants issue centrally.

Accordingly, officials are guided by the following D/Finance and D/PER guidance documents;

- Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies - September 2016. This comprehensive guidance document addresses governance across a range of areas, including, but not limited to, the role of the Board, role of the board chairperson, role of board members, Ethics in public office and disclosure of interest by Board members,

- Guidance Circular on Appointments to State Boards - November 2014

- Circular 12/2010 - Protocol for Civil Servants nominated to the boards of non-commercial State Bodies - August 2010.

Letters of appointment of new board members generally include reference details concerning the key aspects of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies to guide new board members.

Teacher Training Provision

258. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address concerns outlined in correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6659/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): In Budget 2019, school leadership is again supported with an additional release day for teaching principals in primary schools and a further four additional release days for teaching principals in schools with special classes. These additional release days - 18, 24, and 30 depending on the size of the school - will be effective from 1st September 2019.

This builds on measures in previous budgets, including €0.4 million made available in Budget 2018 to fund almost 4600 additional release days for teaching principals in primary schools. This funding provided an increase in the number of release days available to teaching principals in the 2018/19 school year to 17, 23 or 29 days depending on the size of the school.

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

The Deputy will be aware that mandatory reporting of child protection concerns by teachers and greater oversight of child protection arrangements in schools were among a range of changes that came into effect with the full commencement in December 2017 of the Children First Act 2015 and with the introduction of new Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.

Face-to-face training sessions were provided for school principals or Designated Liaison Persons (DLPs) for child protection in all schools in 2018 by the Professional Development Service for Teachers, and additional training sessions are being provided for newly appointed principals/DLPs in 2019.

Matching changes to inspection arrangements also began to be rolled out in 2018, and new Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections are a further step to monitor child protection in schools.

The new inspections are designed to strengthen our child protection systems in schools. They will provide another level of reassurance and they will help to guide and direct schools in relation to meeting their child protection obligations. They are also an important way of promoting improvement in the implementation of child protection procedures by schools; they are also designed to promote best practice in school leadership as it relates to child protection.

The inspections do not require any school to produce any paperwork or record that the school is not already required to have in place since December 2017. The inspectors are also flexible in carrying out the checks and in timing the meetings they have with any staff in the school, so that school life is not disrupted.

The new Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections were developed through an extensive research and consultation process with the education partners and other interested stakeholders including the Office of the Ombudsman for Children. In the context of this consultation, my Department carefully considered feedback from schools, principals, unions and management bodies, particularly in relation to their requirements on record-keeping and reporting and the supports they need in order to implement child protection procedures. In that regard:

- My Department has provided a suite of templates and supporting documents to help schools and boards to fulfil their record-keeping, reporting obligations and other obligations under the 2017 Procedures

- The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and the Inspectorate are working closely together to promote best practice among schools in relation to child protection

- The Inspectorate has provided regional seminars on the new Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections for primary and post-primary school principals and is planning further briefings on the new inspections during May and June 2019. The Inspectorate is also presenting at conferences of a number of education partners. It is expected that more than 3,000 principals will have attended briefing sessions on the new inspections by the end of June this year.

Question No. 259 answered with Question No. 240.

Schools Building Projects Status

260. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a new school building project for a school (details supplied); if the acquisition of a new site for the school has been completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6725/19]

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

Officials in my Department have recently contacted officials in Fingal County Council for assistance under the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the identification and acquisition of a suitable site. The relevant Local Area Plan provides for the location of a Post Primary School site in the Kenure area of Rush and engagement with the relevant landowners in respect of the potential acquisition of this site has commenced.

It is difficult to indicate a timeline for the completion of the acquisition of a site for the school in question as it is dependent on the outcome of current negotiations and also on the complexity of the conveyancing process. Once a site has been acquired, the project can progress to architectural planning.

SOLAS Training and Education Programmes Data

261. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 38 of 22 January 2019, when he expects a full year's data to be available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6755/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): As I indicated in Parliamentary Question No. 38 of 22 January 2019, a detailed analysis on the value and quality of the provision of the new contracted training multi supplier framework

agreement is be undertaken.

SOLAS expects a full year's data will be available in Q2 2019. at which time arrangements will be made for the detailed analysis to be carried out.

Schools Facilities

262. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a new national school for south Swords area of Fingal will be delivered in temporary accommodation at a location (details supplied) for the commencement of the September 2019 school year; if so, the number of classrooms that will be provided; and if other facilities such as physical education, school bus and special needs unit will be included. [6759/19]

264. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the planning assessment process will be completed with regard to the delivery of a new national school for an area (details supplied) in County Dublin. [6761/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 262 and 264 together.

As the Deputy may be aware, the current focus for my Department is to prioritise the 17 schools due to be established in 2019 so that accommodation solutions can be put in place as soon as possible.

A planning application was lodged on 21 December 2018 for the location referred to by the Deputy. However, following further engagement with the local authority a better accommodation solution has been identified and this is currently being pursued. The application for planning permission at the National Show Centre will be withdrawn.

The school was announced as an 8 classroom school and will open with a single stream junior infant class in September 2019 in suitable interim accommodation.

The patronage process for the new primary schools opening in September 2019 is nearing completion and it is anticipated that the successful patrons will be announced later in February.

Due to their temporary nature, special education needs bases are not provided in start-up school accommodation, they are however, provided as part of the permanent accommodation projects for new schools.

In relation to the issue of school transport generally, the purpose of my Department's Primary School transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school for children who reside remote from their nearest school.

School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of my Department. Generally children are eligible for school transport where they reside not less than 3.2 kilometres from and are attending their nearest national school, having regard to ethos and language.

A minimum number of 10 eligible children residing in a district locality, as determined by Bus Éireann, are required before consideration may be given to the establishment of a school transport service, provided this can be done within reasonable cost limits.

School Catchment Areas

263. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a new national school for south Swords area of Fingal will give priority access to children from a catchment area (details supplied) for September 2019. [6760/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): 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), including a new 8-classroom primary school to be established in 2019 to serve the Swords(South) school planning area. 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.

All new schools established since 2011 to meet demographic demand are required to prioritise enrolments from within the school planning area which the school was established to serve. This does not preclude schools from enrolling pupils from outside of the designated school planning area, rather it reflects the need to accommodate in the first instance the demographic for which the school was established.

The question of enrolment in individual schools is the responsibility of the managerial authority of those schools. It is the responsibility of the managerial authorities of schools to implement an enrolment policy in accordance with the Education Act 1998 and the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018.

My Department's main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking places. Parents have the right to choose which school to apply to and where the school has places available the pupil should be admitted. However, in schools where there are more applicants than places available a selection process may be necessary. This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants. However, this may result in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice.

As the Deputy is aware the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018, which was signed into law by the President on the 18 July 2018, 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.

Question No. 264 answered with Question No. 262.

Schools Building Projects Status

265. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the breakdown of the allocation in 2019 for the prefab replacement scheme; the dates in 2019 each construction project is expected to commence; if this will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he has been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6792/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): My Department's capital allocation in 2019 is €941m of which €672m is being allocated for capital spending in primary and post-primary schools. The school sector allocation will be expended primarily on the delivery of large scale projects and on the Additional Accommodation Scheme. Since mid-2018 all schools approved additional accommodation under my Department Additional Accommodation Scheme are also having all necessary prefabs replaced as part of their additional accommo-

dation project. The timing of when these projects go to construction is a matter for the school authority as all projects are devolved for delivery.

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.

Information in relation to the current status of all school building projects is available on my Departments web-site and this information is updated on a regular basis.

I understand that the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform will clarify following today's Cabinet meeting how cost pressures relating to the National Children's Hospital will be addressed.

Third Level Funding

266. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the breakdown of the €15 million allocation for 2019 for a college (details supplied); the date in 2019 the project will commence; if this will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he has been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6794/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): It is anticipated that the TCD E3 project will commence construction during the second half of 2020, with a completion date in the second half of September 2022.

The project cost is estimated at €60m, including a contribution of €15m from the Exchequer.

I understand that the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform will clarify following today's Cabinet meeting how cost pressures relating to the National Children's Hospital will be addressed.

Third Level Funding

267. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the breakdown of the €18 million allocation for 2019 for an institute (details supplied); the date in 2019 the project will commence; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he has been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6795/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT) is in the process of procuring a design team for a major refurbishment of its North and South Block buildings. It is anticipated that work will commence on site in the first half of 2020.

Approximately €18.5m has been allocated by the Department for this project, which will be undertaken in phases over a number of years. It is expected that only a limited portion of overall project costs will be drawn down by DKIT in 2019.

I understand that the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform will clarify following

today's Cabinet meeting how cost pressures relating to the National Children's Hospital will be addressed.

Third Level Funding

268. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the breakdown of the €15 million allocation for 2019 for an institute (details supplied); the date in 2019 the project will commence; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he has been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6796/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): It is envisaged that the Sports Science, Health and Recreation Building at the TU Dublin Tallaght Campus will commence on site in the second half of 2019.

The Department of Education and Skills has agreed to provide just over 50% of the total project cost of approximately €15m, with TU Dublin funding the balance. Payments will be made to TU Dublin over the construction period.

I understand that the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform will clarify following today's Cabinet meeting how cost pressures relating to the National Children's Hospital will be addressed.

Third Level Funding

269. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the breakdown of the allocation in 2019 for the higher education PPP programme; the date in 2019 the programme will commence; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he has been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6797/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The higher education PPP programme is currently in design stage and the costs incurred in 2019 will relate primarily to design team costs. These costs are estimated at €5m this year.

I understand that the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform will clarify following today's Cabinet meeting how cost pressures relating to the National Children's Hospital will be addressed.

Teacher Recruitment

270. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when teacher supply panels will be introduced. [6805/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Management bodies and schools have, in recent years, reported difficulties in recruiting teachers. At primary level this relates mainly to the recruitment of substitute teachers and at post-primary level to the recruitment of teachers of particular subjects (e.g. STEM, modern foreign languages, Irish and Home Economics).

In response to these difficulties, the Teacher Supply Steering Group was established in March of last year and the Group is chaired by the Secretary General of my Department.

The Steering Group is considering the issues that impact on teacher supply, including: initial teacher education policy, provision, funding and support; data/research requirements; policies and arrangements for schools and teachers that impact on teacher mobility/supply; and promotion of the teaching profession.

The Steering Group is overseeing the implementation of the Action Plan for Teacher Supply, which was published in November 2018. Following from the Action Plan, the Department is undertaking an analysis of the potential for a supply panel scheme for primary schools.

Autism Support Services

271. Deputy Tony McLoughlin asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the development of an ASD unit at a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6818/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has no record of receiving an application, for capital funding, for the provision of an ASD Unit at the school in question.

Should an application be received it will be considered and the school authority informed of the outcome.

School Curriculum

272. Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount of time allocated in a school day for national school children to have their breaks; the portion of this time allocated for eating; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6838/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Circular 11/95 “Time in School” paragraph 3 states that a typical school day for Junior classes is 4 hours and 40 minutes and Senior classes 5 hours and 40 minutes with appropriate recreation i.e. 30 minutes. Under the Rules for National Schools, forenoon and afternoon breaks of five minutes each are allowed.

Where a recreation interval or break of a longer duration than the foregoing are taken (for example when children are allowed to have lunch in the classroom prior to the official commencement of the recreation interval) the length of the school day must be extended correspondingly.

Under the provisions of the Education Act, 1998, the Board of Management is responsible for the day to day running of a school. The arrangement within the recreation interval for pupils to eat their lunch is a matter for each Board of Management to determine. My Department has not issued guidelines to schools in this regard.

Scoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge

273. D’fhiabhráigh Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív den an Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cad iad na socrúithe atá á ndéanamh le freastal ar an éileamh ar oideachas dara leibhéal i ndeisceart Cha-

thair Bhaile Átha Cliath le freastal ar na scoláirí atá ag fágáil na nbunscoileanna lán-Ghaelacha i mBaile Átha Cliath 6 (sonraí tugtha); agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [6922/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Mar is eol don Teachta, b'fhéidir, d'fhógair an Rialtas pleananna le deireanas le 42 scoil nua a bhunú sna chéad cheithre bliana eile (2019 go 2022), lena n-áirítéar:

- iar-bhunscoil nua 1,000 dalta a fhreastalóidh ar cheantair pleanála scoile Bhaile Átha Cliath 6 Chluain Sceach agus Bhaile Átha Cliath 6W mar réiteach réigiúnach, agus a bhunófar in 2020; agus

- iar-bhunscoil nua 600 dalta a fhreastalóidh ar cheantair pleanála scoile Bhaile Átha Cliath 2 agus Bhaile Átha Cliath 4 agus a bhunófar in 2021.

Fógraíodh na scoileanna seo tar éis suirbhé náisiúnta déimeagrafach a rinne mo Roinn ar an ngá atá ann le bunscoileanna agus iar-bhunscoileanna ar fud na tíre. Tabharfaidh an t-achar pleanála ceithre bliana deis dúinn chun an bonneagar riachtanach seo a phleanáil agus a chur i gcrích.

Mar atá leagtha amach sa Phlean Gníomhaíochta (2018-2022) maidir le Straitéis 20 Bliain na Gaeilge (2010-2030), beidh deiseanna ann chun oideachas Gaeilge a leathnú lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht i bhfianaise na 42 scoil nua a bhunófar; déanfar breithniú ar leith ar bhunú Gaelscoileanna, Gaelcholáistí agus aonaid Lán-Ghaeilge mar chuid den phróiseas pátrúnachta nua.

Nuir a chinnfear go bhfuil gá le scoil nua chun freastal ar riachtanais dhéimeagrafacha i gceantar ar leith, eagróidh mo Roinn próiseas pátrúnachta chun pátrún na scoile a roghnú. Cuirfear teanga theagaisc na scoile nua beartaithe san áireamh mar dhlúthchuid den mheasúnú agus den mholadh a dhéanfar maidir le pátrún. Beidh an próiseas chun pátrún a cheapadh do scoileanna nua ar oscailt do gach foras pátrúnachta agus do phátrúin ionchasacha, lena n-áirítéar pátrúin atá bainteach le soláthar Gaeilge agus go deimhin aon phátrún ionchasach ar mian leis oideachas Gaeilge a chur ar fáil.

Braithfidh tortháí an phróisis ar shainroghanna tuismitheoirí sa cheantar pleanála scoile lena mbaineann i gcás phátrúin agus teanga theagaisc na scoile, agus ar a mhéad éagsúlachta atá ar fáil cheana féin sna ceantair sin. Déanfar anailís mar chuid den phróiseas measúnachta ar a mhéad éagsúlachta atá ar fáil sa cheantar cheana féin, teanga san áireamh, agus sna ceantair pleanála scoile máguaird.

Grúpa seachtrach neamhspleáach comhairle atá i bhfeighil an phróisis phátrúnachta maidir le scoileanna nua, an Grúpa um Bunú Scoileanna Nua. Tar éis don Ghrúpa seo tuairisci measúnaithe mo Roinne a bhreithniú, cuireann siad tuairisc agus moltaí ar fáil domsa le haghaidh mo bhreithniú agus mo chinnidh deiridh. Cuirtear na tuairisci measúnaithe agus moltaí an Ghrúpa i gcás gach próiseas pátrúnachta ar fáil ar shuíomh gréasáin na Roinne.

Schools Building Projects Applications Data

274. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if each capital application for schools in County Wexford will be granted; the type and extent of each application; the status of each; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6960/19]

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 Wexford, being delivered under the school building programme may be viewed on my Department's website, www.education.gov.ie.

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.

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 four schools' in Wexford. The applications will be assessed and a decision 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, which is updated regularly.

Autism Support Services

275. Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Education and Skills the distance from Dublin 12 to the nearest school with a designated classroom for students with autism. [6980/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has a statutory function to plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs including Autism, in consultation with the relevant education partners and the Health Service Executive (HSE). This includes the establishment of special class and special school placements 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.

The number of ASD special classes in Co. Dublin have increased from 66 in 2011/2012 to 197 in 2018/2019. There are currently 13 ASD special classes in Dublin 12 - 1 ASD early intervention class, 7 primary ASD classes and 5 post primary ASD classes.

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

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.

Parents/guardians who may need advice or are experiencing difficulties in locating a school placement, including special class placement, should contact their local Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) who can assist in identifying an appropriate educational placement

for their child. Contact details are available at <http://ncse.ie/seno-contact-list>.

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

Home Tuition Scheme

276. Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of payments of home-school tuition made to persons in the Dublin 12 area. [6981/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The information requested by the Deputy is not readily available. My Department will reply directly to the Deputy as soon as this information has been compiled.

Youthreach Programme Review

277. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the review of the Youthreach programme; when it will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7018/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): The Further Education and Training Strategy (2014-2019) committed SOLAS to organising a schedule of independent evaluations of key areas of further education and training provision to ensure that they are effective in delivering the objectives of the programme for FET learners. The evaluation of Youthreach is part of this series of evaluations

The purpose of the Youthreach evaluation is to generate policy-relevant knowledge concerning the outputs and outcomes of the Youthreach programme (i.e. Youthreach centres and Community Training Centres) and the effectiveness of this provision. Following a competitive tendering process, the ESRI was awarded the contract to conduct the independent Youthreach evaluation throughout 2018, with the final report submitted to SOLAS in December. SOLAS have developed a response document to the findings, which is currently being reviewed by my Department and SOLAS. It is envisaged both the evaluation and response document will be published before the end of Q1 2019.

Teagmháil na nÓg

278. D'fhiarfraigh Deputy Catherine Connolly den an Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna maidir le Ceist Uimhir 147 ar an 19ú Aibreán 2018, cad iad torthaí an phróisis comhairliúcháin a chuir Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna na Gaillimhe agus Ros Comáin ar bun le grúpaí agus eagraíochtaí pobail áitiúla mar aon leis an tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna maidir le hIonad Teagmhála na nÓg i dTír an Fhia, Conamara; an bhfuil an próiseas comhairliúcháin curtha i gcrích; an bhfuil na torthaí ar fáil go fóill; cad iad na moltaí a rinneadh ina thaobh; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [7019/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): Clár oideachas agus oiliúna é Youthreach a sholáthraítear i suíomhanna lasmuigh den scoil do dhaoine óga idir 16 – 20 bliain d’aois a bhfuil an príomhchórás scolaíochta fágtha go luath acu. Clár breisoideachais atá ann a bhíonn á stiúrú ag na Boird Oideachais agus Oiliúna (BOO).

Tá críoch á chur faoi láthair le meastóireacht ar an gclár Youthreach, agus tá sé i gceist go bhfoilseofar é i ráithe 1 2019. Déanfaidh an mheastóireacht seo iniúchadh ar tháirgeachtaí agus ar thortháí an chláir Youthreach agus ar éifeachtacht an tsoláthair seo. Cuirfear moltaí ar fáil sa tuarascáil freisin ar an tslí inar féidir an clár a fhorbairt sa todhchaí.

In 2018, bhí sé i gceist 4,372 áit a sholáthar ar fud na tíre. Tá laghdú suntasach tagtha ar an uimhir seo le blianta beaga anuas, díreach os cionn an tríú cuid, mar thoradh go príomhadh ar na rátaí coinneála níos airde san iar-bhunoideachas. Ba é ráta luathfhágla na hÉireann do 2017 ná 5%, ceann de na rátaí luathfhágala scoile is ísle san AE. Tá an pátrún seo le feiceáil go soiléir in iarthar na Gaillimhe. Chuir Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna na Gaillimhe agus Ros Comáin (GRETB) in iúl do mo Roinn go bhfuil rátaí coinneála níos airde in iar-bhunscoileanna agus laghdú dá réir ar an éileamh ar sholáthar oideachais athdheisce do luathfhágálaithe scoile sa cheantar áitiúil. I bhfianaise an easpa éilimh seo, rinne GRETB cinneadh gan an clár Youthreach a sholáthar san ionad atá i gceist. Shocraigh GRETB cúrsaí de chineál eile a chur ar fáil san ionad nár bhain go díreach le Youthreach chun deis a chruthú do rannpháirtíocht an phobail níos leithne.

Bhí oifigigh ó mo Roinn i dteagmháil le GRETB, agus cuireadh in iúl dóibh go rabhthas i dteagmháil le páirtithe leasmhara sa cheantar, ina measc Muintearas, Comhairle Ceantar na nOileáin, agus Ionad Oidhreachta Comhar Chuigeal chun riachtanais áitiúla, ó thaobh oiliúna agus oideachais a aithint in 2018. Is iad na réimsí a aithníodh mar thoradh ar an gcomhairliúchán seo ná: Scileanna Tógála; Sláinte & Scéimh; Ealaín; Scileanna Meáin, Fáilteachas. Bhí sé i gceist go ndéanfaí na cúrsaí seo a reachtáil agus bhí maoiniú cuí SOLAS aitheanta. Rinne an t-ionad na cúrsaí seo a fhogairt go háitiúil ach ní raibh aon ghlacadh leo. Aithníodh éileamh breise d'oiliúint Spóirt agus Áineasa le linn an phróisis chomhairliúcháin agus cuireadh Oiliúnacht phíolótach i Spóirt & Áineasa ar fáil ag QQI Leibhéal 5 agus tá an cursa seo ag tarlú faoi láthair i gcomhar leis an Spórtlann i Leitir Móir.

I ngeall ar an easpa éilimh do sholáthar de chineál eile i rith an lae, leanfaidh GRETB ag cur deiseanna ar fáil i Leitir Mór trína roinn Oideachas Pobail. I measc na gcúrsaí beidh Scéimh; Gruagaireacht; Cócaireacht; Uaschúrsáil; Oiliúint Lotnaidicíde; Oiliúnt ar Sábh Slabhra; Sláinte & Folláine; Do Ghnó Féin a Chur ar Bun; Oiliúint an Oiliúnóra; Bácáil; Grianghráfadóireacht; Fíodóireacht Chiseán; Snoíodóireacht Chloiche; Láimhsíú Sábháilte; Bád Mionsamhlach a Thógail; An Chéad Fhreagróir Garchabhrach. Ghlac trí chéad agus fiche naoi ranpháirtí páirt sna cúrsaí seo in 2018.

Tá sé curtha in iúl ag m'oifigigh dom go bhfuil comhairliúcháin á thosú arís ag GRETB agus fáilteofar roimh ionchur ón bpobal áitiúil maidir le riachtanais cúrsaí. Tá sé i gceist ag GRETB tú a chur le cúrsaí mara i mbliana agus táthar ag súil go mbeidh spéis ag daoine a leithéid de chúrsaí a dhéanamh toisc go bhfuil uiscechultúr mar thionscail atá lonnaithe sa cheantar. Tá sé i gceist ag GRETB bolscaireacht a dhéanamh arís ar na cláracha Fáilteachais.

Beidh deis eile, níos déanaí i mbliana, cur isteach arís ar chláir CIA/PLC réamh-phrintíseacht agus beidh GRETB ag cur roinnt cúrsaí eile faoi bhráid SOLAS don mhaoiniú. Má éiríonn leo, déanfar ceann acu seo a lonnú i Leitir Móir, ag brath ar an éileamh.

Leanfaidh GRETB ag cur soláthar oideachais ar fáil do roinnt gníomhaireachtaí sa cheantar freisin - Seirbhísí Meabhairshláinte na Ceathrún Rua; Bruach na Mara (Bráithre na Carthanachta); Rehabcare (Casla). Soláthraíonn GRETB os cionn 9,500 uair an chloig teagaisc in aghaidh na bliana do sheirbhísí i gConamara chun ábhair a chur ar fáil ar nós Drámaíoch; Ealaín; Gairneoiracht; Eacnamaíocht Bhaile; Potadóireacht; Forbairt Phearsanta; Scileanna Maireachtála Neamhspleáach; TFC; Litearthacht & Uimheartacht.

Questions - Written Answers
School Transport Appeals

279. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason free school transport is not being provided to a child (details supplied); when the appeal lodged regarding the case will be decided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7020/19]

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.

Under the terms of my Department's School Transport Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs, children are eligible for school transport where they have special educational needs arising from a diagnosed disability and are attending the nearest recognised school/class that is resourced to meet their special educational needs

Eligibility is determined following consultation with the National Council for Special Education through its network of Special Education Needs Organisers.

The child in question is not attending the nearest school/class that is resourced to meet his special educational needs and is therefore not eligible for school transport

An appeal was lodged with the School Transport Appeals Board on the 4th February 2019 and the Board will liaise directly with the family regarding the appeal date and their subsequent deliberations.

Schools Building Projects Status

280. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress made to date on providing a new school building for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7025/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Deputy will be aware that a building project for the schools in question is included in my Department's 6 Year Construction Programme.

The options for providing this accommodation are currently being explored and my Department will continue to liaise directly with the school authority in this regard.

National Educational Psychological Service

281. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a full psychological service will be restored to a school (details supplied); the reason for the delay in same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7026/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): My Department's National Educational Psychological Service provides educational psychological support to all primary and post-primary schools. This involves direct support in the event of a critical incident, access to national and regional support and development work to build school capacity to support stu-

dents, access to a NEPS psychologist for responses to queries arising, and access to individual pupil casework via a NEPS psychologist or through the Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments (SCPA).

All mainstream schools in Galway City and County receive a service from NEPS psychologists based in the Galway Office. As the Deputy may be aware there were two psychologist vacancies in this office, all schools continue to have access to support and development, critical incident and advisory support from NEPS and pupil casework via their assigned psychologist or via SCPA. The school to which the Deputy refers in his question has heretofore, in this academic year, been in receipt of assessment services via SCPA.

I can inform the Deputy that a new recruit, sourced from the recruitment panels administered by the Public Appointments Service, took up office in Galway in early January. I understand that a meeting has taken place recently with the school in question, the NEPS Regional Director and the new psychologist, preparatory to her taking up her assigned duties with the school following a short period of induction to the service.

For the Deputy's information a candidate for the second staffing vacancy has been identified through PAS and a start date agreed in the next two months.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Schools Recognition

282. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a request by a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7039/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I can confirm to the Deputy that my Department has received correspondence from the school in question and it is under consideration. My officials will be in contact with the relevant parties as quickly as possible.

Tax Collection

283. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Education and Skills the circumstances that have resulted in substitute teachers paying emergency tax since before Christmas 2018; the measures he has taken to resolve the issue; when it will be resolved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7024/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Revenue Commissioners introduced real time PAYE (PAYE modernisation) which went live on the 1st January 2019. This was the biggest change to the PAYE system since the 1960s.

From 1 January 2019 employers are required to report their employees' pay and statutory deductions to Revenue for each payroll issue.

The salary issue relates to the taxation of the substitute staff who were paid in the first payroll of 2019 and in the case of post primary substitute teachers in the second payroll.

In these payrolls, in which the new system was applied for the first time the payroll files that transferred to Revenue inadvertently included an end date for substitute staff. This informed Revenue that these staff would not be paid under this employer number in the future.

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This notification caused Revenue to immediately reduce the tax credits and cut off points to zero for this cohort of staff which meant that when they were next paid, there were no tax credits available to be applied to the salary.

This has meant that some substitute staff paid on the payrolls of the 3rd, 10th and 17th January and who have continued to be employed since have been assigned week 1 / cumulative zero credits or emergency tax.

The payroll software has been amended to prevent an end date transferring to Revenue for future payments which means substitute staff paid on payrolls after the 17th January do not have problems with tax credits.

However this software amendment did not correct the issues that arose for the staff who were paid already.

My Department is working closely with Revenue to implement a solution to this problem. A solution is currently being implemented in consultation with Revenue.

Some adjustments will be processed for the post primary payroll issue of the 14th February and further adjustments will be processed for the next pay issue of the 28th February.

This solution will be applied to the primary and non teaching staff payrolls of the 21st February and primary substitute teachers and substitute non teaching staff paid on that date should have the correct tax deducted.

There are staff paid on the payroll who are assigned zero credits apart from those impacted by the end date issue. For example in cases where a substitute staff member is retired and in receipt of pension their credits may be assigned to the pension payment and zero credits assigned to the substitute employment. In addition teachers are placed on emergency basis where their tax position has not been finalised with Revenue. Some substitute staff may have other employments and their credits may be assigned to that employment.

Drug and Alcohol Task Forces

284. Deputy John Curran asked the Minister for Education and Skills the expenditure and allocations attributable to drugs programmes that were made available in each of the past five years; the projects and programmes supported by the funding in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7114/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Over the last five years, my Department has provided funding to the following six projects in local drugs task force areas in Dublin ;-

- Killinarden Drug Primary Prevention Group in Tallaght (KDPPG)
- Drug Education and Training, Dun Laoghaire Parents Making Children Aware (PMCA)
- Blanchardstown Early School Leavers Project (BESLP)
- Crinan Youth Project (Salesian Youth Enterprises), Seán McDermott Street
- Familibase, Ballyfermot
- Rehabilitation and Support Programme (RASP), Malahide Road Industrial Estate

The funding provided to each of these projects over the period is set out in the table.

My Department is working to support the Government's policy on drug and alcohol use through its engagement on the national strategy Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery – a health led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025. Working with other Government Departments and agencies it is represented on both the National Oversight Committee and the Standing Sub-Committee, established to give leadership and drive implementation of the strategy.

Schools support their students to develop the key skills and knowledge to enable them to make informed choices when faced with a range of difficult issues, including drugs, alcohol and gambling. This is mainly done through the SPHE programme, which has a specific module on the use and misuse of a range of substances. SPHE is currently mandatory in all primary schools and in junior cycle. It also forms part of the mandatory 'Wellbeing' area of learning for the new junior cycle which was introduced in September 2017. Schools are also encouraged to deliver the SPHE programme in senior cycle.

Relevant topics in SPHE include student decision-making skills and safety and protection. Students learn how to exercise judgement, weigh up different possibilities, examine the steps and choices that guide them towards considered decision-making, begin to understand their own rights and the rights of others, and explore decision-making. In respect of safety, students' ability to assess the consequences of risky behaviour is developed.

Current best practice guidelines for the delivery of SPHE indicate that the classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students and that individual themes such as Substance Misuse Prevention should not be treated in isolation but should be integrated with the other SPHE modules.

Funding provided by DES to projects in LDTF areas 2014 - 2018

Year	KDPPG	PMCA	BESLP	Crinan YP	Familibase	RASP
2014	€48,000	€7,450	€71,070	€50,475	€67,400	€138,840
2015	€43,200	€6,705	€76,615	€52,040	€67,400	€138,840
2016	€38,880	€6,035	€76,615	€52,040	€67,400	€143,830
2017	€34,560	€5,365	€76,615	€52,040	€67,400	€148,820
2018	€34,560	€5,365	€76,615	€52,040	€67,400	€148,820

Information and Communications Technology

285. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address matters relating to a device (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7138/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As part of the implementation of the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020 Enhancing Teaching Learning and Assessment, funding of €210m for ICT Infrastructure will be distributed to schools over the five years of the Strategy, to date a total of €60m has been distributed in respect of the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years, and a further instalment of this grant is due to issue shortly in respect of the 18/19 school year. Schools do not have to apply for this grant.

It is a matter for a school's Board of Management and Principal to decide how the grant can be best used for their school, in line with the schools Digital Learning Plan including the purchase of Interactive Screens such as the devices mentioned by the Deputy. All purchases must

be in compliance with Public Procurement Procedures with further information for schools available on the Schools Procurement Unit website at www.spu.ie. ICT purchasing Frameworks are in place operated by the Office of Government procurement with appropriately defined technical specifications. These Frameworks should be engaged with and taken advantage of as they simplify the process of purchasing ICT equipment for schools.

Further information on current ICT Frameworks open to schools is available through the School Procurement Unit at www.spu.ie. Further information on Digital Learning Planning can be found at <http://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/en/Planning/>. Advice on appropriate ICT infrastructure for schools is available at www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie.

Inspector of Prisons

286. Deputy Jim O'Callaghan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the staffing complement of the Inspector of Prisons; the staffing level deemed necessary; if requests for additional funding to increase staff numbers have been made in 2018 or to date in 2019; if so, the result of such requests; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6268/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Inspector of Prisons was established on a statutory basis under Part 5 of the Prisons Act 2007. A new Inspector of Prisons, Ms Patricia Gilheaney, was appointed in May 2018. She has an important role in ensuring an effective independent oversight of our prison system. Following her appointment, Ms. Gilheaney contracted PA consultants to carry out a review of the functions and arrangements of her office. The report was recently submitted to my Department and discussions regarding resources, legal powers and other related issues are ongoing.

Including Ms Gilheany, there are currently six staff assigned to the Office of Inspector of Prisons. The Deputy will appreciate that the Inspector of Prisons is independent in the performance of her statutory functions and it is a matter for her to determine how she implements her functions within her allocated resources.

Direct Provision System

287. Deputy Eoin Ó Broin asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the tender process for the new direct provision centre within a 40 km radius of Newbridge, County Kildare, has concluded; if so, the contracts that have been awarded for same; and the way in which this affects the status of a centre (details supplied) in Dublin 22. [6278/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): The tender process for the provision of premises within the Kildare region (radius of 40 km from Newbridge Town Centre), including the provision of management, catering, housekeeping, general maintenance and security services for persons seeking international protection will be completed on Thursday, 14 February 2019 on the expiration of the requisite standstill period provided for under Section 5 of the European Communities (Public Authorities' Contracts) (Review Procedures) Regulations 2010 (S.I. 130/2010, as amended).

After this date it is open to the Department to invite all Successful Tenderers to become a Framework Member by entering into a Framework Agreement with each of them in terms as set out in the Request For Tenders ("RFT").

My Department then intends to award contracts by drawing down from the Framework to

meet the required demand for accommodation services as set out in the RFT.

The Deputy will appreciate that as this particular tender competition is still in process, I cannot comment on any individual bids at this time.

Execution of Wills

288. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the process in a situation in which no will relating to land is left by a deceased person in which there is no immediate family or known descendants to the deceased; if the State eventually takes control of the land in such a situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6388/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The position is that Part VI of the Succession Act 1965 deals with the distribution of an estate on intestacy. Where a person dies without having made a will, or if the will is invalid for whatever reason, that person is deemed to have died intestate.

Section 73 of the Succession Act 1965 provides that where a person dies intestate and without known next-of-kin, the estate of that person shall be taken by the State as ultimate intestate successor. Where an estate falls to the State under section 73, it is administered by the Chief State Solicitor. Depending on the extent and nature of the estate, this process may involve the extraction of letters of administration from the High Court and advertising for next-of-kin. Where no next-of-kin can be found, the proceeds of the estate are paid into the Intestate Estates Fund Deposit Account.

Section 73(2) of the 1965 Act provides that the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform may waive, in whole or in part and in favour of such person and upon such terms as he or she thinks proper having regard to all the circumstance's of the case, the right of the State under this section.

Victim Support Services

289. Deputy Pat Buckley asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the supports available for the families of victims of crime abroad to help them to attend court dates and trial hearings that may be financially prohibitive independently; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6405/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I understand that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, through its Consular Assistance Unit in Dublin and the Irish Missions worldwide, provides a range of supports to Irish citizens and family members who are victims of crime abroad.

This can include, for example, providing practical assistance such as help in finding English speaking legal and medical practitioners, in dealing with the police, in making travel arrangements and in liaising with family members back home, for example.

I am informed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade that while the Consular Assistance Unit and Missions abroad make every effort in assisting Irish citizens who experience crime abroad in these ways, there is not a funding scheme in place to provide financial supports directly to the families of the type raised by the Deputy.

The provision of such funding is an issue which would need to be considered in the context

of the wider issues surrounding any decision to extend the provision of supports for victims of crime and to their families in cross border situations.

These wider issues include, for example, the reimbursement of expenses to victims and/or witnesses in order to participate in proceedings abroad and the related provision of translation and interpretation services as required.

These are matters which will be raised with the European Network on Victim Rights, of which Ireland is a founding member. This is a network of Government officials involved in their respective victim support policy areas across the EU Member States.

The Network has been established in order to further strengthen the supports to victims across the European Union and to enhance the co-operation of the Member States in the area of victims' rights against the background of the European Union Victims Directive.

Deportation Orders Re-examination

290. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the options available to a person (details supplied); if the deportation order will be reconsidered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6455/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 01 October 2018. This Order requires the person concerned to remove themselves from the State and remain outside the State. The enforcement of Deportation Orders are a matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

It is open to the person concerned to submit representations requesting that the Deportation Order be revoked, pursuant to Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). However, I wish to make clear that such an application would require substantial grounds to be successful.

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.

Garda Deployment

291. Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí attached to each sub-district within the Cork city division. [6468/19]

299. Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí attached to the station in Carrigaline, County Cork, in each of the years since 2010. [6478/19]

300. Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí attached to the station in Ballincollig, County Cork, in each of the years since 2010. [6479/19]

301. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí attached to the station in Passage West, County Cork, in each of the years since 2010. [6480/19]

302. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí attached to the station in Douglas, County Cork, in each of the years since 2010. [6481/19]

303. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí attached to the station in Togher, County Cork, in each of the years since 2010. [6482/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 291 and 299 to 303, inclusive, together.

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.

Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I can assure the Deputy that local Garda management in the areas referred to remains resolute in its determination to act against all forms of criminal activity and will work with these communities to prevent and detect crime.

Since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, almost 2,400 Garda recruits 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 600 Garda Civilian Staff. This Garda Staff recruitment will allow the Commissioner to redeploy a further 500 fully trained Gardaí from administrative duties to frontline policing in 2019.

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 ongoing 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 Cork City.

The Garda strength of the Cork City Division from 2009 to 31 December 2018 as provided by the Garda Commissioner is available on my Department's website through the link below. http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/002_Garda_Numbers_by_Division_District_and%20Station_2009_to_30_December_2018.xlsx/Files/002_Garda_Numbers_by_Division_District_and%20Station_2009_to_30_December_2018.xlsx

For more general information on Garda Facts and Figures please see the link below:

http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/An_Garda_Siochana_facts_and_figures

292. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of squad cars or Garda vehicles attached to each sub-district within the Cork city division. [6469/19]

293. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of squad cars on duty in the Cork city division between October 2018 and to date in 2019. [6470/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 292 and 293 together.

There has been unprecedented investment in Garda resources across the State in recent years.

Specifically in relation to Garda vehicles, €46 million has been provided by the Government for investment in the Garda fleet between 2016 and 2021, to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose fleet allowing Gardaí to be mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime. This is in addition to the investment of almost €30 million in the Garda fleet in the period 2013 to 2015. I am pleased to confirm that a capital allocation of €10 million is available to An Garda Síochána for the purchase of Garda vehicles in 2019.

The Deputy will appreciate that the Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. This includes responsibility for the distribution of Garda funding and resources, including allocation of Garda vehicles among the various Garda divisions. 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 so as to ensure that their optimum use.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the following table sets out the number and type of Garda vehicles assigned to the various Districts of Cork City Division as at 6 February 2019. I am informed by the Garda authorities that responsibility for the efficient deployment of vehicles in each Division is assigned to the Divisional Officer, who may allocate vehicles between stations in accordance with operational need.

Cork City Divisional Fleet as at 06/02/2019	Cars	Vans	Motorcycles	4 x 4	Other	Total
Anglesea Street District	55	13	7	3	4	82
Gurranabraher District	11	1	0	0	1	13
Mayfield District	11	4	1	0	4	20
Togher District	13	1	0	0	0	14
Total Cork City Division	90	19	8	3	9	129

As further requested by the Deputy, the following table sets out the number and type of Garda vehicles assigned to the Cork City Division in October 2018.

Cork city Divisional Fleet as at 31/10/2018	Cars	Vans	Motorcycles	4x4	Other	Total
Anglesea Street District	55	13	7	3	4	82
Gurranabraher District	11	1	0	0	1	13
Mayfield District	10	4	1	0	4	19

Cork city Divisional Fleet as at 31/10/2018	Cars	Vans	Motorcycles	4x4	Other	Total
Togher District	13	1	0	0	0	14
Total Cork City Division	89	19	8	3	9	128

Garda Transport Data

294. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of squad cars attached to the Garda station in Carrigaline, County Cork, in each of the years since 2010. [6473/19]

295. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of squad cars attached to the Garda station in Ballincollig, County Cork, in each of the years since 2010. [6474/19]

296. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of squad cars attached to the Garda station in Passage West, County Cork, in each of the years since 2010. [6475/19]

297. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of squad cars attached to the Garda station in Douglas, County Cork, in each of the years since 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6476/19]

298. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of squad cars attached to the Garda station in Togher, County Cork, in each of the years since 2010. [6477/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 294 to 298, inclusive, together.

There has been unprecedented investment in Garda resources across the State in recent years.

In relation to Garda vehicles, €46 million has been provided by the Government for investment in the Garda fleet between 2016 and 2021, to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose fleet allowing Gardaí to be mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime. This is in addition to the investment of almost €30 million in the Garda fleet in the period 2013 to 2015. I am pleased to confirm that a capital allocation of €10 million is available to An Garda Síochána for the purchase of Garda vehicles in 2019.

The Deputy will appreciate that the Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. This includes responsibility for the distribution of Garda funding and resources, including allocation of Garda vehicles among the various Garda divisions. 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 so as to ensure that their optimum use.

I understand that Carrigaline, Douglas, Passage West and Togher Garda Stations are in Togher District of Cork City Division and that Ballincollig Garda Station is in Gurranabraher District of Cork City Division.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the following table sets out the number and

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type of Garda vehicles assigned to the various Districts of Cork City Division as at 6 February 2019. I am further informed that responsibility for the efficient deployment of vehicles in each Division is assigned to the Divisional Officer, who may allocate vehicles between stations in accordance with operational need.

Cork City Divisional Fleet as at 06/02/2019	Cars	Vans	Motorcycles	4 x 4	Other	Total
Anglesea Street District	55	13	7	3	4	82
Gurranabraher District	11	1	0	0	1	13
Mayfield District	11	4	1	0	4	20
Togher District	13	1	0	0	0	14
Total Cork City Division	90	19	8	3	9	129

The Deputy also requested information on the number of Garda vehicles assigned in the years from 2010 onwards. I am informed by the Garda authorities that the following table sets out the number of Garda vehicles assigned to the various Divisions in the Cork City Division from 2010 to 2018. The requested details for 2010 are available only at Divisional level.

Year	Cars	Vans	Motorcycles	4x4	Other	Total
2018						
Anglesea Street District	55	13	7	3	4	82
Gurranabraher District	11	1	0	0	1	13
Mayfield District	11	4	1	0	4	20
Togher District	14	1	0	0	0	15
Total Cork City Division	91	19	8	3	9	130
2017						
Anglesea Street District	67	15	7	3	4	96
Gurranabraher District	12	1	0	0	1	14
Mayfield District	10	3	1	0	4	18
Togher District	11	1	0	0	0	12
Total Cork City Division	100	20	8	3	9	140
2016						
Anglesea Street District	65	17	8	4	6	100
Gurranabraher District	11	1	0	0	1	13
Mayfield District	9	2	1	0	3	15
Togher District	14	1	0	0	1	16
Total Cork City Division	99	21	9	4	11	144
2015						
Anglesea Street District	65	16	4	2	2	89
Gurranabraher District	8	1	0	0	1	10
Mayfield District	9	3	0	0	2	14
Togher District	13	1	0	0	1	15
Total Cork City Division	95	21	4	2	6	128
2014						
Anglesea Street District	61	16	6	3	3	89
Gurranabraher District	8	1	0	0	1	10
Mayfield District	9	4	1	0	2	16
Togher District	11	1	0	0	1	13
Total Cork City Division	89	22	7	3	7	128
2013						

Year	Cars	Vans	Motorcycles	4x4	Other	Total
Anglesea Street District	50	13	5	2	3	73
Gurranabraher District	6	2	0	0	1	9
Mayfield District	9	4	1	0	2	16
Togher District	10	1	0	0	1	12
Total Cork City Division	75	20	6	2	7	110
2012						
Anglesea Street District	39	10	7	2	3	61
Gurranabraher District	8	1	0	1	1	11
Mayfield District	7	4	1	0	2	14
Togher District	11	2	0	0	1	14
Total Cork City Division	65	17	8	3	7	100
2011						
Anglesea Street District	55	12	7	4	3	81
Gurranabraher District	7	0	0	1	2	10
Mayfield District	8	4	2	0	1	15
Togher District	10	2	2	0	1	15
Total Cork City Division	80	18	11	5	7	121

Cork City Divisional Fleet 2010

Cars	Vans	Motorcycles	4x4	Other	Total
81	23	12	3	2	121

Questions Nos. 299 to 303, inclusive, answered with Question No. 291.

Road Safety Data

304. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding roadside accident statistics; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6497/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed by An Garda Síochána that the species of animals involved in road traffic collisions is recorded in the general narrative of the incident. Road traffic enforcement data is transferred by An Garda Síochána to the Road Safety Authority (RSA), on an ongoing basis, for detailed analysis in the context of the RSA's road safety promotion function.

I have been informed by the RSA that, in their latest figures, from 2012 to 2016*, there were 99 single vehicle collisions with animals, five of which involved deer. Of the 99 recorded incidents there were three cases in which the animal species was not specified, therefore, deer were involved in only 5.2% of collisions, during this period, where the species was recorded. I am satisfied that this method of data collection provides sufficient detail with regard to the overall rate of vehicle collisions with animals.

* data for 2016 is provisional and subject to change.

Ministerial Advisers Data

305. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of advisers and special advisers employed by his Department in 2017 and 2018 and to date in 2019; the areas of expertise covered by such advisers; the annual salaries associated with same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6575/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that I have two Special Advisers both of whom are remunerated on the Principal Officer standard pay scale (PPC).

Ms. Sarah Kavanagh was appointed as Special Adviser in June 2017. She holds a BA degree in History and Politics, an MA degree in Politics, an MA in Political Communication, a Post Graduate Diploma in Legal Studies and a Barrister at Law Degree. Ms. Kavanagh worked in the Houses of the Oireachtas as a Parliamentary Assistant and Senior Policy Officer for nine years and as a Special Advisor in three Government Departments over the last five years.

Ms. Caroline Murphy was appointed Special Adviser in April 2018, replacing Mr. Tom Fabozzi who served as special adviser from June 2017 until April 2018. Ms. Murphy has over 30 years' experience in the fields of communications and media having worked with RTÉ in both TV and radio. In addition, she is qualified as an Organisational Psychologist.

In order to assist with the extensive significant legislative programme for which I am responsible, Mr. Robert Bourke was employed by my Department as a Legal Adviser from March to December 2018. Mr. Bourke came to my office with over ten years' experience as a practising barrister and having worked for nine months as a Legal Researcher for the Company Law Review Group. He holds a BA degree in Business, Politics and French, a Post Graduate Diploma in Legal Studies and a Barrister at Law Degree. Mr. Bourke was also remunerated on the Principal Officer standard pay scale (PPC).

Refugee Resettlement Programme

306. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of refugees settled here under the Irish refugee protection programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6626/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): On 10 September 2015, as part of Ireland's response to the migration crisis in central and southern Europe, the Government established the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP). Under this programme, the Government committed to accepting up to 4,000 people into the State, through a combination of the EU Relocation Programme (established by two EU Council Decisions in 2015 to assist Italy and Greece) and the UNHCR-led refugee Resettlement Programme, which is currently focussed on resettling refugees from Lebanon. To date, a total of 2,251 people have arrived in Ireland under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme. Preparations are currently underway to bring the latest group of refugees from Lebanon who were selected in a mission in October 2018.

Appointments to State Boards

307. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of boards or agencies his officials have been appointed to; if there are guidelines or protocols for members of staff being appointed to boards or agencies; if so, when same were last updated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6650/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The table outlines the State boards and agencies which my officials have been appointed to. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's (DPER) Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards as well as the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies which was issued by DPER in 2016 applies to all such board memberships. It should be noted that in the process of making appointments to State Boards under the Minister's remit, regard is had to the Government target of at least 40% representation of each gender on all State Boards.

Name of State Board or Agency that Departmental official has been appointed to	Number of officials and position on Board or Agency
Courts Service Board	1 Official of the Department nominated by the Minister
Legal Aid Board	1 Official of the Department nominated by the Minister.
National Disability Authority	1 Official of the Department nominated by the Minister
Parole Board	3 Officials - comprising one each from the Irish Prison Service, the Probation Service and the Department of Justice and Equality, nominated by the Minister.
Private Security Authority	1 Official of the Department nominated by the Minister
Property Services Regulatory Authority	1 Official of the Department nominated by the Minister
Public Appointments Service Board	1 Official of the Department, nominated by the Minister for Justice and Equality and appointed by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Road Safety Data

308. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prosecutions initiated in respect of road worthiness-related infringements against HGV operators in each of the years 2016 to 2018; the number of such prosecutions against foreign operators and their countries of origin; the number of convictions secured; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6733/19]

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.

Garda Expenditure

309. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the capital expenditure proposed by An Garda Síochána in the north Dublin Garda division in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6775/19]

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; and
- considerable capital investment is also being made in the Garda estate.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is a matter for the Commissioner to efficiently manage these resources provided for An Garda Síochána and to determine the allocation of budgets to all Divisions, including those in the Dublin Metropolitan Region, based upon operational requirements. I am informed by the Garda authorities that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review so as to ensure their optimum use.

For example, I can confirm to the Deputy a capital allocation of €10 million will be available to An Garda Síochána for the Garda fleet in 2019. I am not in a position to confirm to the Deputy today what the exact allocation will be across the Garda Divisions, including those in the DMR, of the additional vehicles which will be purchased from this allocation.

A total of €61 million has been allocated to Garda ICT infrastructure and Communications for 2019. I understand that a full list of ICT projects for 2019, together with a breakdown of the roll-out of additional ICT infrastructure across the Divisions, is still being finalised within An Garda Síochána.

In terms of the Garda estate, I would recall that the Office of Public Works (OPW) has the responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation and accordingly the programme of replacement and refurbishment of Garda accommodation is progressed by the Garda authorities working in close cooperation with the OPW.

The Garda Building and Refurbishment programme 2016-2021 will continue to be delivered during 2019. The programme includes planned works at over 30 locations, including:

- major refurbishment of selected stations and facilities, including facilities for meeting victims of crime;
- essential remedial works to selected existing stations; and
- development of large scale Property and Exhibit Management Stores (PEMS).

The programme also includes a Cell Refurbishment Programme and provision of improved Custody Management Facilities.

In terms of the Garda Divisions in the DMR, this investment includes the development of a new Garda Station and Immigration Facility at Transaer House in Dublin Airport. Work on this project commenced in 2018. Construction works are ongoing on this development and I am informed by the Garda authorities that they are expected to be complete by the end of Q1, 2019.

Other major building projects which will continue to be progressed during 2019 for the benefit of the Divisions in the DMR include the ongoing refurbishment of Fitzgibbon Street station and development of a facility at Military Road, Dublin.

In addition, the Programme for Government contained a commitment to re-open six Garda Stations on a pilot basis to determine possible positive impacts on criminal activity, with special emphasis on burglaries, theft and public order. A report was prepared by the Garda Commissioner which identified the six Garda Stations to be reopened on a pilot basis, including two stations in the DMR, namely Rush and Stepaside. I understand that the Garda authorities and the

OPW are cooperating closely on implementation of the pilot project. Reopening of all relevant stations is being pursued as a priority and I am informed by the OPW that it expects that work will be completed at all remaining stations in 2019.

The clear goal of this significant 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 in locations identified in accordance with agreed Garda priorities.

Garda Operations

310. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will report on Garda operation disruption; the number of persons arrested and charged to date; the number of successful convictions obtained to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6776/19]

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

Security of the Elderly

311. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to introduce grants for the installation of intruder alarms for older persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6779/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I must inform the Deputy that my Department does not provide funding for the installation of intruder alarms for older persons.

However, I can advise the Deputy that the Department of Rural and Community Development funds the Senior Alert Scheme, which provides grant assistance towards the purchase and installation of personal monitored alarms for persons aged 65 or older and of limited means.

The objective of the Seniors Alert Scheme (SAS) is to encourage community support for vulnerable older people in our communities through the provision of personal monitored alarms to enable older persons, of limited means, to continue to live securely in their homes with confidence, independence and peace of mind. I am advised that the grant assistance is made available through community, voluntary and not-for-profit organisations that are registered with Pobal. Any decision to extend the scheme to house alarms, rather than personal alarms, would be a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Rural and Community Development.

Notwithstanding the above, I can advise the Deputy that An Garda Síochána continues to pursue a range of measures to support elderly and more vulnerable people in the community, working closely with Community Alert, Neighbourhood Watch and other community groups. For many years, my Department has supported community crime prevention by providing funding for the Community Alert programme, which is operated by Muintir na Tíre, in partnership with the Garda authorities. At the Ploughing Championships last September, I announced that up to €150,000 would be made available for local communities in 2018 towards the cost of running the Scheme.

I can assure the Deputy that the Government remains committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community

engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. 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. These unprecedented resources are underpinned by the Government's ongoing commitment to achieving a Garda workforce of 21,000 by 2021.

Garda Complaints Procedures

312. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 175 of 9 October 2018 and 241 of 4 December 2018, when a reply will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6822/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I apologise for the ongoing delay in issuing a response to your question of 9 October 2018, however, you will appreciate that the requested statistics, on complaints made to An Garda Síochána by insurers under section 19(1) of the Criminal Justice Act 2011, are not held by my Department.

I have, again, requested an urgent response from An Garda Síochána and my officials will forward this information to you directly, as soon as it is received.

Garda Policing Plans

313. Deputy Mary Lou McDonald asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he expects to receive the policing plan for 2019 for An Garda Síochána. [6824/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that it is important that the annual Policing Plan takes into account all relevant factors impacting on the delivery of policing services.

Exceptionally, for 2019, in light of the fact that the Commissioner was appointed in September 2018 and taking into account the approval of the report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland by the Government in December, I acceded to a request from the Policing Authority, with the agreement of the Commissioner, that the deadline for the submission to me of the 2019 Policing Plan be deferred to 31 March 2019.

I expect that the new deadline will be met.

Garda Stations

314. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the allocation in 2019 for the Garda station bundle; the date in 2019 the project is expected to commence; the projects that will commence and be completed in 2019; if they will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials has been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6900/19]

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 to maintain and strengthen community engagement, 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, 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.

In terms of investment in the Garda estate, 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 in 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 the 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 Deputy will appreciate that the programme of replacement and refurbishment of Garda accommodation is progressed by the Garda authorities working in close cooperation with the Office of Public Works (OPW), which has responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation.

The Public Private Partnership arrangement included in the Building and Refurbishment Programme is intended to deliver new stations at Macroom, Clonmel 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 in Sligo. The site in Clonmel is a portion of the former Kickham Barracks and has at all material times been in state ownership. Having previously been transferred from the Department of Defence to Tipperary County Council, I am informed by the OPW that all difficulties in relation to completion of transfer of the site from the Council to the OPW are resolved and that 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). As the Deputy will appreciate, preparation of a PPP can be complex, but my Department and An Garda Síochána are actively engaging with the NDFA with a view to progressing the matter further. These engagements concern the appropriate scope and governance of the PPP bundle, as well as costings and design for the stations. The 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.

It is not possible at this point to provide a timeframe for completion of the projects. 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.

There is no indication, nor is it anticipated that this project will be impacted by the budgetary position in relation to the National Children's Hospital.

Domestic Violence

315. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 291 of 16 October 2018, if he has received a response to his communication with the Garda Commissioner regarding domestic homicide reviews; and if he will make a

statement on the matter. [6932/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have been advised by the Commissioner of An Garda Síochána that the Garda National Protective Services Bureau (GNPSB) has introduced a process whereby specific homicide incidents, which are believed to have involved domestic violence, are the subject of review. The purpose of each review is to establish lessons which can be learned from examining the circumstances of an incident, in order to inform the updating of current Garda Síochána policy on domestic violence. While there are no plans to amend the law at this time, the matter is being kept under review, including assessing the UK experience.

Garda Transport Data

316. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of mountain bikes attached to each district in the Westmeath Garda division as of 31 January 2018 and 31 January 2019. [6996/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda resources, including mountain bikes, across the various Garda divisions are a matter for the Garda Commissioner in the light of his identified operational demands. As Minister, I have no 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 as at 31 January 2018, 5 mountain bikes were assigned to Mullingar District and that 5 mountain bikes were also assigned to the Athlone District.

I am informed that as of the 31 January 2019, the number of mountain bikes assigned to both the Mullingar District and Athlone District remains unchanged.

Protected Disclosures

317. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to details relating to a complaint made by a member of An Garda Síochána (details supplied) providing evidence of alleged assault, bullying and intimidation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7006/19]

318. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason no action was taken in the case of a person (details supplied); the reason suspensions have not taken place; the attempts that have been made to rehabilitate the career of the person; his plans to compensate the person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7007/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 317 and 318 together.

In the first place, as the Deputy is aware, the matters referred to in the questions are the subject of an investigation by GSOC. Accordingly, I do not propose to comment in any way on that matter.

I can, however, say that my predecessor was notified by the Garda referred to in the Deputy's question that a complaint had been made to GSOC citing the Protected Disclosure's Act 2014.

In order to be of assistance, in April 2017 the then Minister opted to utilise her powers under section 102(7) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 to refer that correspondence to the Ombudsman Commission. This was so the Commission could assess whether the contents might form part of their investigation. The individual concerned was notified of the Minister's actions at that time. That investigation is on-going at present.

The Deputy will, no doubt, appreciate the statutory independence of GSOC, which prevents me from interfering with its operational functions. That is the guarantee to persons making complaints that their complaints will be considered independently and free from outside interference. I have full confidence in the role that GSOC plays in investigating complaints of wrongdoing in the Gardaí, including protected disclosures from members.

As the Deputy is aware, the Protected Disclosures Act was enacted in 2014 to allow employees to bring alleged wrongdoing to the attention of the appropriate authorities. The Act also affords very important protections to persons making protected disclosures. The Act provides that the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) is a designated body for receipt of protected disclosures. The protections afforded under the Act include protection from dismissal and other forms of penalisation and for the protection of the identity of persons making disclosures. I am sure that the Deputy appreciates that the protection of whistleblowers rightly prioritises the confidentiality of the process.

With regard to the actions taken by the Garda Authorities in respect to these allegations it is important to remind the Deputy that I, as Minister, have no authority to direct the Garda Commissioner in matters concerning the control, operation and direction of An Garda Síochána. Similarly, certain workplace issues which have also been raised in the correspondence are not matters in which I have authority to act, nor indeed would the Deputy wish me to have such authority. These are properly matters for the Garda Commissioner.

Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission Investigations

319. Deputy Marc MacSharry asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will address a matter relating to a posting on social media (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7008/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I want to make it clear that neither I nor my Department would seek in any way to influence GSOC in carrying out its statutory duties.

I can inform the Deputy that the social media posting to which he refers was issued by a national newspaper wholly in error and was removed at the request of the journalist concerned as soon as he saw the inaccurate tweet.

The Deputy will note that in the actual content of the article which the tweet in question purported to refer, I stated the importance of due process in all investigations, and reiterated my commitment that GSOC be fully resourced so as to address these matters in a timely and appropriate manner. At no stage did I make reference to any individual person or investigation.

Naturalisation Applications

320. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to introduce a differentiation in the process for persons applying for citizenship (details supplied)

who have been here for a long period of time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7014/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is governed by the provisions of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. All applications for a certificate of naturalisation are processed and assessed individually in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

Minimum periods of reckonable residence are required and standards checks are carried out as part of the overall process. These checks are required, notwithstanding the duration of time a person maybe in the State.

There is also specific provision in the Act in relation to persons resident on the island of Ireland. Section 15A provides that, where the application is based on being the spouse or civil partner of an Irish citizen the requirements include that the couple are married or civil partners to each other for a period of at least 3 years and are living together and, immediately before the date of application, have a period of one year's continuous residence in the island of Ireland and, during the preceding four years, have a further period amounting to 2 years (i.e. 3 years in total).

It is also open to an applicant generally to apply under Section 16(a) of the 1956 Act where the applicant is of Irish descent or has Irish association. In such cases the Minister may in his absolute discretion waive the conditions for naturalisation set out under Section 15 of the Act, including residency. The onus is on the applicant to provide evidence of Irish descent or Irish association to the Minister for consideration.

The standard fees payable by an applicant are designed to reflect the effort and cost involved in processing applications for a certificate of naturalisation. The Deputy will be aware that formal citizenship ceremonies have been introduced at no extra cost to applicants. These have been universally well received by participants as the ceremonies provide a sense of dignity and occasion that serves to underscore the importance to both the State and the applicant of the granting of Irish citizenship.

As part of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service published Customer Service Improvement Plan, it is planned to improve the provision of services for applicants for citizenship through a series of measures including the introduction of on-line forms, on-line payments and customer feedback during the application process.

Departmental Budgets

321. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the expenditure and allocations attributable to drugs programmes that were made available in each of the past five years; the projects and programmes supported by the funding in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7111/19]

322. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the expenditure and allocations attributable to the drugs programme that were made by An Garda Síochána in each of the past five years; the projects and programmes supported by the funding in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7117/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 321 and 322 together.

Drug-related public expenditure includes any drug-related spending across the various functions of government. Total expenditure is categorised under the Classification of the Functions of Government (COFOG) system.

Broadly speaking, drug-related public expenditure is described as “labelled” or “unlabelled”.

- Labelled expenditure is identified as drug-related expenditure in government budgets.
- Unlabelled expenditure is not identified as specifically drug-related expenditure and must therefore be estimated.

As per the COFOG classification, the reported expenditure is not specific to particular projects and programmes, but relates to different categories of drug-related operations and services.

The figures reported for the Department of Justice and Equality relate to funding provided to the Maritime Operational and Analysis Centre – Narcotics (MAOC-N) situated in Lisbon; the Drug Treatment Court; Community Based Organisations providing services to offenders (through the Probation Service) and youth crime diversion programmes (through the Irish Youth Justice Service). Expenditure by An Garda Síochána relates to policing and investigation costs.

In response to Question 323 I have provided detailed information on the drug treatment programme expenditure in the Irish Prison Service.

In regard to specific projects and programmes supported by funding provided by my Department and by An Garda Síochána, it was not possible to collate this information in the time allowed. I will provide the Deputy with this information as soon as it has been collated.

Drug Treatment Programmes Funding

323. Deputy John Curran asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the expenditure and allocations attributable to the drugs programme that were made by the Irish Prison Service in each of the past five years; the projects and programmes supported by the funding in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7118/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have been advised by the Irish Prison Service that figures for 2018 expenditure on drug treatment programmes are not yet available. The aggregate spend in the previous five year period is set out in the table below:

Year	Drug Treatment Pharmacist Service	Addiction Counselling	Addiction Psychiatry	Methadone Treatment	Total
2017	€417,067	€1,036,361	€109,734	€53,058	€1,616,220
2016	€456,428	€1,076,887	€118,080	€77,571	€1,728,966
2015	€455,283	€1,048,041	€95,902	€65,481	€1,664,707
2014	€512,325	€1,142,384	€89,828	€82,438	€1,826,975
2013	€781,709	€1,225,039	€93,529	€78,237	€2,178,514

The table does not include the substantial staffing costs for other healthcare staff, and for prison officers on treatment related duties. This work forms part of the overall duties that they perform, and it is not possible to apportion separately.

The Irish Prison Service continues to seek to construct a range of programmes, support services and through-care options for prisoners demonstrating a commitment to addressing their

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substance misuse. The IPS engages Merchants Quay Ireland to provide a prison based addiction counselling service, with structured assessments and evidence-based counselling interventions with clearly-defined treatment plans and goals. The counselling service provides a range of generic counselling and intervention skills related to substance misuse and dependency. These skills include, motivational interviewing, motivational enhancement therapy, twelve step facilitation programme, cognitive behavioural therapy and harm reduction approaches. There are currently 19.8 whole time equivalent addiction counsellors employed across the prison estate.

The IPS has an agreed protocol with the Health Service Executive for the seamless transition of prisoners established on drug treatment into community drug treatment settings.

The number of prisoners who received drug treatment (methadone) for the years in question are as follows:

Year	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Total Patients	1695	1793	1865	1886	1922

As of December 2017, some 530 prisoners were in receipt of methadone on a daily basis. In addition, the number of addiction counselling sessions provided in 2017 was 10,252

The Irish Prison Service has a number of drug treatment programmes in operation. This includes a nine week programme in Mountjoy Prison which accommodates 9 prisoners, with up to 6 programmes being facilitated annually.

In addition, the Medical Unit at Mountjoy Prison has 9 beds available to be utilised exclusively for the Drug Treatment Programme at any one time. Some of the other services which are available include Slow Detoxification, and Stabilisation and Relapse Programmes in all prisons.

Brexit Supports

324. Deputy Billy Kelleher asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the supports and guidance that will be provided by her Department and agencies under her remit for businesses arising from standards and certification changes due to Brexit. [6257/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department and its agencies are providing extensive supports and guidance to help businesses prepare for the impacts of Brexit. These supports aim to assist businesses in identifying key risk areas and the practical preparatory actions to be taken.

The National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI), an agency of my Department, is the State body with responsibility for developing and promoting the use of standards. It works to improve the performance of organisations and protect consumers by developing, publishing and distributing standards and issuing certification in the quality and safety of goods and services. It is an EU Notified Body for the purpose of certifying products in several areas, including medical devices, motor vehicles, construction products and measuring instruments.

Since the UK Government notified the European Council of its intention to leave the EU, the NSAI has been developing mitigating strategies in the areas of standards and certification. In line with Government policy, an inclusive approach has been adopted by the NSAI which continues to work closely with other Government agencies to fully provide the information and supports required by Irish businesses.

Brexit is an ongoing and evolving process which requires a fluid and adaptive response in the provision of guidance and support. A dedicated Brexit Unit was established in the NSAI last year which has developed a three-strand approach focused on raising public awareness, engaging with Government and industry, and assessing and developing strategies to mitigate the impact of Brexit on Irish businesses.

Over the past number of months, the NSAI has organised a series of standalone general and sector-specific Brexit briefings. As well as raising public awareness through participation at Brexit information events, a number of online supports have been developed. These include a dedicated Brexit webpage outlining guidance for businesses, a dedicated point of contact for individuals seeking advice, and Brexit factsheets which provide succinct and clear information on standards and certification issues in several sectors.

A key message from NSAI to businesses is that if a business relies on a UK Notified Body for conformity assessment certificates, they need to be aware that certifications from UK Notified Bodies will no longer be valid after Brexit. NSAI is also advising businesses to examine their supply chains to check for risks and vulnerabilities to the UK. If they depend on sourcing a product, component or perhaps a service from the UK, their supply chain may be at risk.

To ensure that businesses that use standards and require certification are fully informed about their requirements post-Brexit, the NSAI is engaging proactively with industry representatives and other stakeholders. It has undertaken analysis work to identify possible gaps and exposure in the provision of certification services to Irish companies, including wider formal engagement with all Irish Notified Bodies.

This work forms part of the concerted efforts across my Department and agencies to ensure that businesses make the necessary preparations for Brexit.

Legislative Measures

325. Deputy Billy Kelleher asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding a legislative proposal. [6259/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Due to legislative and other commitments, I have not been in a position to respond to the request for a meeting made in the correspondence referred to by the Deputy, but hope to be able to do so in the near future. While I will consider carefully the points made in the correspondence, it is not my intention to make the change to proposed legislation sought in the correspondence.

IDA Ireland Site Visits

326. Deputy Willie O'Dea asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA Ireland site visits to County Limerick in each of the years 2011 to 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6283/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Regional development is a key priority for my Department. We understand the importance of achieving the best possible spread of employment and investment across the country and we have been working hard towards that goal. Significant progress has already been made, with 58% of all IDA client-supported employment now located outside of Dublin. This figure represents the highest such figure in the history of the Agency. Our aim is to increase this percentage

further in 2019.

Limerick forms part of the IDA's Mid-West region, along with County Clare and North Tipperary. There are 56 IDA supported client companies in the County, which collectively employ approximately 12,000 people. Limerick is home to a number of prominent multinationals who have shown significant commitment to the County with companies such as Northern Trust and Stryker continuing to perform well.

Site visits represent a valuable tool through which investors can be encouraged to invest in regional areas. However, as I have said before, site visit activity does not necessarily reflect investment potential, as almost 70% of all new FDI comes from existing IDA client companies.

I want to emphasise that the IDA does its utmost to encourage its clients to locate or expand in regional Ireland. This is just as much a priority for the Agency as it is for my Department and the Government. Indeed, the IDA is continuing to target an increase of investment of 30% to 40% in every region by the end of its current strategy in 2019. At the same time, we must recognise that the final decision as to where to invest always rests with the firm concerned. It is also the case, no matter what efforts we make to underline the undoubted benefits of regional locations, that certain overseas companies will only consider investing in large urban areas for various commercial or operational reasons.

The IDA will continue to work with both existing and prospective clients to identify new opportunities for investment in the Mid-West. In doing so, the Agency will continue to highlight the region's strengths to overseas firms.

The table below outlines site visits to Limerick from 2011 to 2018.

County	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Limerick	40	30	23	22	40	49	42	35

Employment Data

327. Deputy John McGuinness asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 120 of 31 January 2019, if her Department or an agency under her remit holds the information; the extent of the involvement of her Department with the company at the time of transfer or purchase; the involvement by the State in rescuing the company and the jobs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6381/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Kilkenny Design Workshops Limited ceased to operate in 1989.

The day to day issues for the company were matters for the Board of Directors and the management of the Kilkenny Design Workshops Limited. The settlement of debts incurred by Kilkenny Design Workshops was a matter for the company itself and the Minister had no statutory powers to provide a guarantee to the company's creditors.

Kilkenny Design Workshops Limited was dissolved under a Members Voluntary Liquidation in 2002, and any liabilities were addressed in the context of the liquidation process.

Brexit Preparations

328. Deputy Eugene Murphy asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if the relevant Departments have engaged with the CEOs of the various food companies and

SMEs that conduct business here or have a workforce in the UK in the event of a no-deal Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6466/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The long-term response to Brexit is for companies across all sectors to become more competitive, more innovative and to diversify their export footprint into more international markets. I am working closely with the agencies under my Department who have a wide range of supports available to enable companies to consolidate market share within the UK, and also to become more resilient by broadening their sales to other international markets.

Enterprise Ireland's focus is to assist client companies to build on the strength of their 2018 performance by supporting them to start, innovate, be competitive and to diversify their global footprint. In delivering on this, new supports have been introduced, others streamlined, a Global Ambition campaign launched and an intensive programme initiated to support companies to take action and plan for Brexit so that they have the resilience necessary to navigate the challenges and opportunities posed by any kind of Brexit.

The UK is the leading exporting destination for Enterprise Ireland supported companies and is the first export destination for many companies. Despite this, Enterprise Ireland supported companies, including food companies, are steadily diversifying their global footprint beyond the UK. The proportion of exports to the UK has reduced by 10% over the last ten years, reflecting the success Irish companies are having in substantially increasing and broadening their exports to other international markets.

Enterprise Ireland has a broad range of supports to help companies prepare for Brexit including the Brexit Scorecard, Be Prepared Grant, Advisory Clinics, Agile Innovation Fund, Operational Excellence Offer and Market Discovery Fund. Recently launched EI supports include online Customs Training and Act On Consultancy. Later this month, it is planned that the Local Enterprise Offices will be launching their customs training offering which will be available to all companies. Furthermore, the suite of enterprise supports in place cover a range of potential Brexit impacts. These range from liquidity support through short term and longer term loans, to restructuring aid for businesses in severe operating difficulties, including an EU State aid approved Rescue and Restructure Schemes in place to deal with sudden shocks and an expanded network of overseas offices and in-market supports to help firms diversify markets and to consolidate market share in the UK where appropriate.

I recently met with key players in the Grocery Retail and Distribution sector to hear directly from them on the current status of their Brexit preparedness. Distribution chains within the sector are highly integrated across Ireland and the UK and I will continue to engage with the sector on preparatory actions. This is reflective of the importance the Government attaches to the sector and its recognition of the challenges that it faces, including in a no-deal Brexit scenario.

Additionally, I chair my Department's Enterprise Forum on Brexit and Global Challenges which provides a forum for discussion of enterprise policy implications arising from Brexit and other Global Challenges, with a particular focus on capturing the views, concerns and suggestions of the enterprise sector. Membership of the Forum, which meets every 6-8 weeks includes business representative bodies, representatives from the Agencies under my Department and policy officials from across my Department.

It is vital that businesses which have yet to do so, now engage with the appropriate Government measures in place to mitigate against the impact of Brexit. My Department and its agencies will continue to provide the necessary extensive supports and advice to ensure that businesses are prepared for the challenges which exposure to Brexit brings.

Questions - Written Answers
Ministerial Advisers Data

329. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of advisers and special advisers employed by her Department in 2017 and 2018 and to date in 2019; the areas of expertise covered by such advisers; the annual salaries associated with same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6564/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, I have employed the services of two Special Advisers, details of whom are available through the Department of Public Expenditure website, but are set out below for the Deputy's information.

Name	Role	Salary
Ms Lucy Moylan	Special Adviser Press	PO Standard Scale
Mr Pauric McPhillips	Special Adviser Policy	PO Standard Scale

I have included a table below which provides details of all Special Advisers appointed to my Department since commencement of this Government who served during 2017, 2018 and 2019, including the commencement dates and cessation dates in each case.

Minister	Date	Special Adviser	Area of Expertise	Commencement Date	Cessation Date
Mary Mitchell O'Connor, Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation	6/5/2016 to 13/6/2017	Jim McGrathEllen LynchRoy Dooney	PolicyPress-Policy	13/6/2016 9/1/2017 23/1/2017	21/1/2017 13/6/2017 13/6/2017
Frances Fitzgerald, an Tánaiste and Minister for Business Enterprise and Innovation	14/6/2017 to 29/11/2017	Marion ManningMatthew Lynch Aoife SweeneyStephen O'Shea	Lead Advisor-PolicyPressPress	14/6/2017 14/6/2017 4/9/2017 14/6/2017	29/11/2017 29/11/2017 29/11/2017 29/7/2017
Heather Humphreys, Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation	30/11/2017 to date	Pauric McPhillipsLucy Moylan	PolicyPress	30/11/2017 30/11/2017	To dateTo date.
Minister Pat Breen, Minister of State for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection.	19/5/2016 to date	None	N/A	N/A	N/A
*Minister John Halligan, Minister of State for Training, Skills, Innovation, Research and Development	19/5/2016 to date				

* Minister Halligan's responsibilities span two departments (this Department and the Department of Education and skills). The Special Adviser to John Halligan is appointed to the Department of Education and Skills.

Meat Processing Plant Inspections

330. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of meat plants inspected by the legal metrology service in each of the years 2016 to

2018; the date each plant was inspected; the breaches that were found; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6634/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) Legal Metrology Service is responsible for the implementation of the Metrology Acts 1980-1996 and related Regulations. It does this through certifying and inspecting measurement instruments and the quantities of pre-packaged products. A wide range of measuring instruments, including weighing instruments used in meat plants, are subject to legal metrological control when used for trade purposes.

The Metrology Act 1996 and associated Regulations provide that only nationally approved instruments or instruments that have undergone European conformity assessment and bear the CE mark can be used for trade. The primary responsibility for design approval and conformity assessment rests with the manufacturer. The trader is obliged to ensure that only such a measuring instrument is used for trade and that it is correct and verified at all times.

In order to ensure sufficient resources are available for traders to keep their instruments in compliance, NSAI Legal Metrology has authorised private operators, under section 12 of the Metrology Act 1996 and subject to specific conditions, to undertake verifications at the request of the instrument owner. To monitor compliance, NSAI Legal Metrology Inspectors, operating out of seven offices countrywide, carry out inspections at meat plants on the basis of risk-based enforcement.

During 2016, 2017 and 2018, Legal Metrology did not receive any complaints in relation to the suspected use of non-compliant weighing instruments used for trade purposes in meat plants.

Inspections will be ongoing in this sector throughout 2019.

2018 Meat Plant Visits

Table 1. 2018 Visit Dates & Locations

Inspection Date	Trader Name
15-Oct-18	LIFFEY MEATS
23-Oct-18	ENNIS ABATTOIR
15-Aug-18	STAUNTON FOODS LTD.
11-Oct-18	DAWN MEATS
13-Mar-18	DAWN MEATS
08-Nov-18	C&J MEATS
24-Sep-18	DAWN MEATS
22-Jun-18	DAWN MEATS
09-Oct-18	CAROLAN'S BUTCHERS
12-Feb-18	DAWN MEATS
21-Mar-18	DAWN MEATS
22-Aug-18	IRISH COUNTRY MEATS
26-Oct-18	IRISH COUNTRY MEATS
20-Mar-18	ABP CLONES
28-Nov-18	ABP CLONES
29-Nov-18	ABP CLONES
05-Jul-18	KEPAK MEATS LTD.
06-Nov-18	COURTNEY MEATS
18-Jun-18	LIFFEY MEATS LTD.

Questions - Written Answers

Inspection Date	Trader Name
23-Oct-18	KEPAK
12-Jun-18	KEPAK LTD.
06-Apr-18	KEPAK LTD.
27-Apr-18	ANGLO IRISH BEEF PROCESSORS
07-Nov-18	FOYLE DONEGAL
25-Oct-18	ASHBOURNE MEAT PROCESSERS LTD.
28-May-18	DAWN MEATS
29-May-18	ABP
24-Oct-18	CLONMORE MEATS
19-Nov-18	ROSDERRA IRISH MEATS
30-Nov-18	ABP RATHKEALE
22-May-18	ABP RATHKEALE
22-Oct-18	LUNDY MEATS
08-Oct-18	DUNLEAVY MEATS
02-Oct-18	HOGAN TURKEYS LTD.
25-Oct-18	HOGAN TURKEYS LTD.
18-Apr-18	CUNNIFFE BACON COMP. LTD.
07-Mar-18	ABP IRELAND
11-Oct-18	ABP IRELAND
15-Jan-18	ABP IRELAND
28-May-18	ABP
12-Jul-18	ABP
04-Jul-18	ABP
08-Jun-18	IRISH COUNTRY MEATS
13-Nov-18	IRISH COUNTRY MEATS
08-Jun-18	IRISH COUNTRY MEATS
16-Apr-18	SLANEY FOODS
21-May-18	SANDYFORD MEATS LTD.
30-May-18	KEPAK
09-Jun-18	KEPAK

49 meat plants were visited by Legal Metrology Inspectors during 2018 with the following instrument types inspected: weighbridge, platform scales, bench scales and overhead tracks. Of the 327 instruments inspected, 74 failed (an instrument may have more than one failure), and two were removed from trade use as they were operating outside the legal tolerance and did not re-enter trade use until the non-compliance was addressed by an NSAI Authorised Verifier. The remaining failures were considered minor and the instruments were allowed to remain in trade use for up to 20 days, during which time the non-compliance was addressed by an Authorised Verifier

Table 2. 2018 Detected Non-Compliance

No. of Failures	Failure Reason
15	Never Verified
1	Within + 10% excess of Maximum Permissible Error (MPE)
2	> -10% (deficiency) of MPE
4	Incorrect or Missing Descriptive Marks
4	Other non-conformity
56	Repaired, altered or adjusted (On inspection a seal has been found to be no longer intact due to either a repair, alteration or adjustment since last verification took place)

2017 Meat Plant Visits

Table 3. 2017 Visit Dates and Locations

Inspection Date	Trader Name
06-Apr-17	LIFFEY MEATS
12-Jun-17	LIFFEY MEATS
15-Aug-17	DIVILLY'S QUALITY FOOD PRODUCTS
05-Sep-17	EMERALD ISLE FOODS
01-Dec-17	JENNINGS MEATS
15-Feb-17	KEPAK
10-May-17	KEPAK
28-Nov-17	ROSDERRA MEATS
06-Oct-17	FOYLE DONEGAL
07-Sep-17	O'GORMAN MEATS
07-Jul-17	ROSDERRA
09-Oct-17	OLIVER CARTY LTD.
28-Nov-17	ASHBOURNE MEATS
13-Dec-17	ABP
03-Apr-17	DAWN MEATS
14-Mar-17	DUNBIA
29-Aug-17	IRISH COUNTRY MEATS
06-Sep-17	KAVANAGH MEATS
09-Mar-17	SANDYFORD MEATS LTD.
29-Aug-17	KEPAK
28-Aug-17	KEPAK

21 meat plants were visited by Legal Metrology Inspectors during 2017 with the following instrument types inspected: weighbridge, platform scales, bench scales and overhead tracks. Of the 93 instruments inspected, 17 failed (an instrument may have more than one failure) and two were removed from trade use as they were operating outside the legal tolerance and did not re-enter trade use until the non-compliance was addressed by an NSAI Authorised Verifier. The remaining failures were considered minor and the instruments were allowed to remain in trade use for up to 20 days, during which time the non-compliance was addressed by an Authorised Verifier.

Table 4. 2017 Detected Non-Compliance

No. of Failures	Failure Reason
2	> -10% (deficiency) of MPE
3	Never Verified
2	Incorrect or Missing Descriptive Marks
12	Repaired, altered or adjusted
1	Within + 10% excess of MPE

2016 Meat Plant Visits

Table 5. 2016 Visit Dates & Locations

Questions - Written Answers

Inspection Date	Trader Name
21-Sep-16	SEÁN LOUGHNANE (GALWAY)
09-Feb-16	BALLON MEATS LTD.
29-Aug-16	STAUNTON FOODS LTD.
13-May-16	DAWN MEATS
03-Aug-16	GREEN PASTURES MEAT PROCESSORS LTD.
02-Jun-16	DAWN MEATS
24-Aug-16	DAWN MEATS
13-Dec-16	JENNINGS MEATS
20-Sep-16	ROSDERRA MEATS
23-Mar-16	COURTNEY MEATS
23-Sep-16	FOYLE DONEGAL
29-Nov-16	QK MEATS LTD.
05-Dec-16	QK MEATS LTD.
17-Jun-16	ABP
23-Aug-16	ABP
05-Aug-16	ROSDERRA IRISH MEATS
06-Sep-16	KEPAK LTD.
04-Nov-16	KEPAK LTD.
26-Jul-16	LUNDY MEATS
11-Mar-16	DUNLEAVY MEATS
29-Nov-16	DUNLEAVY MEATS
31-May-16	DUNLEAVY MEATS
04-Nov-16	ABP IRELAND
09-Feb-16	IRISH COUNTRY MEATS
09-Feb-16	SLANEY FOODS
06-Oct-16	DUBLIN PRODUCTS LTD.

26 meat plants were visited by Legal Metrology Inspectors during 2016 with the following instrument types inspected: weighbridge, platform scales and overhead tracks. Of the 71 instruments inspected, 15 failed and one was removed from trade use as it was operating outside the legal tolerance and did not re-enter trade use until the non-compliance was addressed by an NSAI Authorised Verifier. The remaining failures were considered minor and the instruments were allowed to remain in trade use for up to 20 days, during which time the non-compliance was addressed by an Authorised Verifier.

Table 6. 2016 Detected Non-Compliance

No. of Failures	Failure Reason
4	Never Verified
1	> +10% (excess) of MPE
9	Repaired, altered or adjusted
1	Within - 10% excess of MPE

Appointments to State Boards

331. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of boards or agencies her officials have been appointed to; if there are guidelines or

protocols for members of staff being appointed to boards or agencies; if so, when same were last updated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6639/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The answer to this PQ is deferred to allow for clarification on some elements of our response.

My Department will supply the information requested once it has been collated.

Third Level Funding

332. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the breakdown of the €17 million allocation in 2019 for cycle 5 of the programme for research in third level institutions; the date in 2019 it will be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if she has been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6788/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRTLI) was launched in 1998, with five cycles of expenditure to date. In addition to supporting the provision of top-class research infrastructure (buildings, laboratories and cutting-edge equipment), PRTLI saw significant investment in human capital development, through Structured PhD/Emergent Technology programmes across the Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

In REV 2019 my Department has allocated €1.878m towards paying off remaining PRTLI cycle 5 commitments.

The scoping of a future cycle of PRTLI, as tasked in Innovation 2020, has been undertaken by my Department, working with the Department of Education and Skills (DES). Pending a Government decision on the timing and scale of a future cycle of PRTLI, it is important to note that actions are already being taken by my Department, DES and other research funders to fund infrastructure and human capital in research. Funding in REV 2019 for Centres for Research Training helps to address the human capital component of PRTLI.

€15.5 million has been allocated under subhead B.5 towards the new Centres for Research Training (CRTs) initiative. The programme will see Higher Education Institutions collaborating to provide training for 600 PhD and Research Masters students in key identified areas of future skills around digital, data and ICT.

I understand that the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform will clarify following today's Cabinet meeting how cost pressures relating to the National Children's Hospital will be addressed.

Research and Development Funding

333. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the details of the €500 million allocated for the disruptive technologies innovation fund to be rolled out in 2019; the date in 2019 the fund will roll out; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if she has been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6789/19]

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

€500m Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund is currently being implemented through my Department and its agencies. The Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund will see investment in the development and deployment of disruptive innovative technologies and applications, on a commercial basis, targeted at tackling national and global challenges.

€20 million has been allocated to the fund in REV 2019. Over 300 Expressions of Interest were received in August 2018. The high number of applications for funding under the DTIF meant that this first Call was a very competitive process and highlights a significant appetite among both Irish enterprise and research bodies for projects seeking to develop and deploy disruptive technologies in Ireland.

27 projects are approved for funding with many led by start-ups and SMEs. The successful projects will receive over €70 million to 2021. The successful projects represent the health, food, ICT and manufacturing sectors in Ireland.

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) have confirmed funding for the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF) to 2022 as follows:

Year	DTIF
2019	€20m
2020	€30m
2021	€40m
2022	€90m

I understand that the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform will clarify following today's Cabinet meeting how cost pressures relating to the National Children's Hospital will be addressed.

IDA Ireland

334. Deputy Fergus O'Dowd asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she will respond to issues raised in correspondence (details supplied) in relation to Drogheda, County Louth; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6826/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Whilst I understand that the IDA has responded directly to the specific correspondence referred to, I would like to emphasise that regional development remains an absolute priority of mine. I am focused on supporting and sustaining existing regional employment while also working to create new economic opportunities and jobs in every county of Ireland. With regard to foreign direct investment (FDI) supported employment, there are now nearly 230,000 people working in IDA client firms. Last year saw more IDA-supported jobs added in regional Ireland than at any time over the past 17 years, with 58% of total such employment now located outside of Dublin.

County Louth itself has seen a 3.5% increase in FDI-driven employment in the last year. There are now 28 IDA-supported client companies in the County employing 3,903 people. These firms are continuing to grow and develop. Last year, for example, saw PCI Pharma announce that 70 new jobs will be created at their facility in Drogheda. This represents a vote of confidence in what Louth and the broader North-East region has to offer to multinationals who are looking to locate outside of Dublin. In particular, Louth continues to maintain a strong contingent of overseas firms in the International Business Services sector, with key clients such as

YapStone, Becton Dickinson and PCI Pharma Services performing well in the County.

While progress has been made in helping to generate new economic opportunities in Louth, the Government remains determined to achieve more. That is why work is continuing to unlock further the economic potential of the County. The IDA remains pivotal to this and the Agency is engaging with its clients and with other enterprise agencies to create jobs and source new investment there.

Departmental Reports

335. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she has commissioned research or holds research or data relating to a united Ireland. [6927/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department does not hold any research or data relating to a united Ireland.

Departmental Reports

336. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if a report will be commissioned to explore the potential benefits and challenges a united Ireland would bring to businesses across the island of Ireland. [6928/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department does not have plans to commission a report to explore the potential benefits and challenges that a united Ireland would bring to businesses.

Departmental Reports

337. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the reports commissioned by her Department in 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the cost and author of each report; and if each report is publically available. [6929/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Details of external consultant reports commissioned by my Department in 2018 and to date in 2019 are set out in the attached tables.

My Department considers hiring external consultants in cases where there is not the necessary expertise to deliver the project in-house, in cases where an external assessment is deemed essential, or in cases where a project must be completed within a short time scale, and although the expertise or experience may be available in-house, performing the task would involve a prohibitive opportunity cost.

My Department complies with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's guidelines for engagements of consultants by the civil service, having regard to public procurement guidelines.

2018

Questions - Written Answers

Name of external Consultant/ Organisation	Report Title	Date of Commission	Publication Status	Cost of Report€
Mazars	Financial and Governance Analysis of certain Credit Co-operatives	7th November 2018	This project is currently underway and is expected to be completed in Q1 2019. It is not the intention to publish this report.	€44,280.
KPMG	Data Analysis and Benchmarking Exercise for the Personal Injuries Commission (PIC).	20th February 2018	Published September 2018 as part of the Second and Final Report of the PIC.	€43,050.
Economic and Social Research Institute	Measuring Contingent Employment in Ireland	2017	Published August 2018	€51,357.42
Coyne Research	Workplace Relations Commission Stakeholder and Service user Research	2016	Published April 2018	€32,200.00
Herlihy Access Consultancy	Development of Access Policy for the Workplace Relations Commission	2018	For publication shortly	€12,669.00
Colleary & Co Solicitors	GDPR Gap Analysis Report for Workplace Relations Commission	2018	Not for publication	€5,842.50
Ove Arup & Partners	Dangerous Substances Legislation Review 2018	24.8.18	Not for publication. Internal report	€45,003
Behaviour & Attitudes	Brexit Vote – The impact on Irish SMEs and their Capital Funding (Survey 3)	May 2018	Published 25 September 2018	24,995.02
OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)	Review of SME and Entrepreneurship Issues and Policies in Ireland	March 2018	Work in progress – Final report to be published in second half of 2019	€300,000 (Two payments of €85,000 and €115,000 made in 2018. Final payment of €100,000 to be paid over in May 2019))
IDC UK Ltd	Digital Transformation: Assessing the Impact of Digitalisation on Ireland's Workforce	March 2018	Published December 2018	€72,570
ASM Chartered Accountants	Five internal audit reports: 1) Health & Safety Authority – Liaison and governance 2) Personal Injuries Assessment Board – Liaison and governance 3) Companies Registration Office 4) Workplace Relations Commission 5) Labour Court	(Under contract terms to end of 2018)	Operational reports not for publication	€54,000
Copenhagen Economics	Making EU Trade in Services Work for all	12th June 2018	Published on 29th November 2018	€130,036 Note: The sum above is Ireland's share of the costs. Further contributions were made by a number of other Member States who participated in the projected.
Ward Solutions	IT systems security testing	14/3/2018	Not for publication - internal ICT report	4,735.50

Name of external Consultant/Organisation	Report Title	Date of Commission	Publication Status	Cost of Report €
Ergo Systems	ICT Security Review	January 2019	Not yet completed. Internal report not intended for publication	€35,000 estimated
Clarion Consulting	ICT Strategy Development	October 2018	Not yet completed. Internal report not intended for publication	€66,000 estimated

National Digital Strategy

338. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to provide for a merchants' incentive scheme as part of the new digital strategy; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6993/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): A new National Digital Strategy, to help Ireland maximise the economic and societal benefits from digitalisation and its transformative effects, is currently under development.

The Strategy is being led as a shared effort by the Department of the Taoiseach; the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment; the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation; and the Office of the Chief Information Officer in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. An Interdepartmental Group, which includes representatives from all Departments, is also assisting the development of the Strategy. This approach reflects the broad spread of policy areas impacted by digitalisation.

A public consultation exercise, to allow citizens to influence the development of the Strategy, took place at the end of 2018. Over 300 responses were received. In parallel, consultations with stakeholders and experts to inform development of the Strategy took place.

It is intended that the new National Digital Strategy will set out Ireland's vision and ambition in the fast-changing digital world. It will set out a roadmap across themed pillars incorporating Digital Foundations, such as infrastructure and security; Trust, Society and Well-being; Effective Use of digital; and the Digital Economy and Labour Market changes. As well and focusing on national issues, it will place an emphasis on international and European linkages and help to position Ireland within the European Union, at the heart of digital developments.

While it is too early to comment on any specific initiatives that the Strategy may address, I have no plans to introduce a merchant's incentive scheme.

It is recognised though that all businesses, regardless of size or sector, in today's competitive environment must build their digital online capability. Accordingly, the agencies of my Department offer a range of supports to assist businesses to trade online.

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are the first-stop-shop front line service assisting in delivering business growth and jobs for the small and micro-enterprise sector. The LEOs are the first port of call for anyone who wishes to start or expand a business, in terms of advice, training, sign posting to other support providers and, in certain circumstances, grant support. The LEOs undertake a number of activities to encourage businesses to build their online presence and compete in the online market place.

The LEOs nationwide actively promote the Trading Online Voucher Scheme (TOVS) on behalf of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. The TOVS offers matched financial assistance of up to €2,500, along with training and advice, to micro companies (10 or less employees) who want to establish an online presence for the first time, or

who wish to expand a basic existing website to incorporate a more substantive online trading capacity. Since the start of the scheme in July 2014 to date almost 4,500 micro companies have availed of the TOVS.

The LEOs also offer a wide range of short training programmes to support their clients in building their online presence and to compete in the online marketplace. These programmes are focused on different elements which aim at maximising outputs from investment in online trading such as:

- Marketing, focused mainly on development of an online/mobile marketing strategy;
- Social Media, with the majority of programmes focused on educating the client base on how to use the different social media platforms to support their business;
- eCommerce Sales Strategy, including how to convert website visits into sales; and
- Search Engine Optimisation, including web analytics and video optimisation for web.

As Chair of the Retail Consultation Forum, I have prioritised supporting the retail sector to develop their online capability and enhance their competitiveness. In 2017, data from the CSO showed that 66% of Irish enterprises in the Wholesale and Retail Sector reported having a website or homepage, with only 28% able to facilitate online ordering.

In support of this, the first call for the new pilot Online Retail Scheme administered by Enterprise Ireland, opened on 24th October 2018 and closed on 5th December 2018. Applications are currently under assessment by Enterprise Ireland. The Scheme launched with a fund of up to €625,000, which was later doubled to €1.25m as part of the Department's 2019 Budget. A second call will issue this year (2019). The Online Retail Scheme will support retail businesses of 20 employees or more under the areas of (research, strategy development, implementation and training) who are ready to strategically grow their online capability.

In recognition of the strong role the retail sector plays in supporting regional development and vibrant communities, at least 50% of the total number of grants awarded will be reserved for retail SMEs with their headquarters outside of county Dublin.

More generally, Enterprise Ireland (EI) works with 5,000 manufacturing and internationally traded services companies, and building an online presence is part of the range of supports offered to those clients. EI has supported projects focused on developing innovative products on new product platforms for international markets. Working closely with the Irish Internet Association, EI delivers a range of funded and advisory eCommerce supports for its clients to develop their online marketing capabilities. In addition, EI regularly organises events which can connect clients with leading experts and inform them on best practice.

An additional €1.8m has been earmarked for the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland over the next 3 years. The proposed investment, again via EI, is to assist the sector to develop and generate additional export sales and online revenue opportunities, increasing market diversification by client companies and underpinning sustainable growth.

Medicinal Products Regulation

339. Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Health if the public information leaflet and associated stickers are being included mandatorily in the dispensing of sodium valporate to prescribed patients. [6735/19]

446. Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Health if an impact study being carried out by an organisation (details supplied) is delaying action on commitments made to raise public awareness regarding the use of sodium valproate for certain groups of persons. [6736/19]

447. Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Health the status of an agreement to place a public information poster in all general practitioner and primary care practices concerning warnings about side effects from the prescribing of sodium valproate. [6737/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 339, 446 and 447 together.

My Department continues to liaise closely with the HSE and the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA), as well as other stakeholders, to help address concerns raised over the use of sodium valproate, also known as Epilim.

As part of its Valproate Response Project, the HSE undertook a communication programme in 2018 to provide information to support the safe prescribing of valproate treatment in women with epilepsy, bipolar disorder and other conditions, to help prevent current and future harm to women of childbearing age who are pregnant or who could become pregnant while taking valproate medicines. To date, the communications plan has included:

1. Issuing letters to all prescribers and pharmacists in relation to new European Medicines Agency (EMA) and HPRA guidelines on the use of sodium valproate;
2. Issuing patient-specific letters to GPs;
3. Issuing 2500+ letters to patients who were dispensed sodium valproate;
4. Issuing letters to pharmacies advising them of the patient support service and requesting that they include a patient information leaflet every time they dispense sodium valproate;
5. Developing an information web page regarding sodium valproate; and
6. Using social media to provide regular updates to patients and stakeholders.

In addition to this HSE programme, the HPRA has collaborated with national stakeholders, including patient representatives and healthcare professionals, to implement the EMA's new risk minimisation measures in Ireland.

These measures have included changes to the product information for patients and healthcare professionals; a visual warning on the packaging of valproate medicines; updated educational materials to reflect the new measures and provide age-appropriate advice; and a patient alert card to be attached to the packaging so that pharmacists can go through it with the patient when valproate is dispensed.

In tandem with the actions taken by the HPRA, the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI), as pharmacy regulator, has directed pharmacists that they must inform women of child-bearing age of the potential risk of abnormal pregnancy outcomes when supplying medicines containing valproate. This includes providing a patient leaflet and Alert Card with each supply of these medicines.

It is important to note that many of these actions, as well as other strands of work within the HSE Valproate Response Project, are continuing while an impact assessment led by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) is taking place, and are not dependent on the outcome of the RCSI's report.

The Deputy may also be aware that the HSE is planning a public conference on sodium valproate at the end of March to expand the scope of communication around this medicine and increase awareness among women age who are currently taking, or have previously taken, sodium valproate.

Disability Support Services Provision

340. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Health if a service agreement between the HSE and a service provider exists or existed in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6243/19]

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

Disability Support Services Funding

341. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health the reason the Cork-Kerry HSE has not received its budget allocation for 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6247/19]

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 matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Home Care Packages Provision

342. Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has not received a homecare package; and when a package will be put in place for them [6271/19]

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.

Disability Services Provision

343. Deputy Bríd Smith asked the Minister for Health the measures he is taking to ensure children (details supplied) will not be waiting for 18 months before receiving an appointment with the early intervention team; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6276/19]

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.

Audiology Services Provision

344. Deputy Brendan Griffin asked the Minister for Health the reason there are no audiology services in the new primary care centres in Tralee, County Kerry and Bantry, County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6282/19]

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

Hospital Procedures

345. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health when an operation will be rescheduled for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6284/19]

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.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

346. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health when a resubmitted application seeking reimbursement for Translarna (details supplied) will be processed by the HSE; when the drugs committee will assess the submission; when a decision will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6285/19]

347. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if an application seeking reimbursement for Translarna (details supplied) will be approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6286/19]

497. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health when a decision will be made on whether Translarna will become available through the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6991/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 346, 347 and 497 together.

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.

Obesity Strategy

348. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in the establishment of a body to monitor the codes of practice on the marketing and advertising of food and non-alcoholic beverages in addition to the development of guidelines for same; the timeline for same in view of the fact that the codes will be one year old in February 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6297/19]

349. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 188 of 12 December 2018, the detail of his engagement with industry representation on initiating a register of signatories to the codes of practice on the marketing and advertising of food and non-alcoholic beverages; the frequency with which he has met with representatives of the industry; when a register of signatories will be initiated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6298/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 348 and 349 together.

Under the umbrella of the national oversight group, the Obesity Policy Implementation Oversight Group, work is being intensified on the development of the monitoring mechanism for the Codes of Practice on the Marketing and Advertising of Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages. This has taken longer than anticipated with respect to determining the most robust monitoring mechanism to preserve the integrity of the implementation of the Codes for the benefit of public nutritional health and in line with the main objective of the Obesity Policy and Action Plan (OPAP) to deal with the problem of obesity. The progression of the development of guidelines to govern the implementation of these codes is also being conducted in tandem with the development of the robust monitoring mechanism.

Furthermore, my Department has engaged with industry representation on initiating a register of signatories to the Codes of Practice from the perspective of compiling a list of companies that would be signing up to the Codes. The development of guidance on the interpretation of the Codes will precede the development of this list.

My Department has engaged with industry both formally and informally in a number of areas of interest within the context of obesity. For example, and as the Deputy is aware, the Obesity Policy Implementation Oversight Group agreed to establish a sub-group for Reformulation. This sub-group has met on a number of occasions since being established and agreed their Terms of Reference. The Reformulation sub-group is technical in its work programme. The work of the sub-group will primarily set targets on reformulation of food and drink. It will also make recommendations on addressing reduction of portion sizes and on monitoring and validation procedures.

As part of its work, a workshop between the Reformulation sub-group and Food Sector Stakeholders comprised of, among others, industry on reformulation, took place on the 20th of September last. This workshop provided an important opportunity for detailed engagement with key Food Sector Stakeholders on the challenges and opportunities of reformulation in the interests of promoting the health and wellbeing of the population. And the work of the sub-group is now building on this engagement.

Public Health Policy

350. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Health the timeline for the consideration of the collated outcomes from Connect, Collaborate, Create; Co-Designing Healthier Communities, A Healthy Ireland Stakeholder Forum on the Built Environment by the relevant Departments, the national physical activity plan implementation group and the obesity policy implementation oversight group for the purposes of advancing work in the area of health and environmental planning; if there is a proposed timeline for the development of these materials; if not, the reason therefore; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6299/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): Connect, Collaborate, Create; Co-Designing Healthier Communities, A Healthy Ireland Stakeholder Forum on the Built Environment, was held on November 21st 2018, in the National Indoor Arena. The event was organised by the cross-Governmental Implementation Groups overseeing the National Physical Activity Plan and the Obesity Policy and Action Plan.

The Forum brought together those who have a responsibility for planning and developing public spaces with those who have expertise regarding the impacts of the built and natural environments on all aspects of health and well-being, including sport and physical activity, obesity and mental health, with the objective of examining how our physical environment can impact on our collective health.

The format for this event consisted of a number of talks and presentations from many key stakeholders, followed by a workshop and discussion. Written feedback was gathered from all of the groups participating in the workshop and has now been collated. This material is currently being analysed and core points are being identified.

A meeting will be held in the coming weeks between the Department of Health, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to consider the points raised and to identify the next steps in the process, which will include consideration by the two policy implementation oversight groups referred to.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

351. **Deputy Charlie McConologue** asked the Minister for Health the status of the reopen-

ing of a ward at a hospital (details supplied); if the first tranche of beds have now been opened; when the remaining beds will be open; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6318/19]

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 18 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 2019, including the 40-bed modular build in South Tipperary General Hospital, the 30-bed ward in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda, 4 HDU beds in Cork University Hospital and 4 HDU beds in the Mater Hospital;

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;

and 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.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

352. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health when legislation will be brought forward to implement the proposed changes in the fair deal scheme outlined in February 2018; the full extent of the changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6326/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The proposed policy change to the Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS), to cap contributions from farm assets at 3 years where a family successor commits to working the productive asset, has been approved by Government. My Department is working on the development of draft Heads of Bill while considering a number of complex ancillary policy and operational matters which may need to be addressed in the proposed legislation.

It is intended that this proposed policy change, the 3 year cap, will be extended to eligible existing participants in long term residential care so that they are not disadvantaged, but that there would be no retrospective recoupment of contributions for those who have paid contributions over and above the 3 year period.

A draft General Scheme of a Bill is currently with legal advisers for advice and legal quality control review. Subject to legal advice, I expect to bring the heads of bill to Government soon. The changes to the Scheme will come into effect in 2019 subject to the legislative process.

General Medical Services Scheme

353. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person with

a full medical card is charged for blood tests in a general practitioner surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6328/19]

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.

Brexit Preparations

354. Deputy Eugene Murphy asked the Minister for Health the arrangements and-or instructions issued to the HSE with regard to the supply of vital medicines in respect of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6332/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As part of the overall 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 been undertaken by my Department, the HSE, and the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA), together with medicines manufacturers and suppliers, to ensure that risks to the continuity of supply are mitigated to the greatest possible extent.

The Department of Health, HSE and HPRA do not anticipate an immediate impact on medicine supplies should there be a no-deal Brexit on 29 March. There are already additional stocks of medicines routinely built into the Irish medicine supply chain, and these additional stocks, together with planning by Revenue to allow the fast-tracking of essential drugs into Ireland, where necessary, will help deal with any delays that may arise.

It is important to note that there is no need for hospitals, pharmacists or patients to order extra quantities of medicines, or for doctors to issue additional prescriptions. To do so could disrupt existing stock levels and hamper the supply of medicines for other patients.

In 2018, the HPRA developed and launched a multi-stakeholder Medicine Shortages Framework to anticipate and manage medicine shortages when they occur. The health system is therefore well placed to anticipate and respond to any additional shortages, should they arise because of Brexit.

As an additional safeguard, my Department requested that consideration be given to those categories of medicines which are considered most essential to public health. As a result, HSE

and HPRA technical experts are undertaking a process to verify the contingency planning in place for the continuity of supply of medicines essential to public health, in order to determine those medicines that have the potential to be vulnerable to supply disruption and, where necessary, identify clinically appropriate alternatives. Work on this process is ongoing and will continue in the months before and after Brexit.

Both the HPRA and HSE have requested that medicines manufacturers and suppliers highlight any issues regarding the availability of specific products associated with Brexit and, to date, no major issues have been identified through this process.

Cancer Services Provision

355. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Health the steps being taken to ensure that cancer patients have access to innovative new cancer treatments at the same time as those in other European countries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6335/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): A standard process is in place for the HSE reimbursement of new drugs, and new indications for existing drugs. This assessment process aims to ensure that decisions on the funding of drugs are clinically appropriate, fair, consistent and sustainable. The process is underpinned by the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013.

Many Irish cancer patients also access new cancer treatments through clinical trials. The National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026 envisages increased recruitment of patients to clinical trials over the period of the Strategy.

National Cancer Strategy

356. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Health his plans regarding strengthening the role of the national cancer control programme in delivering the National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026 as per recommendation No. 44; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6334/19]

357. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Health the status of the implementation of the National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026; the funding allocated in 2019 towards the implementation of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6336/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 356 and 357 together.

The National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026 Implementation Report 2018 was published on 4th February. This sets out the progress achieved on the implementation of the 52 recommendations of the Strategy, and the degree to which the key performance indicators are being met, to the end of 2018. It is available on the Department of Health website at: health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/NCS-Implementation-Report-2018.pdf.

The National Cancer Control Programme is continuing their central role in the implementation of the Strategy. They control some direct funding which is utilised in a targeted way to maximise improvements in the quality and accessibility of cancer services.

The National Cancer Control Programme received increased funding of €8.9 m for cancer services under the HSE's National Service Plan 2019.

National Children's Hospital Administration

358. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Health the preparation undertaken to ensure that the chain of command for administering the procurement and building of the national children's hospital project was prepared, skilled and stress tested in order to prevent spiralling cost overruns. [6340/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Established under the National Paediatric Hospital Development (Establishment) Order 2007, the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board (NPHDB) has statutory responsibility for the planning, designing, building and equipping of the new children's hospital and outpatient and urgent care centres.

Notwithstanding the NPHDB's clear statutory responsibility for the construction of the hospital, because of the range of other elements to the overall programme to relocate services to the new hospital once commissioned, and the need for appropriate oversight of all inter-related service and capital elements of the programme, in 2017 revised governance structures were approved by Government and put in place to oversee and monitor progress on the children's hospital project and integration programme. The Children's Hospital Project and Programme (CHP&P) Steering Group, chaired by the Deputy Director General of the Health Service Executive was established to direct the overall programme of work. This Steering Group reports to the CHP&P Board, chaired by the Secretary General of my Department, which oversees and monitors progress on the project and programme.

Government approved the commissioning of an independent review of the escalation in cost in determining the adjusted contract sum in relation to the new children's hospital. This independent review has been commissioned by the HSE and is being undertaken by PwC. The review will be completed by the end of March, subject to availability of relevant documentation and personnel and will inform any governance or other changes required. The review will establish the sequence of events in relation to the cost increases experienced by the project; establish what was known, when and by whom, and the reporting of relevant information from the project team to the relevant oversight and governance bodies including NPHDB Board and also its Committees, the HSE and the Department of Health. The review will comment not just on the major residual risks and the robustness and completeness of the current forecasts, but also identify and where possible quantify those risks contractually excluded from the Guaranteed Maximum Price. The terms of reference also require the review to develop any further recommendations which may identify any areas of potential cost savings or reductions, which are consistent with the applicable contractual undertakings and the delivery of the project, in light of its current status, address major residual risks, control and oversight issues and bring greater oversight of performance and value for money.

National Children's Hospital Expenditure

359. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Health if unsuccessful bidders for development of the national children's hospital will be included in the investigation into the spiralling of costs; if employees that undertake the procurement for large infrastructure projects such as this have a contractual obligation to ensure that costs of projects do not spiral out of control; and if not, the way in which he will hold those responsible for the cost overruns to account. [6341/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The terms of reference of the independent review of the escalation in cost in determining the adjusted contract sum in relation to the new

children's hospital do not address issues relating to unsuccessful bidders.

The review will establish the sequence of events in relation to the cost increases experienced by the project; establish what was known, when and by whom, and the reporting of relevant information from the project team to the relevant oversight and governance bodies including NPHDB Board and also its Committees, the HSE and the Department of Health. The review will comment not just on the major residual risks and the robustness/completeness of the current forecasts, but also identify and where possible quantify those risks contractually excluded from the Guaranteed Maximum Price/adjusted contract sum.

The terms of reference also require the review to develop any further recommendations which may identify any areas of potential cost savings or reductions, which are consistent with the applicable contractual undertakings and the delivery of the project, in light of its current status, address major residual risks, control and oversight issues and bring greater oversight of performance and value for money. Under the terms of reference, the review will deal with the accountability of the relevant key parties, functions and roles. This may inform next steps by decision makers, including Government.

The review will be completed by the end of March, subject to availability of relevant documentation and personnel and will inform any governance or other changes required.

Home Help Service Provision

360. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 475 of 16 October 2018 if home help hours will be sanctioned for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6343/19]

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.

Disability Services Provision

361. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of respite care, occupational therapy, home support and speech and language therapy appointments in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6354/19]

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 Waiting Lists

362. Deputy Timmy Dooley asked the Minister for Health when a child (details supplied) will have an assessment for surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6355/19]

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 Waiting Lists

363. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on waiting lists for occupational therapy by county; the number waiting more than three, six and nine months and one year, respectively, by county; and the longest length of time waited for the service. [6356/19]

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.

Health Services Provision

364. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 421 of 22 January 2019 if he will request the HSE to issue a response as promised (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6357/19]

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.

Cannabis for Medicinal Use

365. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) can be given a licence for medicinal cannabis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6361/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): It is important to note that the medical decision to prescribe or not prescribe any treatment, including cannabis treatment, for an individual patient is strictly a decision for the treating clinician, in consultation with their patient. As Minister for Health I have no role in this clinical decision-making process.

Medical practitioners and patients may consult the Department of Health website for detailed information on medical cannabis, including clinical guidance on the use of medical cannabis and details on who is permitted under legislation to apply for a licence, and how those persons may apply for a Ministerial licence for medical cannabis. This information can be found at the following link: <https://health.gov.ie/blog/publications/cannabis-for-medical-use/>.

Members of the Oireachtas were advised of this repository of information via a circular from the Controlled Drugs Unit of the Department of Health in October 2018.

If your constituent or their clinicians require any further details or clarification, having consulted the website, they should contact the Department of Health directly.

National Children's Hospital

366. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the contractual obligations included in the procurement process to prevent spiralling costs in the development of the national children's hospital. [6370/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Established under the National Paediatric Hospital Development (Establishment) Order 2007, the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board (NPHDB) has statutory responsibility for the planning, designing, building and equipping of the new children's hospital and outpatient and urgent care centres.

The size, complexity and specialist nature of the new children's hospital project informed the decision by the NPHDB to adopt a two-stage procurement process comprised of:

Procurement Stage 1: A full tender and contract for Phase A (below ground including basement works) on the basis of a detailed design with the tendering of Phase B (the main above ground works) on a Preliminary 1st stage design with an approximate and remeasurable bill of quantities reflecting the Preliminary 1st stage design. Contract Awarded to main and specialists contractor 3rd August 2017.

Procurement Stage 2: While the basement Phase A works were under construction, the 2nd stage detailed design for the above ground Phase B works was completed with a full bill of quantities priced at the 1st stage Preliminary design tendered rates. The contract becomes in effect a lump sum contract. Phase B works instructed 8 January 2019.

The procurement strategy was developed and finalised from 2014 to 2016. The Government Contracts Committee, the cross-government consultative committee for construction procurement matters, accepted that given the project's scale, complexity and its programme, the circumstances were such as to warrant a deviation from the standard form of Government contract and agreed a derogation from its use.

Reasons for adopting the two-stage process include:

- Early commencement on site, two years ahead of traditional procurement (Phase A works commenced on site on 3 October 2017 and are nearing completion. Finalisation of instruction for Phase B main works in parallel allows these works to commence;

- Market engagement with Irish and international contractors identified this procurement approach would attract increased competition in a situation where there are a very limited number of contractors with the ability to undertake a project of this scale. This was borne out by the competitive nature of the tender process with 5 contractors short-listed for the main contract, 4

for the mechanical installation and 4 for the electrical installation;

- Claims are addressed up front, prior to main construction, rather than as is traditional throughout the project and beyond;
- Reduce exposure to rising inflationary pressures in the construction market through procurement at 2016 tender market rates (versus 2018 tender rates);
- Provide opportunity for the 3 contractors (main contractor and Mechanical & Electrical contractors) to influence/interrogate the detailed design and assume contractual responsibility for completeness including quantities at end of Stage 2 Design;
- The programmes for main works are fully aligned across 3 contractors with a single point accountability for site management.
- Project substantially de-risked in relation to ground conditions with Phase A nearing completion prior to instructing and commencing the main hospital build (Phase B); and
- Incorporation of streamlined dispute resolution including using an independent expert whose decisions are binding on all parties.

A Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) is determined prior to the instruction to proceed with the main Phase B works (with the GMP only adjustable for clearly defined exclusions such as changes in scope, excess national construction tender inflation above 4% post July 2019, changes in legislation (e.g. VAT, PRSI, statutory labour rates, building regulations). Other than in respect of exclusions, the GMP ceiling cannot be exceeded with any amount in excess not recoverable by contractors.

Hospital Appointments Status

367. Deputy Peter Burke asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be expedited for a person (details supplied). [6373/19]

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 Staff

368. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Health the number of persons working

in the child and adolescent mental health services in County Tipperary; the number of positions that are either on leave or vacant, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6374/19]

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 Services Provision

369. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health if the service at a location (details supplied) in County Cork is to close; if so, the replacement services being provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6375/19]

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.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

370. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health his plans to improve the level of child mental health service in County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6376/19]

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

371. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); the timeframe for surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6377/19]

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 Waiting Lists Data

372. Deputy John McGuinness asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be arranged for a person (details supplied); if the matter will be expedited; the number on the waiting list; the length of time they have been waiting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6382/19]

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

Hospital Waiting Lists

373. Deputy John McGuinness asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in arranging an operation at Cappagh hospital for a person (details supplied); the way in which he is addressing the waiting list for young children who require urgent hip operations; if there is a restriction on the use of the operating theatre at the hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6384/19]

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.

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

Services for People with Disabilities

374. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health if home support and grief counselling will be provided for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6389/19]

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.

Hospitals Funding

375. Deputy Eamon Scanlon asked the Minister for Health when capital funding will be allocated for the new diabetes day unit at Sligo University Hospital for which planning permission was secured in December 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6390/19]

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 directly you in relation to this matter.

Autism Support Services

376. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health if a report will be provided (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6391/19]

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 Waiting Lists Data

377. Deputy John McGuinness asked the Minister for Health if a MRI scan will be expedited for a person (details supplied); the number of MRI scans carried out each week at WUH; the number of persons on the waiting list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6392/19]

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

378. Deputy John McGuinness asked the Minister for Health his plans to expand the services for those affected by Alzheimer's and who attend a centre (details supplied); the funding received by the centre from the HSE in the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6396/19]

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 Services Provision

379. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health his plans for the implementation of the national clinical programme for epilepsy, which has been under discussion since 2012 and was approved by the HSE in 2016 (details supplied). [6398/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this PQ refers to the National Clinical Programme on Epilepsy, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Mobility Allowance

380. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Health the status of the health (transport support) Bill. [6401/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): 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 consideration 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.

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.

National Children's Hospital Expenditure

381. Deputy Joan Collins asked the Minister for Health the cost of the original agreed tender with a company (details supplied) for the children's hospital in St. James's; and the amount it has increased to. [6402/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Contract tenders were received from the main contractor, mechanical and electrical installation contractors and lift contractors in October 2016. The most competitive tender sum, excluding VAT, in total was €637m, of which €432m applied to the main contractor.

Following completion of the Guaranteed Maximum Price Process (GMP) in November 2018, the total adjusted GMP construction budget is €890m excluding VAT, of which €556m applies to the main contractor.

Patient Safety

382. Deputy Bríd Smith asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 137 of 7 November 2018 and 349 of 18 December 2018, if a statement was provided by a person (details supplied). [6423/19]

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.

National Children's Hospital Expenditure

383. Deputy Jonathan O'Brien asked the Minister for Health the revised cost of a report (details supplied) into overruns at the national children's hospital in view of the revised terms of reference. [6429/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE commissioned the review by PwC into the cost escalation relating to the new children's hospital project. Accordingly, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Healthcare Infrastructure Provision

384. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to State-backed health infrastructure projects that have been delayed due to the sale of the loans of a contractor to vulture funds; if so, the projects, such as in the case of a company (details supplied); his plans to intervene to ensure the timely completion of such projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6434/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive has the statutory responsibility for the management and delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

General Practitioner Services

385. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the Clashmore health centre, County Waterford; if ownership of the health centre remains with the HSE; when general practitioner services will be reinstated in the village; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6438/19]

386. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the status of a health centre (details supplied) in County Waterford; if ownership of the facility remains with the HSE; when general practitioner services will be reinstated in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6439/19]

387. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the status of a facility (details supplied) County Waterford; the ownership status of the facility; when general practitioner services will be reinstated in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6440/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 385 to 387, inclusive, together.

As these questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for them to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Nursing Staff Data

388. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of whole-time equivalent public health nurses operating in the Dungarvan and Lismore municipal district or the closest corresponding HSE area of operations; if the full allocation of positions is filled; the number of public health nurses attached to each health centre in the district; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6441/19]

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.

Ambulance Service Provision

389. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the level of emergency ambulance provision in the Dungarvan and Lismore municipal district or closest corresponding HSE area of operations; if a needs assessment has been carried out; the way in which the allocation corresponds to need; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6442/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Hospital Services

390. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health when a reply will issue to correspondence (details supplied). [6448/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I understand Tallaght University Hospital replied directly to the Deputy on 25 June 2018 in relation to this matter.

Questions - Written Answers
Air Ambulance Service Provision

391. Deputy Brendan Griffin asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter regarding an air ambulance (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6450/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Deputy will be aware that the Programme for a Partnership Government commits to exploring the feasibility of the expansion of air ambulance services, including the possibility of a second base. In that context, I met with the Irish Community Rapid Response (ICRR) in 2017 to discuss their proposal to establish a charitably funded Helicopter Emergency Medical Service in the South. At that meeting it was agreed that the ICRR would work with the National Ambulance Service (NAS) with a view to reverting to me with an agreed proposal.

I am advised that the ICRR and the NAS are currently finalising details of a proposed service arrangement which will be submitted to me for decision. The Deputy will appreciate that before recommending the service arrangement to me for approval, the NAS will need to be fully satisfied that the necessary clinical and corporate governance arrangements are such that the new service will be safe, robust and sustainable.

Hospital Appointments Status

392. Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a hospital appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6457/19]

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.

Home Care Packages

393. Deputy Eoin Ó Broin asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be allocated additional home care hours. [6465/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): This is a service matter, however the Health Service Executive needs further details to answer the request, including a date of birth and address of the person concerned.

If the Deputy contacts my office with these details, I will ask the HSE to respond directly to

the Deputy as soon as possible.

Local Drugs Task Forces Funding

394. Deputy Fergus O'Dowd asked the Minister for Health if a €1 million national fund will be made available through the drug policy unit in his Department; if the addiction services and local drugs task force in Drogheda will be in a position to apply for this funding stream at a time when it is providing critical work during a major drugs crisis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6467/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): The Department of Health allocated funding of almost €100m to the HSE for addiction services in 2019. The HSE National Service Plan 2019 sets out the type and volume of addiction services to be provided, having regard to the funding allocated.

In addition, the Department provides a further €28m to Drug and Alcohol Task Forces through various channels of funding, including the HSE.

Implementing the health-led national drugs strategy continues to be a Government priority. Task forces have an important role in delivering the strategy at the local level.

Within the limited envelope of resources available for drug and alcohol services in 2019, I am considering options for the provision of additional funding for addiction services and task forces.

I am committed to providing additional resources to enhance service provision under the national drugs strategy. These resources should be directed towards those interventions which are most likely to lead to a reduction in problem substance use and positive improvement in public health, safety and wellbeing.

Health Screening Programmes

395. Deputy Seán Barrett asked the Minister for Health if consideration will be given to establishing a screening programme for haemochromatosis such as in the UK in order to ensure that no person goes undiagnosed with an iron overload (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6488/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): It is correct to say that haemochromatosis is now recognised as one of the most common genetic disorders in Ireland. Research has shown that as many as 1 in 100 people are likely to be at risk of developing iron overload. However this fact alone is not sufficient to commence a population based screening programme.

There are well established international criteria to be met before a national population based screening programme can be recommended. The current position of the UK National Screening Committee is that a systematic population screening programme is not recommended.

Arising from a recommendation from the Scally Report (2018) a National Screening Committee (NSC) will be established and become operational in Ireland during the course of 2019. The NSC will be responsible for advising the Minister and Department of Health on all new proposals for screening and revisions of existing programmes.

Questions - Written Answers
Hospitals Building Programme

396. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Health the timeframe for approved funding spend for the community nursing units in Stranorlar and Ramelton, County Donegal; when tenders will be sought for this work to begin (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6489/19]

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.

Hospitals Building Programme

397. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Health the progress made to address the issues outlined by a group (details supplied); when a definitive answer on its future in terms of a new build community nursing unit for the area will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6490/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): At a meeting on 7 November with public representatives and local delegations I advised that the need for additional beds and the potential to develop a replacement facility to the existing community nursing unit in Lifford will be reviewed further post 2021, when new Census data is available and the Health Service Capacity Review and the National Development Plan have been advanced.

The existing unit at Lifford will continue to operate in the intervening period. I further advised that I welcome the community continuing to engage with the HSE at local level, in the first instance, as appropriate, regarding further ideas and proposals for community based options that may be considered.

I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy in relation to the funding aspect of his question.

Hospitals Building Programme

398. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Health the impact on anticipated upgrades for the community hospital sector in County Donegal in view of the cost overrun of the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6491/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 and beyond 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. Once the HSE has finalised its Capital Plan for 2019, it will then be submitted to me for consideration.

Disability Services Provision

399. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a case regarding the HSE and a service provider (details supplied); the status of the

funding that was provided for the service user; if he will direct the HSE to review the case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6495/19]

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

400. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will have a follow-up appointment at University Hospital Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6499/19]

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

401. **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. [6501/19]

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.

School Equipment

402. Deputy Kate O'Connell asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question Number 129 of 21 November 2018 to the Minister for Education and Skills, the way in which an application can be made through the aids and appliances scheme administered by the HSE regarding computer equipment for a person (details supplied) [6516/19]

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

National Children's Hospital

403. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Health if the reports by a company (details supplied) in respect of the national children's hospital will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6521/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have been advised by the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board that, while it has no current plans to publish the report, the report was forwarded to the Clerk of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health on 22 January 2019 for circulation to all members of the Committee following a request for a copy of the report made at the meeting of the Committee on 16 January.

HSE Properties

404. Deputy Joan Collins asked the Minister for Health if he will engage with the HSE to facilitate conservation-led improvements to a location (details supplied) in Dublin 8 and carry out a study of its historical importance, that is, the persons buried there and so on. [6531/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the management of the healthcare property estate, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to you in relation to this matter.

Hospitals Building Programme

405. Deputy Eugene Murphy asked the Minister for Health the status of the planned €7.85 million national rehabilitation unit at Roscommon County Hospital, which was approved in 2015 for a 20-bed unit to be managed in conjunction with the service in Dún Laoghaire; when the design phase will be completed; when construction is expected to commence; if funding for the project is included in the HSE capital plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6532/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of healthcare capital projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this project at Roscommon University Hospital.

Hospitals Building Programme

406. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the status of the progression of capital projects at the Sacred Heart Hospital in Roscommon, Portiuncula University Hospital in Ballinasloe and St. Patrick's Community Hospital in Carrick-on-Shannon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6534/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive is developing its Capital Plan for 2019 which will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 having regard to the limited 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 individual healthcare infrastructure projects such as those referred to in the Deputy's question, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to the current position of each project listed.

Medical Card Eligibility

407. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if eligibility for a medical card for a person (details supplied) will be reviewed in view of the circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6539/19]

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.

Hospital Appointments Status

408. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in obtaining a scan at a clinic in County Galway; the position on the waiting list for same of a person (details supplied); when an appointment will be arranged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6549/19]

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.

National Treatment Purchase Fund Data

409. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Health the amount spent by the NTPF on patients by county in each of the years 2016 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6550/19]

412. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Health the amount of the NTPF budget spent on patients with addresses in County Kerry in each of the years 2016 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6585/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 409 and 412 together.

The information requested by the Deputy is currently being collated by officials in my Department, and will be provided to the Deputy directly as soon as it becomes available.

Hospital Appointments Status

410. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health if a hospital procedure will be expedited for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6559/19]

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.

Ministerial Advisers Data

411. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Health the number of advisers and special advisers employed by his Department in 2017 and 2018 and to date in 2019; the areas of expertise covered by such advisers; the annual salaries associated with same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6573/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The information requested by the Deputy is detailed in the table:

Minister/Minister of State	Number of Special Advisers in 2017	Number of Special Advisers in 2018	Number of Special Advisers in 2019
Simon Harris, T.D.	2	2	2
Finian McGrath, T.D.	2	2	2
Jim Daly, T.D.	1	1	1
Catherine Byrne, T.D.	0	1	1

In accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform instructions to Personnel Officers on Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil, the salaries applicable to my advisers and those of Minister of State Finian McGrath, T.D. (who sits at Cabinet), are the standard scale for the grade of Principal Officer in the Civil Service (€81,661 - €107,548). The salaries applicable to the special advisers appointed to Ministers of State Jim Daly, T.D. and Catherine Byrne, T.D., are the standard scale for the grade of Assistant Principal Officer in the Civil Service (€64,232 - €78,311).

The special advisers are suitably qualified for their roles.

Question No. 412 answered with Question No. 409.

Hospital Transfers

413. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be transferred from University Hospital Galway to the National Rehabilitation Hospital; the reason for the delay; the position of the person on the waiting list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6592/19]

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

Hospital Facilities

414. Deputy James Browne asked the Minister for Health the number of psychiatric in-patient units here with no disabled showers within the unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6593/19]

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.

Written Answers Nos. 415-436

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

415. Deputy Kathleen Funchion asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) continues to be on the waiting list for CAMHS and psychiatric services in view of the circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6599/19]

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.

Counselling Services Provision

416. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting for counselling in primary care in each CHO; and the number of persons waiting between zero to one, one to three, three to six and over six months, respectively [6600/19]

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.

Counselling Services Provision

417. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in County Wexford waiting for counselling in primary care; and the number of persons waiting for counselling in County Wexford between zero to one, one to three, three to six and over six months, respectively [6601/19]

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.

Counselling Services Provision

418. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Minister for Health the number of referrals for counselling in primary care; and the number of sessions offered in each CHO in each of the years since its introduction in 2013 to 2018 and to date in 2019 [6602/19]

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.

Counselling Services Provision

419. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Minister for Health the number of referrals for counselling in primary care; and the number of sessions offered in County Wexford in each of the years since its introduction in 2013 to 2018, inclusive, and to date in 2019 [6603/19]

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 Data

420. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Minister for Health the number of referrals for the self-harm intervention programme; and the number of sessions offered in each CHO in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form [6604/19]

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 Data

421. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Minister for Health the number of referrals for the self-harm intervention programme; and the number of sessions offered in County Wexford in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form [6605/19]

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.

Counselling Services Provision

422. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Minister for Health the budget for counselling in primary care for each CHO in each of the years 2013 to 2018 and to date in 2019 [6606/19]

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 Funding

423. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Minister for Health the budget for the self-harm intervention programme for each CHO in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019 [6607/19]

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 Data

424. Deputy James Browne asked the Minister for Health the number of persons awaiting a transfer from prison to the Central Mental Hospital; the number of patients on the caseload of in-reach teams the hospital provides to the prison service here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6608/19]

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

425. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the high cost of the batteries required to operate cochlear implants; if the batteries are covered by a medical card; and if not, if funding is available to cover the cost. [6611/19]

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

Ambulance Service Staff

426. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Health the number of the 1,800 members of the National Ambulance Service availing of the facility to have union deductions taken by NAS payroll; and the number of members of a union (details supplied) exited on the date on which their subscriptions were ceased in view of the fact that he has access to figures for the deductions. [6617/19]

427. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who were having deductions taken for a trade union (details supplied); and the number of deductions being taken from another union on the date on which union subscriptions for members of a union were ceased. [6618/19]

439. Deputy Joan Collins asked the Minister for Health the number of the 1,800 members of the National Ambulance Service availing of the facility to have union deductions taken by payroll; the figures for the deductions of a union (details supplied) to date; and when the National Ambulance Service payroll ceased deducting trade union fees by the union. [6669/19]

440. Deputy Joan Collins asked the Minister for Health the number of members of the National Ambulance Service who have their deductions taken for unions (details supplied), respectively as of 25 January 2018. [6670/19]

460. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Health the number of personnel employed by the National Ambulance Service; the number that avail of the facility to have union deductions automatically deducted through the NAS payroll system by union across each of the relevant recognised workers' unions, by which they are represented in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6803/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 426, 427, 439, 440 and 460 together.

I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on these matters.

Ambulance Service Staff

428. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Health the number of the 1,800 National Ambulance Service staff involved with direct patient contact; and the number in an administra-

tive role. [6619/19]

441. Deputy Joan Collins asked the Minister for Health the number of the 1,800 National Ambulance Service staff involved with direct patient contact and administrative roles, respectively. [6671/19]

451. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health the number of the 1,800 National Ambulance Service staff involved with direct patient contact and the number in an administrative role, respectively [6757/19]

461. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Health the number of National Ambulance Service personnel involved with direct patient contact; the number of personnel employed in administrative roles; the number of personnel employed in other roles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6804/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 428, 441, 451 and 461 together.

As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

429. 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. [6620/19]

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.

Primary Care Services Provision

430. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Health the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for a primary care certificate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6622/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): As the Deputy's question relates to a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Questions - Written Answers
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Staff

431. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Health the number of vacant posts in whole-time equivalent terms in the CAMHS service for each CHO in tabular form [6623/19]

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

432. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Health when he expects the practice of admitting children and young persons to adult mental health units to cease. [6624/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Despite increasing demands overall on CAMHS, irrespective of the source of referrals, individual cases professionally assessed as requiring urgent access to services receive priority. There has been significant progress on age appropriate admissions since 2008 when there were 247 such admissions to adult units. This declined to 84 admissions in 2018. The number of admissions each year does not necessarily equate to the actual number of children involved, as an individual may be admitted on more than one occasion.

There has to be some operational flexibility surrounding emergency placements in Adult Units, particularly where very short-term placements occur, and where full account is taken of all relevant factors such as the preferences of all those involved, or geographical factors relating to access or visiting. This may in practice be the best care option in at least some cases, bearing in mind all the circumstances. The HSE closely monitors on a weekly basis all child admissions to adult units, with a view to minimising these. It also facilitates insofar as possible transition from CAMHS to Adult services.

Work is underway by the HSE to review existing levels of service provision generally, and to examine international models of best practice on the most appropriate models of delivery for use in the Irish context in order to enhance access to mental health care, including CAMHS. My objective, and that of the HSE, is to further improve all aspects of mental health care nationally for those under age 18, including those relating to access and age appropriate care settings.

HSE Staff Data

433. Deputy Jack Chambers asked the Minister for Health the number of psychologists in post by CHO nationally in tabular form; the target number of psychologists by CHO as advised in A Vision for Change in tabular form; the measures in place to address the shortage of psychologists across the health service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6629/19]

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.

HSE Reports

434. Deputy Alan Kelly asked the Minister for Health when a report (details supplied) on

the review of genetics services here will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6630/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris) : The Donnai-Newman Report on the Review of Genetics Services in Ireland (2014) was commissioned by the HSE to recommend improvements in the governance, management and future development of the genetic services.

In relation to the matter of the publication of this report, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Cancer Screening Programmes

435. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health if a company (details supplied), under its contract to provide cervical screening services to the HSE, outsources some of its work outside of the contract with the HSE to labs in the United States of America; if so, when he and a person were notified of same; the actions that have been taken as a result; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6631/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Following on from the publication of Dr Scally's report on 12 September 2018, he committed to providing a supplementary report into certain further aspects of the laboratories, such as procurement, quality and accreditation arrangements, and governance structures. Terms of reference for the Supplementary Analysis and Report were published on the Department of Health's website in October last year.

I can confirm that Dr Scally indicated to me on 31 January that, in the course of this work, he identified further additional labs which CervicalCheck slides had been sent to. I am awaiting Dr Scally's report, which is expected shortly. I do not intend to pre-empt Dr Scally's report, to which I will give careful consideration in advance of bringing it to Government.

Appointments to State Boards

436. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the number of boards or agencies his officials have been appointed to; if there are guidelines or protocols for members of staff being appointed to boards or agencies; if so, when same were last updated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6648/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The nomination and appointment process for statutory boards under the aegis of my Department is set out in legislation. In line with Government Decision SI80/20/10/1617 of 2014 and Guidelines set out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform relating to the advertising for expressions of interest in vacancies on State Boards, my Department in conjunction with the Public Appointments Service (PAS) currently advertises for board vacancies as they arise, where I, as Minister for Health, have nominating rights under relevant legislation. I also appoint members on the nomination of various bodies, again in accordance with relevant legislation.

At present there are two of my officials who have been appointed by me to serve on statutory boards under the aegis of my Department, one is a member of the National Haemophilia Council, one is a member of National Cancer Registry Board.

The guidelines and protocols which must be followed include the 2016 Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies which refers to the Department of Finance Circular 12/2010: Protocol for Civil Servants nominated to the boards of non-commercial State bodies. Civil Ser-

vants must also comply with the 2008 Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour and any other guidance or protocols which may from time to time be issued.

National Children's Hospital

437. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Health the rationale behind the appointment of a HSE staff member and the appointment of a Department of Public Expenditure and Reform official to the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6656/19]

438. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Health the number of persons appointed to the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board since it was set up in 2007; the expertise of these appointees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6657/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 437 and 438 together.

Established under the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board (Establishment) Order 2007, the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board (NPHDB) is charged with planning, designing, building and equipping the new children's hospital and outpatient and urgent care centres.

The 2007 Order provides that the Board will consist of a Chairperson and 12 ordinary members appointed by the Minister for Health for a period of five years. Of the 12 ordinary members, three shall be appointed to represent the interests of the general public; three shall be appointed on the nomination of the Chairperson; two shall be appointed on the nomination of the Health Service Executive; one shall be appointed on the nomination of Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin; one shall be appointed on the nomination of the Children's University Hospital, Temple Street; one shall be appointed on the nomination of the National Children's Hospital at Tallaght; and one shall be appointed on the nomination of the Faculty of Paediatrics, Royal College of Physicians of Ireland.

In 2007, the Chairperson and ordinary board members that were appointed collectively had wide-ranging experience and expertise in areas such as public and private sector management, capital infrastructure management, finance, ICT, construction, communications, health and hospital management, and paediatric medicine.

Following An Bord Pleanála's refusal for Mater site project an interim Board of officials was appointed in January 2013 until July 2013, when a new Board was appointed to progress the project on the St. James's campus. The skill set associated with the new Board includes construction management, legal expertise, engineering and environmental consultancy, architecture, paediatric medicine, planning, procurement, accountancy, ICT and hospital management. This Board was re-appointed in July 2018 on expiry of their five-year term of office. As noted above, as provided for under the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board (Establishment) Order 2007, two of the Board members are appointed on the nomination of the HSE, and three to represent the interests of the general public. It is under that latter provision that the official from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was appointed.

The Children's Health Act 2018 amended the Board appointment process to better reflect the Board's primary role which is to deliver on the capital project, rather than its previous broader remit which also included operational planning for the services, the latter now being a matter for Children's Health Ireland. To allow for the appointment of a Board under the new provisions sooner than on the expiry of the five-year term of office, the Act also includes a

provision which, when commenced, provides for the cessation of membership of the Board in place at the time of commencement of the provision.

As set out in the NPHDB Annual Reports, a total of 42 individuals have been appointed to the NPHDB to date since its establishment in 2007.

Questions Nos. 439 and 440 answered with Question No. 426.

Question No. 441 answered with Question No. 428.

Services for People with Disabilities

442. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will be placed in a facility as a matter of urgency. [6685/19]

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.

National Children's Hospital Expenditure

443. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health the capital expenditure on the national children's hospital in December 2017; the month that coincided with the European Investment Bank, EIB, confirming its capital investment loan in the same project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6723/19]

444. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health the proportion of the EIB loan approved for the national children's hospital in December 2017 vis-à-vis the complete hospital project. [6724/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 443 and 444 together.

Expenditure on the construction of the new children's hospital and associated outpatient and urgent care centres up to the end of December 2017 was €127.79m. The European Investment Bank is providing a loan of €490 million to Ireland to support the project. This represented 50% of the capital cost estimate in 2017 in respect of this project, which was €983m.

Nursing Staff Provision

445. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if an assessment for the provision of a public health nurse for a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [6728/19]

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.

Questions Nos. 446 and 447 answered with Question No. 339.

Hospital Appointments Status

448. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment for orthodontic treatment with the Health Service Executive. [6740/19]

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

Services for People with Disabilities

449. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the details of funding mechanisms available for the purchase of vehicles for HSE community care facilities in County Donegal providing residential, temporary and respite care to ensure they meet HIQA standards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6742/19]

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.

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

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

Hospital Services

450. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding Dingle Community Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6748/19]

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. 451 answered with Question No. 428.

Ambulance Service Staff

452. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health the number of the 1,800 members of the National Ambulance Service, NAS, availing of the facility to have union deductions taken by NAS payroll. [6758/19]

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

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

453. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Health the reason the drug Daxas is not covered under the medical card scheme; his plans to include this drug under the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6765/19]

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.

National Children's Hospital

454. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the funding received from the European Investment Bank for the construction of the new children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6767/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The European Investment Bank is providing a loan of €490 million to Ireland to support the construction of the new children's hospital on St James Hospital campus and associated outpatient and urgent care centres at Connolly Hospital and Tallaght University Hospital.

Respite Care Services

455. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Health if he will address the respite crisis being experienced for dozens of families at a centre (details supplied); the position regarding the latest reports of an oil leak there; when the centre will be open again and return to full service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6769/19]

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.

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

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

Questions - Written Answers
Hospital Appointments Delays

456. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a date for bariatric surgery; the position of the person on the waiting list; the reason for the delay in providing this treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6770/19]

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 Expenditure

457. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent on the community ophthalmic services scheme in 2016, 2017 and 2018; the budget allocation for same in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6773/19]

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

Health Services Expenditure

458. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the way in which the €3.1 million will be spent in 2019 for the national women and infants health programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6774/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Emergency Departments Services

459. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health the reason the accident and emergency department in St. Michael's Hospital, Dún Laoghaire, cannot accept an ambulance after 6 p.m. despite the fact it is open until 8 p.m.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6801/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Question No. 460 answered with Question No. 426.

Question No. 461 answered with Question No. 428.

Services for People with Disabilities

462. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Health the role he has in the provision and contribution of services for persons experiencing deafness; the commitments he will give to ensure the continuation of services to a society (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6825/19]

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.

People with disabilities, including those who are deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind, can access the broad range of Acute Care, Primary Care and Community based services that are provided by the HSE. They can also avail of specialist disability services, which are provided in a variety of community and residential settings in partnership with service users, their families and carers and a range of statutory, non-statutory and community groups.

There are a number of non-statutory organisations specifically focused on addressing the needs of the deaf community. Services offered include family and support services, assistive technology and assistive listening devices, communication therapy and lip-reading classes, information and advice, sign language classes, and a mental health and deafness service.

Most of these organisations receive funding from the HSE, either through local grants of varying amounts and/or direct funding. The HSE had 35 separate service level agreements with organisations providing services for the deaf or hard of hearing in 2018.

I am aware of the financial difficulties that the Irish Deaf Society is currently experiencing and the concerns regarding its future sustainability.

The Irish Deaf Society focuses its service delivery on advocacy, training and development as distinct from the delivery of health and social care supports to the deaf community and for this reason, it does not receive core-funding from the Health Vote. However, there are a number of other funding options available to the Irish Deaf Society. It has received funding, in the past, from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Education and Skills. It has also received grants from the Department of Justice and Equality and the national lottery.

I am currently working with colleagues in government to see if this issue can be resolved and I remain hopeful of a positive outcome.

Respite Care Services

463. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health if respite care will be provided for a child (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6828/19]

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

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

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

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

National Children's Hospital

464. Deputy Alan Kelly asked the Minister for Health if a copy of all minutes of meetings of the board or sub-committees of the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board held in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, will be provided. [6830/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have been advised by the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board (NPHDB) that documents requested on foot of the Joint Committee on Health meetings on 16, 23, 29 January and 6 February and the Public Accounts Committee on 31 January relating to NPHDB Board minutes for 2017 and 2018, NPHDB Procurement Sub-committee meetings minutes for 2017 and 2018 and NPHDB Finance Sub-committee meetings minutes for 2017 and 2018 have been sent to Committee members through the appropriate Committee Secretariat.

Primary Care Centres

465. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Health the steps he will take to address a shortage of parking at Mullingar primary care centre (details supplied). [6834/19]

466. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Health if an adequate air conditioning system will be installed at the Mullingar primary care centre as part of works which are taking place at the facility. [6835/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 465 and 466 together.

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.

Hospitals Building Programme

467. Deputy Denise Mitchell asked the Minister for Health the status of the plan for a new emergency department and the reconfiguration of the existing department at Beaumont Hospital under Project Ireland 2040; if the overrun in spending in the national children's hospital is expected to impact the commencement date of the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6840/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 and beyond having regard to the available capital funding, the number of large national capital projects currently under way 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. Once the HSE has finalised its Capital Plan for 2019, it will then be submitted to me for consideration.

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 issues you raised concerning the proposed new emergency department at Beaumont University Hospital.

Hospitals Capital Programme

468. Deputy Denise Mitchell asked the Minister for Health the status of the plan for a 20-bed purpose built cystic fibrosis inpatient facility at Beaumont Hospital under Project Ireland 2040; if the overrun in spending at the national children's hospital is expected to impact the commencement date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6841/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 and beyond 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. Once the HSE has finalised its Capital Plan for 2019, it will then be submitted to me for consideration.

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 issues you raised concerning the proposed purpose built cystic fibrosis in-patient facility at Beaumont University Hospital.

Hospitals Capital Programme

469. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €79 million allocation for 2019 for the National Rehabilitation Hospital redevelopment; the date in 2019 it will be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6863/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 and beyond 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. Once the HSE has finalised its Capital Plan for 2019, it will then be submitted to me for consideration.

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 issues you raised concerning the capital development at the National Rehabilitation Hospital.

Questions - Written Answers
Hospitals Capital Programme

470. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €55 million allocation for 2019 for the Cork University Hospital radiation oncology unit; the date in 2019 the unit will be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6864/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 and beyond 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. Once the HSE has finalised its Capital Plan for 2019, it will then be submitted to me for consideration.

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 issues you raised concerning the Cork University Hospital radiation oncology unit.

Hospitals Capital Programme

471. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €31 million allocation for 2019 for the Waterford University Hospital ward block; the date in 2019 the ward will be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6865/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 and beyond 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. Once the HSE has finalised its Capital Plan for 2019, it will then be submitted to me for consideration.

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 issues you raised concerning the new ward block at Waterford University Hospital.

Hospitals Capital Programme

472. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €15 million allocation for 2019 for the Naas endoscopy suite; the date in 2019 the building of the suite will commence; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6866/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 and beyond having regard to the available capital funding, the number of large national capital projects currently under way 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. Once the HSE has finalised

its Capital Plan for 2019, it will then be submitted to me for consideration.

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 issues you raised concerning capital developments at Naas General Hospital.

Hospitals Capital Programme

473. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €13 million allocation for 2019 for Sligo acute mental health; the date in 2019 the project is expected to begin; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6867/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 and beyond 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. Once the HSE has finalised its Capital Plan for 2019, it will then be submitted to me for consideration.

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 issues you raised concerning the new mental health unit at Sligo University Hospital.

Hospitals Capital Programme

474. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €12 million allocation for 2019 for the Letterkenny rebuild; the date in 2019 the rebuild will be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6868/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 and beyond 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. Once the HSE has finalised its Capital Plan for 2019, it will then be submitted to me for consideration.

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 issues you raised concerning capital developments at Letterkenny University Hospital.

Hospitals Capital Programme

475. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €4 million allocation for 2019 for the Clonmel ward accommodation and outpatients department; the date in 2019 these projects will commence; if they will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6869/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 and beyond 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. Once the HSE has finalised its Capital Plan for 2019, it will then be submitted to me for consideration.

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 issues you raised concerning the ward accommodation and outpatients department at South Tipperary General Hospital, Clonmel.

Hospitals Capital Programme

476. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €4 million allocation for 2019 for the Sligo central sterile services department; the date in 2019 the project is expected to begin; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6870/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 and beyond 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. Once the HSE has finalised its Capital Plan for 2019, it will then be submitted to me for consideration.

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 issues you raised concerning the Sligo central sterile services department.

Hospitals Capital Programme

477. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €160 million allocation for 2019 for the national forensic mental hospital on the Portrane campus; the date in 2019 the project is expected to be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6871/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 and beyond 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. Once the HSE has finalised its Capital Plan for 2019, it will then be submitted to me for consideration.

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 issues you raised concerning the National Forensic Mental Hospital.

Hospitals Capital Programme

478. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the €295 million allocation for 2019 for the national maternity hospital; the date in 2019 when the project will begin; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6872/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 and beyond 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. Once the HSE has finalised its Capital Plan for 2019, it will then be submitted to me for consideration.

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 issues you raised concerning the national maternity hospital project.

National Children's Hospital Status

479. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Health when the paediatric outpatients and urgent care centre at Connolly Hospital Blanchardstown will open in 2019; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6873/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Development is well advanced on the paediatric outpatients and urgent care centres. 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 also underway with the centre scheduled to open in 2020.

The HSE National Service Plan for 2019 identifies as a priority the need to oversee the children's hospital development and development of paediatric services. This includes opening the new centre at Connolly in 2019, including the recruitment of the relevant staff to support the expansion of a consultant-delivered workforce and increased capacity through additional outpatient clinics. As set out in the 2019 HSE National Service Plan, development funding of €6.7m has been provided for a number of specific paediatric service initiatives, this includes revenue funding for the further recruitment of the workforce for the paediatric outpatients and urgent care centre on the campus shared with Connolly Hospital.

A total of 13 consultant posts are required and were approved by the Department of Health to support the opening of the Paediatric Outpatients and Urgent Care Centre at Connolly. Children's Health Ireland, CHI, has confirmed that to date 10 of these positions have been filled and recruitment is ongoing for the remaining posts. Recruitment for nursing, HSCPS and administrative positions at the Centre is also at an advanced stage.

While it is acknowledged that there are recruitment challenges nationally, and internationally, in certain specialties such as radiology and this challenge has been shared by CHI, recruitment is ongoing, and Children's Health Ireland at Connolly is on schedule to open in July 2019.

National Children's Hospital Expenditure

480. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Health the amount paid to each contractor to date regarding the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6923/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board has statutory responsibility for planning, designing, building, furnishing and equipping the new children's hospital, I have asked it Board to respond to you directly.

Medicinal Products Expenditure

481. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Health the cost per patient by year of the FreeStyle Libre diabetes monitoring system. [6924/19]

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.

Medicinal Products Expenditure

482. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Health the cost per patient by year of the aids needed for finger prick blood glucose monitoring, including the testing strips, lancets and electronic glucose meters [6925/19]

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.

Medicinal Products Availability

483. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Health his plans to place the FreeStyle Libre system on the long-term illness scheme for persons with type 1 diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6926/19]

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.

Medical Card Applications

484. Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Health the status of a medical card application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6931/19]

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.

Dental Services Provision

485. Deputy Frank O'Rourke asked the Minister for Health the timeline and the anticipated official opening date of the new HSE dental clinic in Celbridge, County Kildare, which is undergoing refurbishment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6936/19]

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

General Practitioner Contracts

486. Deputy Willie O'Dea asked the Minister for Health the position regarding FEMPI cuts on general practitioners; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6937/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the General Medical Services (GMS) contract, GPs are reimbursed for a range of services they provide to medical card and GP visit card holders. GPs are remunerated for these services primarily on a capitation basis, with a range of additional support payments and fees for specific items of service. GPs are also remunerated for services they provide on behalf of the HSE under other public health schemes, such as the Maternity and Infant Care Scheme, Primary Childhood Immunisation Scheme, etc.

The Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Act 2009 imposed a range of adjustments to health contractor payments. These included different levels of reductions to various GP fees and allowances and the elimination of certain payments.

Despite reductions to the payment rates of health contractors made under FEMPI legislation, the total fees paid to GPs under the GMS scheme have increased from just over €472 million in 2009 to approximately €525 million in 2017. This increase in fees is largely due to significant developments and investment in GP services introduced in recent years, with more services being made available to our citizens and additional financial support provided by the HSE.

The Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017 now allows the setting and varying of contractor payments on a non-emergency statutory basis. It is my intention to put in place a new multi annual approach to fees in return for service improvements and contractual reforms based upon health policy considerations and engagement with representative bodies.

Officials from my Department and the HSE are currently engaged in talks with the Irish Medical Organisation in relation to the reform and modernisation of the GMS contract. Agreement on the delivery of service improvements and contractual reform has the potential to facilitate a substantial increase in the resourcing of general practice on a multi annual basis. Of course, any agreement must benefit patients and provide value for the taxpayer.

In line with the long-established approach to such processes, and by agreement of the parties concerned, I am not in a position to give further details while engagement between the parties is underway.

Home Help Service Provision

487. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Health the status of a panel in CHO area 8 to fill home help positions; the number of positions filled to date from this panel; and when

further recruitment will take place. [6939/19]

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

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

488. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the repairs policy in place for wheelchair users when repairs are required to their wheelchairs in the Waterford city area; the recommended and average timeframe for repairs to take place at present; if further delays are encountered depending on the monetary value of the estimated repair bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6953/19]

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

Primary Care Centres Provision

489. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a development (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6956/19]

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.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Provision

490. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health when a building (details supplied) will be opened; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6957/19]

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 Equipment

491. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a project (details supplied) in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6958/19]

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 at Wexford General Hospital.

Healthcare Infrastructure Provision

492. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the details of each building project contained in the capital plan at each development stage, including new builds, extensions and improvements; the cost of each project by county in tabular form; and if he will make a

statement on the matter. [6959/19]

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.

Hospital Appointments Status

493. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** 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. [6970/19]

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.

National Children's Hospital Expenditure

494. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the amount of money spent to date on the national children's hospital; the breakdown of money spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6976/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The breakdown of capital expenditure on the new children's hospital project from 2013 to 2018 is as follows:

2013 €1.70m

2014 €6.93m

2015 €20.77m

2016 €30.64m

2017 €67.75m

2018 €107.85m

Total €235.64m

As previously advised to the Deputy the total expenditure at September 2018 was €197.80m and the above expenditure is to the end of 2018.

Questions - Written Answers
Cancer Screening Programmes

495. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding a cervical smear test; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6979/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Smear test samples must be sent to the laboratory and made into slides within six weeks of the smear test date. After six weeks, the sample is deemed expired and cannot be processed. Although every effort is made to avoid these situations from happening, it is inevitable that cervical screening programmes will sometimes encounter these issues; in some cases, the increased volume of smear tests in 2018 resulted in a delay transferring samples to slides.

However, in the period April to December 2018, a proportion of overall cervical screening samples were not transferred to slides within the six-week timeframe. Repeat testing was required in 550 cases or 0.25% of total samples. This compares with a rate of 0.23% for the same period in 2017. In line with normal practice where this occurs, CervicalCheck contacted these women, and their GPs, to inform them of this issue and to invite them to attend a repeat smear test in three months' time (repeat tests can only be carried out three months after the last test to allow time for cells to grow back).

The Deputy will be aware of the increase in the volume of smear tests in 2018. This followed on from a period of significant concern for women. This includes women who have availed of out of cycle tests, following my request to CervicalCheck to make the necessary arrangements to enable them to do so without charge where their GP considered they should have a further test as part of their reassurance. I am advised it also includes a greater number of women presenting for scheduled screening. This increased level of engagement with the programme is welcome.

However, the increased demand has undoubtedly put immense pressure on lab capacity and turnaround times. This is a priority concern for my Department and the HSE. 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.

The development time for cervical cancer is between ten and fifteen years, so it is important that women of screening age attend for cervical screening each time they are invited to participate. The HSE has advised that in this context, a delay in the return of cervical screening results, whilst undesirable, is not necessarily dangerous and poses a very low risk to women.

Treatment Abroad Scheme

496. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients who have utilised the treatment abroad fund in County Tipperary and nationally in 2016, 2017 and 2018, in tabular form; the five main illnesses that were treated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6990/19]

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.

Question No. 497 answered with Question No. 346.

498. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has not heard from health professionals on the matter; and the reason the health system is failing the person. [7003/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible in relation to the health elements of this question.

Cancer Screening Programmes

499. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has not received test results; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7004/19]

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 pressure on lab capacity and turnaround times.

The HSE has been working actively with the labs to manage this issue and to improve turnaround times for smear tests. 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, which will 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.

The HSE advises that the CervicalCheck Programme has recently agreed with laboratories to prioritise those slides which originate from women who attended colposcopy, as this cohort of women are considered to have the most serious need.

In relation to the specific case raised by the Deputy, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to him.

Mental Health Policy

500. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 432 of 16 October 2019, the status of the model of care for dual diagnosis the first draft of which was scheduled for discussion during the January 2019 meeting of the national working group; if further consideration has been given to the selection of County Louth as a demonstration site for a dual diagnosis practitioner; the number of demonstration sites that will be selected; and the timeframe for the roll-out of the demonstration sites. [7009/19]

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

501. **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. [7015/19]

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.

Disabilities Assessments

502. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an assessment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7017/19]

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.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

503. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health his plans to introduce legislation to amend the nursing home subvention scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7023/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The proposed policy change to the Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS), to cap contributions from farm assets at 3 years where a family successor commits to working the productive asset, has been approved by Government. My Department is working on the development of draft Heads of Bill while considering a number of complex ancillary policy and operational matters which may need to be addressed in the proposed legislation.

It is intended that this proposed policy change, the 3 year cap, will be extended to eligible existing participants in long term residential care so that they are not disadvantaged, but that there would be no retrospective recoupment of contributions for those who have paid contribu-

tions over and above the 3 year period.

A draft General Scheme of a Bill is currently with legal advisers for advice and legal quality control review. Subject to legal advice, I expect to bring the heads of bill to Government soon. The changes to the Scheme will come into effect in 2019 subject to the legislative process.

National Children's Hospital

504. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the recent opening of an 18,000 sq. m, 148-bed, state-of-the-art children's hospital in Germany (details supplied). [7027/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The new children's hospital project includes a hospital on the St James's campus and two outpatient and urgent care centres on the campuses shared with Connolly and Tallaght Hospitals. Together, they will provide all secondary, or less specialised, acute paediatric care for children from the Greater Dublin Area. Furthermore this hospital will also be the single national tertiary/quaternary centre for highly specialised paediatric care for children from all over Ireland with the critical mass to deliver best outcomes.

The Outpatient and Urgent Care Centres will improve geographic access to urgent care for children in the Greater Dublin Area. Consultant-led urgent care, with 4-6 hour observation beds, appropriate diagnostics and secondary outpatient services including rapid access general paediatric clinics as well as child sexual abuse unit examination, observation and therapy rooms will be provided in the Outpatient and Urgent Care Centres. The centre at Connolly will also include two HSE paediatric care primary care dental services operating theatres.

An international cost benchmarking study commissioned by the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board to identify construction costs for similar large scale international hospital projects, sourced data provided in relation to 10 projects ranging in size from 45,000 sq.m to 350,000 sq.m. The report concluded that, in terms of cost per sq.m, the new children's hospital was at the higher end but aligned with similar projects, reflecting that the cost per sq.m of €6,500 matches international norms.

The cost per sq.m range is inevitably impacted by the individual briefs for each of these projects and the limitations of international cost benchmarking generally. There are challenges in drawing cost comparisons between the national children's hospital due to be completed in 2022 and an 18,000 square metre 148 bed, children's hospital in Germany which is already open. With its focus on education, research and innovation, the new children's hospital will also be a research-intensive academic healthcare institution, which creates a path between the patient, the classroom and the laboratory. In relation to bed numbers, the number and breakdown in type of bed across the three sites reflects the new model of care which has been planned and designed in a sustainable manner to deliver modern paediatric care now and into the future.

Health Services Staff

505. Deputy John McGuinness asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 814 of 15 January 2019 and the reply issued by the HSE on 22 January 2019, the further meetings that have taken place between the staff concerned, the union and the HSE to help resolve all outstanding issues and fully deal with the Labour Court recommendations; if a redundancy package has been offered to employees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7036/19]

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

National Children's Hospital

506. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health his views on a series of matters (details supplied) relating to the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7040/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to maternity co-location, as has been outlined already, it is proposed to relocate the Coombe Women & Infants University Hospital to the St James's Hospital campus, thereby achieving tri-location of adult, paediatric and maternity services. A site for the proposed maternity hospital is identified in the Site Master Plan, and the new children's hospital design has incorporated the required operational links with both the maternity and adult hospitals. While the construction of the new maternity hospital will not commence until the new children's hospital is completed, work will begin to move ahead with the project brief for that hospital.

In relation to theatres - the new hospital will include 22 operating theatres and procedure rooms, a significant increase on current theatre capacity. In relation to the other issues identified in the Deputy's question relating to baths, hotdesks, car parking and Code of Ethical Business Conduct, as these are operational matters, I have asked Children's Health Ireland to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Services

507. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a copy of a report (details supplied) into the future and long-term sustainability of three community hospitals in County Donegal; if he will provide a copy of other relevant documents relating to the decision to maintain the long-stay accommodation units in all three community hospitals and recent reports into the future of the long-term accommodation units and capacity at these three hospitals that were conducted internally in the HSE or his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7099/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As outlined on 7 November 2018 at a meeting with public representatives and local delegations the policy position adopted in 2015 to replace St Joseph's, Stranorlar and Ramelton Community Nursing Unit has now been officially revised. The HSE's Social Care Directorate and its National Capital and Property Steering Group have accepted recommendations from HSE CHO 1 to retain and upgrade both facilities, in the context of future capacity requirements for these areas. This revises the original decision to replace the existing long stay residential beds on both sites as part of the Capital Investment Programme for Public Residential Care Centres for Older People 2016. It further revises the scale of the proposed new unit at Letterkenny from the original 130 beds to 110 beds. Importantly, the decision to revise the proposals was informed not just by the technical and feasibility studies in relation to the physical infrastructure in these two sites but also on the basis of a broader analysis of population projections and National Planning norms carried out by the HSE.

The need for additional beds and the potential to develop a replacement facility to the existing community nursing unit in Lifford will be reviewed further post 2021, when new Census data is available and the Health Service Capacity Review and the National Development Plan

have been advanced. The existing unit at Lifford will continue to operate in the intervening period. As I advised at the November meeting, I welcome the community continuing to engage with the HSE at local level, in the first instance, as appropriate, regarding further ideas and proposals for community based options that may be considered.

As the reports referred to by the Deputy were commissioned by the HSE I have forwarded this aspect of his request to the Executive for direct reply.

Primary Care Centres

508. Deputy John Curran asked the Minister for Health if funding will be made available in 2019 to ensure work commences on the primary healthcare centre at Rowlagh, Clondalkin, Dublin 22 in view of the budgetary overrun on the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7107/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 and beyond 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.

Once the HSE has finalised its Capital Plan for 2019, it will then be submitted to me for consideration.

Medicinal Products Data

509. Deputy John Curran asked the Minister for Health the number of persons that have been in receipt of Suboxone in each of the past five years; the number receiving Suboxone; if an evaluation of the treatment has been undertaken; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7108/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Drug Treatment Programmes Data

510. Deputy John Curran asked the Minister for Health the expenditure and allocations attributable to drugs programmes that were made available in each of the past five years; the projects and programmes supported by the funding in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7110/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): The Department of Health allocated funding of almost €100m to the HSE for addiction services in 2019 in line with their 2019 Service Plan. The HSE National Service Plan 2018 sets out the type and volume of health and social care services to be provided by the Health Service Executive in 2019, having regard to the funding allocated. In addition, the Department provided €28m to Drug and Alcohol Task Forces through various channels of funding, including the HSE.

Questions - Written Answers

The attached table outlines the allocations and expenditure for the drug programmes directly funded by the Department of Health for the period 2014 to 2018.

I am committed to providing additional resources to enhance service provision under the national drugs strategy. These resources should be directed towards those interventions which are most likely to lead to a reduction in problem substance use and positive improvement in public health, safety and wellbeing.

Department of Health - Drug Programmes Allocations and Expenditure 2014-2018

	2018 Allocation	2018 Expenditure	2017 Allocation	2017 Expenditure	2016 Allocation
14 LDTFs	€4,145,518.00	€4,126,093.54	€4,145,518.00	€4,061,876.00	€4,145,518.00
10 RDTFs	€1,107,690.00	€1,105,522.00	€1,107,690.00	€1,062,659.00	€974,874.00
National Family Support Network	€152,048.00	€169,483.00	€152,048.00	€170,158.00	€152,048.00
CityWide	€206,118.00	€206,118.00	€209,181.00	€206,118.00	€209,181.00
Health Research Board (NACD pre 2018)	€400,000.00	€400,000.00	€388,000.00	€67,782.06	€388,000.00
City of Dublin Youth Services Board	€50,000.00	€50,000.00	€50,000.00	€50,000.00	€50,000.00
Task Force Initiatives	€245,000.00	€245,000.00			
Alcohol Initiative	€250,000.00	€0.00			
Youth Services	€250,000.00	€0.00			
Total	€6,806,374	€6,302,217	€6,052,437	€5,618,593	€5,919,621

	2016 Expenditure	2015 Allocation	2015 Expenditure	2014 Allocation	2014 Expenditure
14 LDTFs	€4,138,145.50	€4,143,987.00	€4,074,365.89	€4,089,400.00	€4,025,086.41
10 RDTFs	€971,581.50	€974,874.00	€973,537.00	€972,574.00	€955,504.00
National Family Support Network	€170,158.00	€152,048.00	€170,553.27	€152,048.00	€170,051.00
CityWide	€209,181.00	€209,181.00	€209,181.00	€209,181.00	€209,181.00
Health Research Board (NACD pre 2018)	€57,441.00	€388,000.00	€389,489.51	€388,000.00	€380,837.00
City of Dublin Youth Services Board	€50,000.00	€50,000.00	€50,000.00	€50,000.00	€50,000.00
Task Force Initiatives					
Alcohol Initiative					
Youth Services					
Total	€5,596,507	€5,918,090	€5,867,127	€5,861,203	€5,790,659

Drug Treatment Programmes Data

511. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the expenditure and allocations attributable to the drugs programmes made by the HSE for each of the past five years; the projects and programmes supported by the funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7116/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Procedures

512. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding a service level agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7131/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

513. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Health when an assessment of need report will be issued in respect of a child (details supplied) in County Cork; when the child will have a CAMHS assessment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7133/19]

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.

Hospitals Data

514. Deputy Alan Kelly asked the Minister for Health if funding is being provided in the 2019 capital plan for the new 60-bed modular unit at University Hospital Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7134/19]

515. Deputy Alan Kelly asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 721 of 15 January 2019, if the reply is accurate in view of his comments at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health regarding the proposed new 60-bed modular unit for University Hospital Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7135/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 514 and 515 together.

Last autumn I announced that a modular ward block would be built at University Hospital Limerick to provide interim patient accommodation. This 60 bed ward block will have 3 wards comprising of 20 single room occupancy with en-suite facilities, two of which will be full isolation facilities. The additional 60 beds will also directly increase capacity allowing patients access to an increased number of beds and improve patient flow across the hospital.

As I outlined to the Deputy at the Oireachtas Health Committee on 6th February, the modular ward block at University Hospital Limerick will go ahead as part of the capital plan.

The HSE reply to your previous parliamentary question is accurate in pointing out that the Capital Plan is yet to be finalised.

Medical Negligence Cases

516. Deputy James Browne asked the Minister for Health if the period allowable for compensation claims for negligence within the health service will be extended from two to five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7140/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The current limitation period, in respect of a clinical negligence action, is 2 years from the date of incident giving rise to the claim or the date of knowledge i.e. when the injured person first learnt that his/her injury was related to the clinical negligence event.

I understand that Part 15 of the Legal Services Regulation Act, 2015, which provides for a pre-action protocol for use in clinical negligence cases, is set to amend the Statute of Limitations (Amendment) Act, 1991 in respect of clinical negligence actions by increasing the current 2 year limitation period to 3 years. This follows a recommendation made by the Working Group on Medical Negligence and Periodic Payments in 2012 while also being intended to enable potential claimants to engage in the new pre-action protocol process. Preparations for the commencement of Part 15 and the issue of the relevant regulations by the Minister for Justice and Equality are at an advanced stage.

Brexit Issues

517. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has formally met with the farming organisations here and in Northern Ireland to discuss the implications of Brexit for the sector; if so, the details of these meetings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7124/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Within two weeks of the UK Referendum result in 2016, I established a Stakeholders Consultative Committee as a forum through which a full exchange of information between my Department and the range of farming, agri-food and fisheries stakeholders in Ireland could take place as the Brexit process unfolds. To date the Committee has met on 10 occasions. Some 31 different stakeholder groups have been represented at these meetings, including the main farming organisations.

I have also taken the opportunity through the All-Island Civic Dialogue process to discuss with the farming organisations here the challenges presented by Brexit, and of course have met with them on a regular basis outside of these formal occasions to monitor and discuss developments. This engagement has been very useful in helping not only to quantify the scale of the challenge facing the agri-food sector, and to discuss possible approaches to preparedness and contingency planning, but it has also helped to inform my approach to the negotiations, through the whole-of-Government approach being co-ordinated by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

While I have not had any formal meetings with the main Northern Ireland farming organisations, I have on occasion met with representatives of these organisations through the All Island Civic Dialogue process, and in the context of discussing developments with political representatives from the Oireachtas and from the Northern Ireland assembly. Discussion at these meetings has generally focused on the Irish Government's commitment to the avoidance of a hard border on the island of Ireland and discussion around the main asks of the negotiations from the Government's perspective, including continued access to the UK market without tariffs, and with minimal additional customs and administrative procedures.

Organic Farming Scheme Payments

518. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when an organic farming scheme payment will be made available to a farmer (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6246/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Issues in respect of the 2017 Organic Farming Scheme balancing payment for the person named have now been resolved. As a consequence, the 2017 Organic Farming Scheme balancing payment will issue shortly. Upon satisfactory completion of the necessary validations in respect of the 2018 Organic Farming Scheme payment for the person named, the 2018 payment will issue shortly thereafter.

Agriculture Scheme Eligibility

519. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a degree in agricultural food science is not recognised for the green certificate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6249/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The recognition of education qualifications to qualify for trained farmers status is an operational matter in the first instance for Teagasc.

Revenue Leaflet SD2B lists the agricultural courses that qualify trained farmers for certain scheme payments and tax incentives. The minimum education qualification is Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications as validated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). Holders of the Teagasc Green Cert (Level 6) qualify for “trained farmer” status.

Teagasc can validate agricultural degrees not included in schedule SD2B to assess equivalence to approved awards listed in the schedule. In order to be deemed eligible for inclusion in SD2B, the award must meet minimum standards of agricultural content. A copy of the award syllabus and content must be included with the application as evidence of the required agricultural curriculum.

Further information regarding the validation process is available from local Teagasc education staff.

Hen Harriers Threat Response Plan

520. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers in County Tipperary that have applied for the hen harrier scheme; the number that have been paid; the maximum and average payment made, respectively; his plans to take more farmers into the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6274/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Hen Harrier Programme is operationally independent of my Department and is run by the Hen Harrier Project team. The information below has been sourced from them.

The number of farmers with Tipperary herd numbers who have applied to join the Hen Harrier Programme is 129.

The number under contract is 59; 51 of those have been paid and the remaining eight will receive their payment shortly.

The maximum amount paid out was €8,216.30 and the average amount paid out was €3,045.52.

These payments represent the habitat component only of the Hen Harrier Programme; fur-

ther payments will be made in respect of the Hen Harrier Programme next month. Participants are currently applying for the Supporting Actions payment which will be paid in the Autumn. All of these payments are in addition to GLAS Hen Harrier payments where applicable.

The Hen Harrier Team have resumed their selection process of participants and a further 17 applicants with Tipperary herd numbers were selected in January 2019. Further selections will be made in February, March and April 2019.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Eligibility

521. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if farmers who have been taken out of the ANC scheme are informed of the reasons they have been excluded in order that they can mount an appeal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6275/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Further to the completion of the review of eligible lands under the Areas of Natural Constraints (ANC) scheme, which was required by EU regulation, my Department has written to all impacted farmers advising of the status of their lands under the 2019 ANC scheme. These letters included a form to instigate an appeal. The appeals form is also available on www.agriculture.gov.ie.

For any farmer who wishes to appeal the status of a particular townland under the 2019 ANC scheme, an independently chaired appeals process is available. Should a farmer wish to make such an appeal, my Department will provide full information in relation to the data underpinning the status of the townland in order that an appeal can be based on full information. There is no set closing date for receipt of these appeal forms but applicants should lodge their appeals without delay so that appeals can be processed promptly.

Applicants are also advised to ensure that they apply for the 2019 ANC scheme when they make their online application in the coming weeks.

Fisheries Protection

522. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a matter relating to the catching of dogfish (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6281/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The current prohibition on landing picked dogfish, also known as spurdog, in all EU waters is due to the current condition of the stock. The stock was subject to high harvest rates for more than four decades, and fisheries were not managed during this time. While dogfish is showing some signs of recovery from the historical lows of the mid 2000s, the period is very short in comparison to the longer-term historical decline.

The spawning biomass of this species is at an extremely low level, although conservation measures in recent years have had an impact in terms of stabilising the decline. The species is a long-lived, slow growing and late maturing species and is, therefore, particularly vulnerable to over-fishing. The scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) is that there should be no targeted fisheries in 2019 and 2020 and that any possible provision for landing of by-catch should only happen as part of a management plan, including close monitoring of the stock and fisheries. ICES also states that, based on medium term pro-

jections, any bycatch should not exceed 2,468 tonnes in total for EU and Norwegian waters.

For 2019, there is a very limited quota available (53t for Ireland) for use only in pilot schemes designed to reduce such by-catches. Any such schemes are subject to EU Commission approval and must relate to reducing by-catches of dogfish in other fisheries i.e. the targeting of dogfish would remain prohibited. Such a scheme for dogfish avoidance was explored by the Marine Institute and, following consultation with industry, a draft pilot scheme was submitted for review to the Commission's Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF).

STECF raised a number of queries about the proposed scheme, in particular on whether or not it would result in a reduction in catches of dogfish relative to the catches that would occur in the absence of a scheme. Having considered the STECF comments and concerns, the Marine Institute reviewed the draft scheme and has now advised that Ireland should not proceed further with the dogfish avoidance scheme but rather work collaboratively with other Member States and the Commission to explore possible bycatch reduction management measures. On the basis of the available scientific advice, there is no possibility of reintroducing a targeted fishery.

Organic Farming

523. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the national and sectoral targets under the new strategy for the development of the organic food sector here in tabular form. [6289/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The new Organic Strategy which was launched last week by my colleague, Minister Doyle, is a strategy for the development of the Organic Food Sector for the period up to 2025. This period coincides with the Food Wise 2025 Strategy which is the over- arching strategy for the Irish food and drink sector and allies it to the stated aims contained therein, to drive added value for Irish agricultural produce. The Strategic Objective of the new Organic Strategy is to create a consumer led viable Organic Food Sector in Ireland, enhancing the sustainability credentials of Irish Food, which will produce a wide range of organic products to meet increasing domestic and export market opportunities.

The targets per subsector are outlined hereunder as requested:

Sub Sector	Target
Cereals & Pulses	To increase the area under organic cereals and pulses from 2,426 hectares in 2017 to 5,000 hectares
Dairy	To increase organic milk production annually by 10% over the lifetime of the plan with more significant increases possible thereafter.
Horticulture	To encourage import substitution where possible and increase the area under organic horticulture from 524 hectares in 2017 to 750 hectares.
Beef	To increase organic cattle production from 0.8% of total cattle in 2016 to 1.6%
Sheep	To maximise organic sales to match current levels and pattern of supply, through a marketing campaign focussed on peak supply periods.
Aquaculture	To increase the quantity of salmon produced to organic standards from 20,000 tonnes to 26,000 tonnes.
Poultry/Eggs	To increase the area under organic cereals and pulses will impact positively on the potential for increased organic poultry.

The targets set for the individual sub-sectors recognise the importance of promoting organic

food production not alone having regard to market demand but also the imperative of climate change mitigation and biodiversity protection requirements. However, the targets recognise the current very low production levels and are set at a level to build a platform for further increases. In this context the Organic Sector Strategy group recommended that the targets should be subject to review after five years.

Forestry Premium Payments

524. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount and percentage of forestry payments received in 2018 by farmers and non-farmers, respectively under the Forestry Programme 2014-2020. [6290/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The current Forestry Programme (2014-2020) commenced in 2015 and offers an ambitious and attractive set of forestry measures aimed at increasing timber production and continuing to provide up to 12,000 jobs in the forestry sector while at the same time improving the quality of the natural environment. The afforestation scheme offers a fixed grant towards the costs, subject to the maximum laid down in the scheme's terms and conditions. In addition, annual premiums are payable to new forests which qualify for an afforestation grant for a maximum period of 15 years.

There is no distinction between the rate paid to farmers and non-farmers under the 2014-2020 Forestry Programme as the aim is to make the afforestation scheme accessible to all landowners. It should be noted that the category of non-farmer below includes those with an association with farming and includes retired farmers, sons and daughters of farmers or other relatives who have inherited land and wish to retain their connection with the land. For this reason, I am satisfied that the bulk of payments are paid to and remain in rural Ireland.

The table below shows the breakdown by farmer/non-farmer of the payments in 2018.

Annual premiums paid 2018

	Farmer	Non-Farmer
Payments made (€000)	€12,872	€10,417
% payment	55%	45%

It is worth noting that farmers have established 66% of forestry planted to date under the Forestry Programme 2014 - 2020.

Brexit Preparations

525. Deputy Eugene Murphy asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the relevant departmental officials have spoken to their counterparts in the UK with regard to food production and the transport of raw materials such as milk from Northern Ireland to here for processing and re-exporting of manufacturing products to England as a result of Brexit; his plans in place in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6324/19]

531. Deputy Eugene Murphy asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a co-ordinated approach in respect of food imports and exports for SMEs to Northern Ireland and the UK in the event of a no-deal Brexit has been developed; and if he will make a statement on

the matter. [6509/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 525 and 531 together.

Among the priorities set by the Irish Government at the outset in relation to the Brexit negotiations was the protection of the Good Friday Agreement, and the avoidance of a hard border on the island of Ireland.

The position of the Irish Government continues to be that it is not preparing for a hard border on the island of Ireland and that the only way to ensure an orderly withdrawal of the UK from the EU is for the UK Parliament to ratify the Withdrawal Agreement, with its backstop provisions, as already endorsed by the UK Government and the European Council.

Consequently neither I nor my officials have been involved with Northern Ireland representatives in developing a coordinated approach in respect of food imports and exports for SMEs to Northern Ireland in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

However, I and my officials have been working hard, in conjunction with other Departments and Agencies, to ensure the minimum possible disruption to the movement of agrifood products between Ireland and Great Britain, while at the same time discharging our obligations under EU legislation.

The requirements in this area are significant, and arise in relation to the carrying out of documentary, identity and physical checks on imports of animals, plants, and products of animal and plant origin, as set out in EU legislation. It is also possible that there could be significant export certification requirements in respect of exports of agri-food and fisheries products to the UK post-Brexit.

Work in this regard has been focused on three key areas, namely, infrastructure, staffing and information technology, and in three key locations, that is Dublin Port, Rosslare Port and Dublin Airport.

I am confident that the state will be in a position to apply the relevant measures at the appropriate time.

Meat Processing Plant Inspections

526. Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the return to service protocol to be followed by the authorised officer to allow a mechanical grading machine to be returned to full service (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6412/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2017/1184 of 20 April 2017 governs the monitoring of carcase classification, carcase presentation and weighing.

In order to determine that the performance of a classification machine is within tolerance, authorised classification officers conduct a classification exercise on a minimum of 100 carcasses at each inspection. The unannounced checks verify the ongoing accuracy of the automated beef grading methods by using a system of points and limits defined in EU legislation.

When any mechanical system is found to be working outside of these tolerances, the meat plants concerned are instructed to revert to manual grading. The factory must then arrange for

the machine to be serviced. When this service is completed, the Department is notified and will then proceed to conduct a further classification exercise (min 100 carcasses) to confirm that it is working within the legal tolerances.

In all cases where a factory is instructed to revert to manual grading, manual grading is initiated and this is advised to farmers through their remittance dockets.

Meat Processing Plant Inspections

527. Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of occasions in 2018 during the course of an unannounced inspection an FBO was asked to check and record the accuracy of the weighing scales used for the purposes of weighing a carcase in the presence of the authorised officer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6413/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2017/1184 of 20 April 2017 governs the monitoring of carcase classification, carcase presentation and weighing.

In 2018 there were 548 inspections conducted in 32 factories classifying carcasses.

The FBO is asked to check and record the accuracy of the weighing scales used for the purposes of weighing a carcass in the presence of the authorised officer at all inspections.

Bord Bia

528. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the date by which the 2018 Bord Bia annual report will be published; and if the report will be of the same format and contain the same type of information as the 2017 report. [6425/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Under the Bord Bia Acts, the 2018 Annual Report must be submitted by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to the Houses of the Oireachtas by the 30th June 2019.

Publication will follow in due course and will be available on the Bord Bia website. The content and format are a matter for Bord Bia and will be, inter alia, as provided for in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. All the Bord Bia Annual Reports are available on the Bord Bia website (www.bordbia.ie).

Meat Processing Plant Inspections

529. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding carcase measurement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6426/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My officials will be in contact with the Deputy within the next two weeks in relation to this request and also concerning the terms under which such information is retained within the Department.

Agriculture Scheme Eligibility

530. **Deputy Charlie McConologue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); when a decision can be expected on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6498/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted a 2017 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint schemes application on 15 May 2017. Under the Terms and Conditions of these schemes, an applicant, as well as meeting the scheme criteria, must comply with EU regulatory requirements relating to Cross Compliance.

The application of the person named was selected for an ovine identification and registration inspection. The person named failed to co-operate with this inspection resulting in a 100% cross compliance penalty being applied to all his area based schemes.

The person named was notified of this decision on 12 March 2018 and of his right to seek a review from the District Inspector, but to date no such request has been received. Officials in my Department will examine the case if a written review request is submitted, together with any supporting documentation, to the District Inspector.

In the event that the person named is dissatisfied with the outcome of any such review, the decision may be appealed to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office within 3 months.

Question No. 531 answered with Question No. 525.

Young Farmer Capital Investment Scheme Applications

532. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an application by a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [6536/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The applicant in question applied for grant aid for animal housing under the Young Farmers Capital Investment Scheme of TAMS 11 on the 13 January 2017. The approval to proceed with the proposed investments issued on 4 July 2017. The applicant submitted a claim for grant payment for the approved works on 9 January 2019. The payment claim is currently being processed and payment will issue in due course.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Appeals

533. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6553/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Further to the completion of the review of eligible lands under the Areas of Natural Constraints (ANC) scheme, which was required by EU regulation, my Department wrote to all impacted farmers advising of the status of their lands under the 2019 ANC scheme. These letters included a form to instigate an appeal. The appeals form is also available on www.agriculture.gov.ie. For any farmer who wishes to appeal the status of a particular townland under the 2019 ANC scheme, an independently chaired appeals process is available.

My Department has received a notification of appeal from the person named in relation to two townlands. My Department will provide full information in relation to the data underpin-

ning the status of these townlands in order that the person named can base any appeal to the independent Appeals Committee on full information. This information will issue to the person named shortly.

Ministerial Advisers Data

534. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of advisers and special advisers employed by his Department in 2017 and 2018 and to date in 2019; the areas of expertise covered by such advisers; the annual salaries associated with same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6563/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Ministerial Advisers are appointed under the Appointment of Special Adviser (Minister for Agriculture, Food & the Marine) Orders.

I can confirm that two advisers were employed by my Department during 2017. During 2018, as one of my advisers was availing of statutory leave, a replacement adviser was appointed on a temporary basis to cover this leave. In late 2018, an additional adviser was appointed to Minister of State Doyle. Therefore a total of three advisers are currently serving, in accordance with Section 11 of the Public Service Management Act, 1997.

The current salary scale for Senior Ministerial Advisers is aligned to the Civil Service Principal Officer salary scale, which is in the range of €81,661 to €100,402 per annum. The current salary scale for Advisers to Ministers' of State is aligned to the Civil Service Assistant Principal Officer salary scale which is in the range of €64,232 to €78,311 per annum.

Additional information in respect of these appointments is provided to the Oireachtas at the time the appointments take place.

Animal Slaughtering Standards

535. Deputy Denis Naughten asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 848 of 15 January 2019, if he has applied a fine on a particular carcase for non-compliance with the carcase trim specification in January 2019; the plant involved; the payment made to the farmer supplier to reflect loss; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6635/19]

536. Deputy Denis Naughten asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the date when each of the mechanical classification machines was recalibrated in each meat plant; if he has received reports from the system provider of machines miscalculating grades; the number of times he has identified that the performance of machine grading has been outside the tolerance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6636/19]

537. Deputy Denis Naughten asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of breaches identified during announced inspections in 2018 on the evaluation of standard of dressing records, concerning use of check weights, comparison of hot and cold weights and labelling particulars, respectively in each plant concerned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6637/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 535 to 537, inclusive, together.

Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2017/1184 of 20 April 2017 governs the monitoring of carcase classification, carcase presentation and weighing. In 2018, my Department conducted almost 550 unannounced, on-the-spot inspections in 32 factories on classification and carcase presentation.

In all cases where a machine is found to be working outside of tolerance by my inspectors, manual grading is instigated immediately and this is advised to farmers through their remittance dockets. There were 8 instances in 2018 and 13 in 2017 when factories were instructed to revert to manual classification.

The system provider of classification machines does not provide reports on miscalculating grades.

As with any mechanical system, grading machines can from time to time fall out of tolerance. Machines operating outside of tolerance are required to be serviced, and the calibration is checked by staff from my Department before mechanical grading recommences. There were no issues discovered at inspection regarding check weights, comparison of hot and cold weights, labelling particulars.

The breaches of carcase dressing presentation in 2018 have been published already on the Department website. Regarding inspections in 2019 it is my intention to publish the resulting on-the-spot fines (if any), at the appropriate time when the inspections and the processes concerned are complete.

Appointments to State Boards

538. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of boards or agencies his officials have been appointed to; if there are guidelines or protocols for members of staff being appointed to boards or agencies; if so, when same were last updated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6638/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Currently, there are three Departmental officials appointed to three of the State Boards under the aegis of my Department. These are Bord Bia, Teagasc and the Veterinary Council of Ireland.

As each of these Boards is non-commercial in nature, the applicable protocols are contained in the Department of Finance Circular 12/2010 Protocol for Civil Servants nominated to the boards of non-commercial State bodies which should be considered as forming part of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

Responsibility for updating these documents is a matter for Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

GLAS Payments

539. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a 2018 GLAS payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6744/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named is fully up to date with all GLAS payments.

Brexit Supports

540. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the targeted financial aid or compensation measures considered at national and EU level to support Irish beef farmers in view of the effects of perceived already uneconomical prices at market from calves to weanlings to finished cattle in the context of a deal or no-deal Brexit. [6750/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The agri-food sector is of critical importance to the Irish economy, and its regional spread means it underpins the socio-economic development of rural areas in particular. Brexit depending on the outcome has the potential to have a very significant impact on farmers and on the agri-food sector throughout Ireland.

There are on-going discussions with the Commission regarding the difficulties facing Ireland, and the assistance that might be required for its agriculture food and fishing sectors

I and my officials have been working very hard for quite some time to sensitise other Member States and the European Commission to the potentially very severe impacts of Brexit on the Irish agri-food and fisheries sectors, and to the likelihood of specific supports being required in order to deal with these impacts. The institutions of the European Union are very well aware of the likelihood of a significant impact of a disorderly Brexit on Ireland's economy because this has been part of the discussion from the beginning, and indeed this is explicitly recognised in the Commission's own communication on contingency planning.

Most recently, I held a bilateral meeting with Commissioner Hogan to discuss the potential impact of a disorderly Brexit on the Irish agri-food and fisheries sectors. We discussed the unique exposure of these sectors to the threat of a disorderly Brexit, and the challenges that it could present. I stressed the need to be ready to deploy a range of measures to mitigate the potential impacts on farmers and processors, including through traditional market supports and exceptional aid under the CAP's Single Common Market Organisation regulation, and increased flexibility under State Aid regulations. Commissioner Hogan reiterated the EU's readiness to respond and support Ireland, and we will remain in contact on these issues as the situation evolves.

Beef Exports

541. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the specific market-oriented engagement that has taken place between his Department and the agencies under his remit since the Brexit referendum with a view to opening new lines of export for the beef sector; the successes achieved to date; the options to be prioritised or explored next; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6751/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Market development – developing new markets and growing existing markets, based on market insights – is one of the five themes of Food Wise 2025, the ten-year strategy for the agri-food sector. Market development and diversification is also a key response to the challenges which Brexit poses for the agri-food, in particular, the beef sector.

In April 2017 I launched a seven point action plan on market access. This is being implemented through a variety of actions, including, *inter alia*:

- A market prioritisation exercise and subsequent detailed studies carried out by Bord Bia

on behalf of my Department. On meat the five ‘deep dive’ countries selected for detailed study were: Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Mexico & Malaysia

- A market access web portal was launched in May 2018, and available on my Department’s website provides a wide range of valuable information to exporters.

- An enhanced programme of Government agri-food trade missions. All of these trade missions involve collaborative planning and participation by both my Department and Bord Bia

Beef market access has been a key feature of these missions and over the last two years, trade missions have focused on key growth markets such as:

- Asia - China, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia and Malaysia;

- North America - USA, Mexico and Canada; as well as,

- The Gulf States and Turkey.

These missions included participants from across the agri-food sector and featured extensive trade contacts as well as high-level political discussions. These and the other missions that my Department has under consideration for the first half of 2019 will serve to enhance and improve our existing levels of market access in these destinations.

According to Bord Bia, in 2018 beef worth an estimated €2.5 billion was exported. In 2018 a number of additional markets were opened by my Department including the Chinese beef market, and the markets for beef, sheepmeat and poultry in Kuwait and Qatar. In 2017 the Egyptian beef market was re-opened to Ireland and amended improved beef certificates were agreed with Singapore, Saudi Arabia and South Africa.

Brexit Preparations

542. Deputy John Deasy asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the latest assessments made by his Department of the potential impact of a hard or soft Brexit on the beef sector here at primary producer level; and if average farm income reduction calculations have been made based on both best case and worst case scenarios. [6752/19]

543. Deputy John Deasy asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department has conducted an analysis by county of the potential consequences of Brexit on the profile of farming types and producer and livestock numbers; and the impact of projected alterations in beef farming activity over the next number of years on local economies such as County Waterford (details supplied). [6753/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 542 and 543 together.

As part of my Department’s Brexit planning, my Department has carried out a detailed analysis of the implications for Irish agri-food exports in a scenario whereby the UK applied the EU’s existing tariff schedule on imports.

The decision as to how and when the UK might impose tariffs on imports from the EU in the event of a no-deal Brexit is a sovereign matter for the UK Government.

The detailed analysis was carried out by my Department using agri-food trade data, broken down into twenty four categories, identified and agreed by my Department and the CSO. The

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EU's MFN (Most Favoured Nation) Tariff Schedule was then applied to this export data. This tariff schedule includes both ad valorem tariffs and tariffs per weight/unit of product, as set out in the EU's TARIC database. The imposition of tariffs is not a linear exercise, and the possible tariffs that could be imposed vary both within individual categories and the sector as a whole. A calculation of tariff rate equivalents based on actual value and volume of trade in 2016 was completed, and is summarised in the table attached.

This analysis found that the estimated cost of potential tariffs for the sector as a whole is €1.7 billion, based on Irish agri-food exports to the United Kingdom of €4.8 billion in 2016.

There are a number of important caveats which must be considered when examining these results, including:

- Tariff data used, is based on a TARIC database extract at 31 December 2016, with the exception of those commodities where tariff rates had changed during the years 2014, 2015, 2016;
- This analysis represented over 90% of agri-food exports to the United Kingdom between 2014 and 2016.
- This analysis does not take account of any possible tariff rate quotas (TRQs), nor does it account for non-tariff barriers (NTBs) to trade, including transport delays and additional administrative costs.
- The analysis does not include the impact of any changes to the Euro-Sterling exchange rate.
- In respect of live animal exports, the average tariff rate equivalent is 8%, however in 2016, 67% of total value of live animal exports were not subject to tariff. The estimated tariff on total live exports which are subject to tariffs is 24%, and for exports of live bovines the tariff rate equivalent is approximately 40%.

Additionally, for some sectors further analysis is ongoing due to the complexity of the tariff calculations, namely:

- While raw forestry products do not usually attract third country duties, processed wood based products such as MDF, and OSB are subject to ad valorem charges based on declared value.
- For Cereals and Cereal Preparations products, almost half of the top 20 commodities are subject to duties which are calculated based on complex compositional data of the ingredients used.

Third country duties for individual product lines can be found on the TARIC website using the eight digit combined nomenclature (CN) code:

http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/dds2/taric/taric_consultation.jsp?Lang=en.

Tariff rate equivalents of agri-food sector commodities, 2016

	Total Exports to the UK 2016	Est Duty as a % of the declared value	Total Est cost of tariff equiv.
Dairy	€857,279,000	49%	€422,547,000
Beef	€1,113,448,000	70%	€780,521,000
Sheepmeat	€52,027,000	75%	€38,996,000
Pigmeat	€408,182,000	22%	€90,595,000

	Total Exports to the UK 2016	Est Duty as a % of the declared value	Total Est cost of tariff equiv.
Poultry	€217,308,000	55%	€118,817,000
Live Animals[1]	€259,200,000	8%	€21,123,000
Eggs	€10,877,000	19%	€2,035,000
Other Meat & Meat Preps	€46,949,000	18%	€8,543,000
Fruit and Vegetables	€239,155,000	14%	€33,439,000
Fish	€64,262,000	14%	€8,900,000
Beverages	€301,642,000	5%	€14,250,000
Cereals & Cereal Prepara-tions	€339,582,000	14%	€47,813,000
Animal Feedstuffs	€211,769,000	8%	€17,272,000
Misc. Edible Prods & Preps	€118,234,000	10%	€11,839,000
Vegetable Oils & Fats	€7,557,000	9%	€666,000
Sugar, Sugar Prep & Honey	€44,467,000	30%	€13,216,000
Coffee, Tea, Cocoa & Spices	€242,241,000	17%	€41,021,000
Crude Animal & Vegetable Material	€31,695,000	1%	€382,000
Animal Oils & Fats	€10,293,000	1%	€85,000
Oilseeds & Oleaginous Fruit	€11,164,000	0%	€15,000
Forestry[2]	€176,544,000	0%	
Animal Skins & Furs	€35,477,000	0%	
Flax, Wool & Animal Hair	€5,142,000	0%	
Cotton	€34,000	0%	
Totals	€4,804,528,000		€1,672,074,000

[1] MFN tariffs on Live Bovine exports (excl. breeding), which are charged at 10.2% + 93.100 DTN are considerably higher than estimated duty for the sector. The estimated tariff rate equivalent of these commodities is approximately 40% tariff rate equivalent.

[2] While Raw forestry products do not attract duties, processed wood products such as MDF do, these are usually charged at 7% ad valorem.

Employment Rights

544. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has engaged in discussions to introduce an employment regulation order to ensure a minimum standard of pay and working conditions for seasonal workers in the agricultural sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6762/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I have not engaged in discussions on the establishment of an Employment Regulation Order (ERO), but I am advised by the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation that ERO's are provided for in the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2012 and set the minimum rates of pay and conditions of employment for workers in a specified business sector.

An ERO is drawn up by a Joint Labour Committee (JLC). A JLC is composed of equal numbers of representatives of employers and workers in an employment sector with an independent chairman. The Committee meets to discuss and agree proposals for terms and conditions to apply to specified grades or categories of workers in the sector concerned. If agreement is reached on terms and conditions, the JLC publishes the details and invites submissions from interested parties. To become an ERO, the proposals drawn up by the JLC must be adopted by the Labour Court and an Order giving them statutory effect must be made by the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

GLAS Payments

545. Deputy Pat Breen asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 483 of 5 February 2019, when validation checks will be cleared on an application (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6771/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 3 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2017 and has received payments in respect of 2017.

During the processing of the 2018 payment an issue was identified regarding the Traditional Hay Meadow action. The land parcel was amended at the request of the GLAS participant or their advisor and this request has delayed the payment of the 2018 claim. The issue is expected to be resolved shortly and once the case clears validations the 2018 advance payment will be made. GLAS payments are issuing on a weekly basis.

Fishery Harbour Centres

546. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the breakdown of the €180 million allocation for the fishery harbour centres; the major development projects to be initiated in 2019; the date in 2019 these projects are scheduled to commence; if this will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he has been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6785/19]

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 €96 million has been invested in maintenance, development and upgrading works at the six fishery harbour centres. Over the same period, almost €28m has also been made available to assist coastal Local Authorities in the maintenance, repair and development of piers, harbours and slipways in their ownership

On the 27th of January 2019 I announced a €35.7m capital investment package under the 2019 Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme in our six Fishery

Harbour Centres and other fisheries related marine infrastructure. Of this €35.7m package, €21.9million is in respect of contractually committed projects and other non-discretionary capital spending. The continuation of the Dinish quay extension, Castletownbere, the commencement of the Smooth Point extension phase 2, Killybegs, and the Middle Pier berthing face project, Howth are the flagship projects for 2019 capital programme.

Looking to the delivery of the Fishery Harbour element of Project Ireland 2040, a number of high profile projects are either under consideration, or are already underway. These include the continuation of the Dinish Island quay extension project in Castletownbere in 2019 and 2020, the commencement of the Smooth Point, Killybegs and Middle Pier, Howth pier extension projects also to run over 2019 and 2020. Other projects being considered include the dredging of Howth Harbour and the upgrade of the East Pier in Howth, a possible breakwater project in Dunmore East, a slipway development, boatyard upgrade and remedial works to the mainland quay in Castletownbere, a new slipway and quay development works in Ros An Mhíl, the East Harbour quay wall development in Dingle and remedial works to Blackrock Pier & landing pier fendering in Killybegs. In addition consideration is also being given to upgrading existing vessel lifting equipment and associated machinery at a number of our Fishery Harbour Centres.

As with all future projects, they will only be progressed having consideration to available funding and National Priorities, in addition to appropriate permitting being in place.

My Department's Capital budget for 2019 has not been reduced as a result of the Children's Hospital Project.

Hazardous Substances Disposal

547. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the breakdown of the €39 million allocation for 2019 for the remediation of Haulbowline Island; the date in 2019 the east tip element will be completed; if this will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he has been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6786/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I refer the Deputy to my response to his parliamentary question 6036/19 on 7 February. The 2019 allocation for the Haulbowline Island Remediation works is €2.5m. The works on the East Tip site were substantially completed during 2018 and expenditure by my Department at the end of 2018 stood at €23m. This figure is comprised of expenditure on regularising the planning and licensing requirements, engaging in preparatory works, completing necessary site investigations amongst other elements and the remediation works on the East Tip itself. The 2019 funding is being provided for residual costs including construction of the access road which is scheduled for completion by the end of April 2019.

My Department's Capital budget has not been reduced as a result of the Children's Hospital Project.

Food Industry Development

548. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the breakdown of the €9 million allocation for 2019 for the national food innovation hub; the date in 2019 the project will be completed; if this will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he has been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and

Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6787/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department is providing Teagasc with €8.8m in exchequer funding on a phased basis to fund the development of a new National Food Innovation Hub at its Research Centre in Moorepark. The budget provision for 2019 is €6m. Teagasc has advised that it expects construction to be completed in September 2020 all going to plan.

The Government is committed to delivering Project Ireland 2040 within the overall multi-year resource envelope that has been set out. For 2019, the capital allocation has increased by €1,325 million or just over 22% above the 2018 allocation as stated in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019. My Department's Capital budget for 2019 has not been affected as a result of the Children's Hospital Project.

Employment Rights

549. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he has taken to act on the conclusions of the review of joint labour committees 2018 carried out by the Labour Court, particularly section 41A(3)(b), with regard to consideration of the making of an employment regulation order for the sector. [6799/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The provision in Industrial Relations legislation for the review of Joint Labour Committees is outside the remit of my Department.

However Horse Racing Ireland (HRI) a commercial State Body responsible for the overall administration, promotion and development of the horse racing industry has informed me that it and the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), in conjunction with employers and representative bodies across the Horse Racing Industry commenced work on an Industry Best Practice Employment Guide in late 2017.

This body of work is currently being consolidated by HRI and the WRC into a draft guide for review by the HRI Board and the representative bodies.

Beef Exports

550. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of progress to facilitate exports of beef to Iran; if he has considered the impact the reopening of the embassy in Tehran would have on agrifood exports to Iran; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6810/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Total Irish agri-food exports to Iran in 2017 were around €11.5 million according to the CSO. The majority of this, some €10.25 million, was accounted for by dairy exports.

A veterinary health certificate for the export of beef from Ireland to Iran was agreed in March 2013. However, no exports have occurred yet, due to unfavourable trading conditions, cheaper Brazilian supplies of beef to Iran, and financial barriers. Work is on-going within the EU to devise measures to overcome these financial barriers.

The location of Irish Embassies abroad is a matter for the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade in the first instance, and these locations are then approved by the Government as a whole.

Ireland continues to have full diplomatic relations with Iran, and the Irish Ambassador in Ankara represents Ireland in Iran on a non-resident basis.

The role of my Department is to open up markets for the industry and it is then up to the industry, with the support of my Department and Bord Bia, to avail of these opportunities. However, the actual levels of exports will depend on a range of factors, including global supply and demand dynamics, currency fluctuations and individual customer requirements.

GLAS Payments

551. 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. [6816/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named is fully up to date with all GLAS payments.

Young Farmers Scheme

552. Deputy Michael Lowry asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the situation regarding young farmers who are in a farming partnership will be clarified regarding their eligibility to apply for entitlements on an annual basis from the national reserve in cases in which the young farmers have their own herd number with an off-farm income which is less than €40,000 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6842/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Terms and Conditions of the National Reserve set out details of the determination of off-farm income for applicants farming as part of a Registered Farm Partnership. Under such applications it is the off-farm income of all participants on the herd number to which the young farmer(s) is associated that is considered in determining off-farm income.

With regard to the case on which details have been provided, an application to the 2018 National Reserve was submitted to my Department on 8th May 2018. This application was unsuccessful and the applicants were notified of the outcome in writing on 24th January 2019 and offered an opportunity to submit an appeal of the decision.

The appeal now submitted by the Agricultural Consultant acting on behalf of the applicants in this case will be processed. Once the appeal has been finalised the applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome.

Departmental Staff

553. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to reopen and review the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6930/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I can confirm that the individual in question retired from my Department in January, 2006 and later on in 2006 made an application to the High Court on two separate courses of action.

I understand that these proceedings were struck out by the High Court in March 2013 due to the lengthy delay in initiating proceedings and failure to abide by Court deadlines.

Under the circumstances, I do not intend to re-examine these matters.

Harbours and Piers Development

554. Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans for improving and extending Killybegs Harbour, County Donegal; the timeline for the tendering of this project; the timeframe for the complete delivery of the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6938/19]

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.

Between the years 2010 to 2018, as part of my Department's Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme, in excess of €20 million has been invested in maintenance, development and upgrading works at Killybegs Fishery Centre.

The Harbour has been attracting increasing levels of fishing, commercial cargo and cruise liner activity and the need for additional berthing has been recognised. The Smooth Point project, when complete, will provide a much needed additional 120 metres quay space.

Because some of the material to be dredged was contaminated, the project was divided into two phases. Work on phase 1 of the project, which entailed the dredging and removal of the contaminated material, commenced in 2017 and was completed in 2018, the total cost of this phase including preparation, permitting and design costs stands at €6.5m.

I have just announced the details of a €35.7m Fishery Harbour and Coastal Development Capital Programme for 2019. Killybegs has been allocated in excess of €5m this year of which €4m is earmarked for phase 2 of the Smooth Point project.

Phase 2 involves the dredging of the remaining uncontaminated material and construction of the 120 metres of berthing space. My Department's engineers are presently finalising tender documents with a view to commencing a public tender exercise in April 2019. Following completion of the tender process, it is hoped to award a contract to the successful tenderer in July, with mobilisation on site to begin in August. Phase 2 has an estimated overall project duration of twelve months, however the final costs and timeline will only be determined following the competitive tendering process.

Fodder Crisis

555. Deputy James Browne asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he will take to address the fodder crisis here; if he will undertake a county specific fodder analysis or survey to account for the regional variations in rainfall and impact on farmland specifically in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6944/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As the Deputy is aware, 2018 presented the agriculture community with some very challenging conditions in terms of a prolonged wet Spring period followed almost immediately by a period of exceptionally dry, hot weather. However we did see a return to normal growing conditions in the autumn/early winter which provided farmers with an excellent opportunity to replenish fodder stocks.

My priority throughout last year was to support measures to assist in the conservation of as much fodder for this Winter/Spring as possible from within our own resources and to supplement this with necessary imports as required. To this end I introduced a number of targeted measures including:

- a €2.75 million Fodder Production Incentive for Tillage Farmers to encourage growers to actively engage in the fodder market and there has been positive engagement with this measure.

- a €4.25 million Fodder Import Support Measure for Autumn 2018. The measure sought to reduce the cost to farmers of imported forage. The measure operated through the Co-operatives/registered importers and covered additional forage imported into the country. I am advised that there remains significant reserves of imported fodder in storage at present through these co-ops.

The most recent national fodder survey conducted in January by Teagasc, on my behalf, and published in the last week indicates that the fodder deficit has receded further. The most recent statistics show that 73% of farmers have sufficient fodder to meet their livestock's requirements. Additionally the survey shows a steady decrease in the percentage of farms reporting deficits of over 10% since the last survey in October of last year (22% in October versus 15% in January).

In relation to County Wexford, the recent Teagasc survey indicates that currently the level of deficit is below 5%

It is important to stress that while the deficit nationally has been reduced significantly there still remains a fodder deficit on some farms and there is a need for farmers to remain vigilant and avoid complacency. I have urged Teagasc and the other Stakeholders to continue their individual efforts in support of those farmers worst affected and in need of help.

Whilst it is not possible to predict the arrival of the spring and the end of the wintering period, I can assure the Deputy that I, together with my officials will continue to closely monitor the fodder situation.

Aquaculture Licence Applications

556. Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application lodged for an oyster farm licence at Carrickfinn, County Donegal; when a decision will be known regarding the application (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6950/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department understands that the area referred to by the Deputy is Braade Strand.

My Department has been notified by the Aquaculture Licence Appeals Board (ALAB) that the Board has received appeals against decisions to grant aquaculture licences for the cultivation of oysters on this strand.

ALAB is an independent Statutory Body established for the purpose of determining appeals against aquaculture licensing decisions. As the Board is currently considering the appeals in

question as part of a statutory process it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the matter pending the conclusion of that process.

Aquaculture Licences

557. Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of the recent round of public consultation on aquaculture licensing reforms and new procedures to be introduced; when he will be in a position to bring forward a new system and procedures of application; if he will provide a report into the ad hoc committee that was working on this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6951/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Applications for aquaculture licences are considered by my Department in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act, the 1933 Foreshore Act and applicable EU legislation. Application forms and application guidelines and procedures are available on my Department's website at <https://www.agriculture.gov.ie>.

The licensing process involves consultation with a wide range of scientific and technical advisers as well as various Statutory Consultees. The legislation also provides for a period of public consultation. This public consultation is in respect of individual applications. My Department is not at present engaged in wider or more general public consultation on licensing matters.

The Deputy will be aware that in December 2016 I announced the appointment of an independent Aquaculture Licensing Review Group to review the process of licensing for aquaculture and its associated legal framework. The report of the Licensing Review Group was submitted to my Department in May 2017.

The core recommendation of the Licensing Review Group was to eliminate the Aquaculture Licensing backlog. In response my Department has undertaken a two year project to eliminate the shellfish licensing backlog. I can confirm that a target of 300 licence determinations during 2018 was achieved two months ahead of schedule. My Department is committed to achieving a further 300 licence determinations in 2019. This will effectively eliminate the shellfish licensing backlog as an issue affecting the industry.

My Department's response to the report of the Aquaculture Licensing Review Group was discussed at a meeting of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine on 23rd October 2018. At the meeting I explained why the elimination of the shellfish licensing backlog needs to be the core priority for my Department at present.

The elimination of the shellfish licensing backlog will be a game changer for the industry and will provide the solid footing for the industry long demanded by industry representatives.

Brexit Supports

558. Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the details of the emergency funding sought for his Department from the European Union; the extent of the request or application for funding made as recently reported during the visit of the Taoiseach to Brussels this week; if agreement exists to date regarding this proposed emergency funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6968/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The agri-food

sector is of critical importance to the Irish economy, and its regional spread means it underpins the socio-economic development of rural areas in particular. Brexit depending on the outcome has the potential to have a very significant impact on farmers and on the agri-food sector.

There are on-going discussions with the Commission regarding the difficulties facing Ireland, and the assistance that might be required for its agriculture, food and fishing sectors.

I and my officials have been working very hard for quite some time to sensitise other Member States and the European Commission to the potentially very severe impacts of Brexit on the Irish agri-food and fisheries sectors, and to the likelihood of specific supports being required in order to deal with these impacts. The institutions of the European Union are very well aware of the likelihood of a significant impact of a disorderly Brexit on Ireland's economy because this has been part of the discussion from the beginning, and indeed this is explicitly recognised in the Commission's own communication on contingency planning.

Most recently, I held a bilateral meeting with Commissioner Hogan to discuss the potential impact of a disorderly Brexit on the Irish agri-food and fisheries sectors. We discussed the unique exposure of these sectors to the threat of a disorderly Brexit, and the challenges that it could present. I stressed the need to be ready to deploy a range of measures to mitigate the potential impacts on farmers and processors.

The Commission has adopted a legislative proposal to help prepare for the potential significant impacts that a “no-deal” Brexit would have on Irish fisheries and this is currently before the Council and Parliament.

The proposal is to allow fishermen and operators from EU Members States to receive financial aid under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) for the temporary cessation of fishing activities. The aim of this is to help off-set some of the impact of a sudden closure of UK waters to EU fishing vessels in a no-deal scenario.

While I welcome this measure as a useful first step I believe that additional measures, including further financing, over and above the EMFF, at EU level will be required.

In that regard, I am continuing to work with the Commission and other concerned Member States to continue to develop EU wide measures to address the very serious potential problems that may arise. It cannot be left to individual Member States to address these problems in isolation.

Ireland is particularly exposed with regard to the potential impacts for our fisheries sector. I will be meeting with Fisheries Commissioner Vella next Monday to explore additional possible mitigation measures.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Appeals

559. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of on an ANC appeal by a person (details supplied); when a decision can be expected on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6973/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Further to the completion of the review of eligible lands under the Areas of Natural Constraints (ANC) scheme, which was required by EU regulation, my Department wrote to all impacted farmers advising of the status of their lands under the 2019 ANC scheme. These letters included a form to instigate an appeal. The appeals form is also available on www.agriculture.gov.ie. For any

farmer who wishes to appeal the status of a particular townland under the 2019 ANC scheme, an independently chaired appeals process is available.

My Department has received a notification of appeal from the person named in relation to one townland. My Department will provide full information in relation to the data underpinning the status of this townland in order that the person named can base any appeal to the independent Appeals Committee on full information. This information will issue shortly to the person named.

Hen Harriers Threat Response Plan

560. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) was omitted from a scheme; if this person will be included in the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6977/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Hen Harrier scheme is operationally independent of my Department and is run by the Hen Harrier Project team. The farmer can contact the Hen Harrier project team directly for information regarding his application. Their website, containing all contact details is: <http://www.henharrierproject.ie/>.

Farm Inspections

561. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 818 of 15 January 2019, if the case will be reviewed in view of the fact his Department cancelled the initial test; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7100/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The herd owner in question was issued a test notification letter on 13/09/2016 requesting that he have his test completed by the 17/10/2016.

The test was not completed by the due date and the herd owner was then issued with an Overdue test letter on the 27/10/2016.

Both letters stated that if the test was not completed by the due date that the herd owner would be liable to pay the fee for the completion of the test.

The test was completed on the 23/11/2017 and an invoice subsequently issued to the herd owner for the cost of the test.

The herd owner did not bring to the attention of the Regional Veterinary Office any mitigating circumstances to explain why the test could not be completed within the timeframe allowed.

GLAS Appeals

562. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a payment in the case of a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7139/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As the Deputy

would be aware from previous recent PQ's a review by the Director of Agriculture Appeals Office of the decision of the Appeals Officer has been requested in this case in accordance with the provisions of the Agriculture Appeals Act, 2001. The Agriculture Appeals Office has indicated that requests for reviews are generally dealt with in order of receipt and that both the Department and the person named will be advised of the outcome when the review has been completed.

Nuclear Waste

563. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he or his officials received information or have had discussions with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mrs. Karen Bradley, on the possibility of the UK Government considering the Newry and Mourne area for the construction of a nuclear waste disposal site (details supplied); his views regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6581/19]

578. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he or his officials received information or have had discussions with his counterpart in the UK on the possibility of considering the Newry and Mourne area for the construction of a nuclear waste disposal site (details supplied); his views regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6582/19]

585. Deputy Jan O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to proposals to consider the establishment of a geological disposal facility and-or nuclear waste disposal facility in the Newry, Mourne and Down area; if he has been notified and consulted by the UK authorities on this matter of concern to Border communities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6972/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 563, 578 and 585 together.

Senior officials in my Department and the Environmental Protection Agency meet twice a year to discuss matters of mutual interest with United Kingdom (UK) colleagues through the UK-Ireland Contact Group on Radiological Matters. Officials from the Northern Ireland administration are also invited to attend. The matter of radioactive waste, and in particular the Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) project, is a standing item on the agenda for the Group. Ireland engages on this matter through this Group, and will continue to monitor developments in relation to UK plans for geological disposal of radioactive waste. This issue was discussed at the Group in November 2018 and officials from the UK Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy confirmed that following a recent public consultation on engagement with potential host communities for a Geological Disposal Facility in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the working policy on potential sites will relate to England only. There are no plans or policy to site a Geological Disposal Facility in Northern Ireland.

A decision regarding locating a Geological Disposal Facility in Northern Ireland would have to be taken by the Northern Ireland Executive.

My officials will continue to engage with their UK counterparts at national and regional levels to ensure that our concerns in this matter continue to be represented.

North-South Interconnector

564. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to the lack of compliance with the planning conditions in the infrastructure agreement between EirGrid and the ESB regarding the North-South interconnector; if his attention has been further drawn to the fact that the ESB has taken over the independent function of EirGrid, which is unauthorised in accordance with SI 445 of 2000; if his attention has been further drawn to the fact that EirGrid did not submit the 584 access routes for planning approval; his views on whether it is appropriate that landowners will not be informed of access to their lands until construction is ready to be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6242/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The issue of planning is a matter between the developer and the relevant consenting authority. As Minister, I have no function in the matter. I understand that in the planning process leading up to An Bord Pleanála's decision to grant planning consent for the project, the issue of access routes was just one of the issues comprehensively examined.

A key aim of the Third Energy Market Package was to ensure effective unbundling of generation and supply activities from the operation of electricity networks and transmission systems. The rules on unbundling are aimed at ensuring the independence of the transmission system operator, ultimately to facilitate greater electricity market competition.

EirGrid is a semi-state company whose job as the national transmission system operator is to plan the development of and operate the electricity grid, and to ensure its maintenance. ESB, as owner of the transmission system, carries out construction and maintenance tasks in accordance with EirGrid's specifications, maintenance programme and Development Plan.

There is an integrated delivery model in Ireland for the planning, development and operation of electricity transmission infrastructure which was developed in accordance with EU "unbundling" rules. An agreement known as the *Infrastructure Agreement* was entered into between EirGrid and ESB to govern the ongoing relationship between the two organisations.

It is my understanding that under this model EirGrid was responsible for obtaining planning permission for the North South Interconnector and it then became ESB's responsibility, as asset owner, to construct the line in accordance with EirGrid's request and specifications.

Hazardous Substances Disposal

565. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the progress on environmental issues at a location (details supplied) in County Tipperary; if a compulsory purchase order is being considered for the site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6250/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Gortmore Tailings Management Facility was the largest site remediated in Silvermines at a cost of €6 million. Monitoring of the site has taken place since the remediation work to detect any potential changes.

On the basis of the advice of the Chief State Solicitor's Office, the Department agreed to negotiate with the owner regarding the transfer of the site into public ownership. My Department's officials are continuing to engage with the owners' legal representatives to secure an outcome that is satisfactory to all affected parties.

Climate Change Adaptation Plans

566. Deputy Timmy Dooley asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the establishment of 11 high-level interdepartmental teams that will develop actions to step up Ireland's response to climate change in the context of the all-of-Government climate plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6266/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am leading on the development of an all of government plan which will set out the actions which must be taken in every government department and body. The central ambition of this plan will be to make Ireland a leader in responding to climate change.

I am working with colleagues across government to develop new initiatives across electricity, transport, heat, as well as a range of other sectors. As part of that work, the following eleven cross-government teams have been established to develop new actions to step up Ireland's response to climate change in a range of key areas which require action across government:

- biomass, renewable heat, and combined heat and power;
- carbon pricing;
- climate action networks;
- decarbonising buildings;
- electric vehicles and compressed natural gas station networks;
- emissions reduction pathways in the agriculture sector;
- forestry;
- just transition;
- making the public service a leader;
- micro-generation; and
- offshore renewables.

Broadcasting Sector Regulation

567. Deputy Denise Mitchell asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the Broadcast Authority of Ireland will undertake a full review of the rules dealing with food advertising to children; the process in this regard; when the revised code may take effect; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6300/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Broadcasting Act 2009 provided for the establishment of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) as the independent regulator responsible for oversight of compliance in relation to broadcasting content in the State.

Section 42 of the Broadcasting Act 2009 requires the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) to draw up and from time to time revise Broadcasting Codes on the standards and practice to be observed by Broadcasters.

Section 24 of the Broadcasting Act 2009 sets out that the BAI shall be independent in the performance of its duties.

Broadcasting Sector Regulation

568. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the public consultation will commence to gather the views and suggestions of stakeholders on the way in which Ireland should approach the implementation of the provisions of the revised audiovisual media service directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6301/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The current Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) was codified in 2010 and contains rules and requirements that form the minimum standards that Television Broadcasting Services and On-demand Audiovisual Media Services such as the RTÉ Player or the iTunes Store, must follow in the EU. The provisions of the current Directive are reflected in Irish law in the Broadcasting Act 2009 and related statutory instruments.

In May 2016 the European Commission published a proposed revision of the AVMS Directive. The proposal was designed to update the rules and requirements in the AVMSD to reflect the rapid changes that the audiovisual media market is experiencing. The revised Directive updates existing requirements for television broadcasting and on-demand audiovisual media services and, for the first time, sets out rules and requirements for Video Sharing Platform Services, for example YouTube and Dailymotion.

The text of the revised Directive has been adopted by the EU and was officially published on 27 November 2018. The deadline by which Ireland must implement the provisions is 19 September 2020.

I am committed to ensuring that the provisions of the revised Directive are implemented in Ireland in a robust and effective manner. Given that the final text has now been published, and the challenging legislative timeline involved, it is intended that a public consultation will commence shortly to gather the views and suggestions of stakeholders on how Ireland should approach the implementation of the provisions of the revised Directive.

Commission for Communications Regulation Remit

569. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the analysis conducted in regard to the number of online scam practices; and if there has been analysis carried out on the way in which this affects vulnerable groups. [6302/19]

570. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if consideration has been given to providing additional powers and resources to the Commission for Communications Regulation to address regulation of online scams being experienced in view of the policy to move persons to online use of public services. [6303/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 569 and 570 together.

I have no function with regard to monitoring or policing criminal activity online. This is a matter for the Department of Justice and Equality and An Garda Síochána.

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg), established pursuant to the provisions of the Communications Regulation Act 2002 (as amended), is the statutory independent regulator of the electronic communications sector which includes telecommunications, radio communications, broadcasting transmission, premium rate services and also of the postal markets.

Whilst ComReg does have a statutory function to protect consumers' interests, it does not regulate online activity and has no role in policing criminal activity online, such as the type of online activity to which the Deputy refers to in his Question.

ComReg meets its consumer protection role by providing information and advice to users, monitoring service providers' compliance with regulatory obligations and intervening in disputes. More information on ComReg's role and functions is available on its website (www.comreg.ie).

Additionally, the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) has information on how consumers can protect themselves from scams generally - this information can be found on the CCPC website at www.ccpc.ie/consumers/money/scams/scams-what-to-watch-out-for/.

Angling Sector

571. Deputy Brian Stanley asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he or his officials have met angling club representatives in recent months; and if not, the reason therefor. [6309/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Canney): Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is the State Agency with statutory responsibility for the protection, conservation development and promotion of the inland fisheries Sector. One of IFI's most important tasks is to engage with angling clubs around the country on inland fisheries related matters.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the vast majority of issues for discussion and advice relates to local matters. In that context, engagement with local IFI officers and, where necessary, regional management brings legislative, operational and technical expertise, as well as local knowledge and understanding, to bear. Such meetings are considered the most appropriate option as they take place in the relevant community and facilitate a focus on what are very largely local matters.

IFI also has a dedicated project team and project co-ordinators to support angling clubs and community based organisations with development projects approved under the National Strategy for Angling Development.

I have had two requests for meetings with angling clubs. One was serviced last week by a meeting between the club and IFI regional management and senior scientific staff, following contact with the Deputy who requested the meeting. I understand the second may relate to a planning issue which is outside the remit of my Department. However I have undertaken to liaise with the Deputy who sought the meeting.

In relation to high level strategic engagement, I am taking a lead role in liaison with angling stakeholders and intend to host a joint meeting of all established Angling Federations together with senior officials of my Department and IFI. I am keen to draw together all strands of the representative angling stakeholder base for positive, inclusive and consensual discussions for

the benefit of the entire sector.

Broadband Service Provision

572. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of a fibre broadband application for a property (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6322/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): According to my Department's high speed broadband map, available at www.broadband.gov.ie, the premises referred to by the Deputy is one which is indicated as having been passed by eir as part of their rural deployment of high speed broadband. Therefore, that premises should be in a position to order a high speed broadband connection from a provider offering services on the network.

Where a premises in this situation is having difficulty getting connected, my Department's customer service team in the National Broadband Plan (NBP) Division can assist by raising a case with eir.

I advise the Deputy's constituent to contact the NBP customer service team at broadband@dccae.gov.ie directly, providing their name, phone number, email address and Eircode, as well as details of the issues they are experiencing. My Department will then be in a position to pursue a case on their behalf with eir.

Broadband Service Provision

573. Deputy Timmy Dooley asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied) will be addressed. [6325/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): In April 2017 my Department published an updated version of the National Broadband Plan (NBP) High Speed Broadband Map. This is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. The map shows the areas targeted by commercial operators to provide high speed broadband services and the areas that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the National Broadband Plan. The Map is colour coded and searchable by address/Eircode:

- The AMBER area represents the parts of the country where commercial operators have no plans to build high speed broadband networks. Premises in the AMBER area will be provided with high Speed Broadband through a State Intervention.
- The BLUE area represents those areas where commercial providers are either currently delivering or have plans to deliver high speed broadband services.
- The LIGHT BLUE area represents eir's commercial rural deployment plans to rollout high speed broadband to 300,000 premises as part of a Commitment Agreement signed with my Department in April 2017.

The table below details the percentage of premises to be covered by the State Intervention and through commercial investment in the Ballymorris area.

Townland	Premises within the NBP Intervention Area	Premises within Commercial Operator's Area	Premises within eir planned rural deployment
Ballymorris	25% (33)	74% (99)	1% (1)

Information on categories of specific premises can be accessed on my Department's website, www.broadband.gov.ie, by entering the relevant Eircode.

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.

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

Information on eir's rural deployment is available on that company's website, <http://fibre-rollout.ie/Eircode-lookup/>. A copy of the Commitment Agreement is available on my Department's website, www.dccae.gov.ie.

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.

Inland Fisheries

574. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the eel fishermen compensation scheme for affected fishermen on Lough Ree; and the reason compensation did not issue in December 2018 as initially reported. [6348/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Government's Eel Support Scheme fund is available to all persons who were the holder of a State 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. There is no geographical distinction in the qualifying criteria for the scheme which apply nationally.

The fund is administered by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI). Correspondence issued from IFI in the first instance to applicants whose applications were deemed not to meet the criteria for the Support scheme. This was to facilitate possible appeals to the decision of IFI as regards eligibility or other matters. I will be extending the deadline for the receipt of appeals to 5.00pm on Friday 22 February 2019.

While it was intended that letters of offer would issue in December 2018, a key element of

offers is to outline clearly the need for recipients to comply with all Revenue requirements and to make the appropriate tax return to the Revenue Commissioners.

I am advised by IFI that individualised letters of offer to applicants deemed eligible, based on individual verification of the records held by the State in respect of each applicant, have issued. Payment can issue to any individual applicant once the applicant communicates, in writing, formal acceptance of the offer and confirmation of an undertaking to adhere to the conditions of the scheme and the letter of offer.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

575. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of progress regarding the provision of broadband (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6380/19]

576. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the national broadband process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6551/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 575 and 576 together.

The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure high speed broadband access 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.

Ministerial Advisers Data

577. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of advisers and special advisers employed by his Department in 2017 and 2018 and to date in 2019; the areas of expertise covered by such advisers; the annual salaries associated with same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6566/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): In the period 2017 to date my Department has contracted 3 Special Policy Advisors and 2 Press and Media Advisors at an annual cost of €176,807 for 2017, €167,132 for 2018 and €175,357 anticipated cost for 2019.

All of the appointments made by myself and my predecessor were made in accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's Instruction to Personnel Officers – Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil.

Question No. 578 answered with Question No. 563.

Appointments to State Boards

579. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of boards or agencies his officials have been appointed to; if there are guidelines or protocols for members of staff being appointed to boards or agencies; if so, when same were last updated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6641/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department is represented at official level on the board of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland; the National Oil Reserves Agency and the Irish National Petroleum Corporation.

The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016 provides guidance for officials serving on the board of non-commercial State bodies.

Air Quality

580. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to the extent to which air pollutants have been identified at the air quality monitoring station in Enniscorthy, County Wexford; the action he will take in response to increases in air pollution in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6747/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Ambient air quality monitoring in Ireland is carried out in accordance with the requirements of the 2008 Clean Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive (Directive 2008/50/EC), and the Fourth Daughter Directive (Directive 2004/107/EC of 15 December 2004). These Directives also include rules on how Member States should monitor, assess and manage ambient air quality.

Following a review by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of air quality monitoring and information provision in Ireland, a decision was taken to develop a new Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Programme (AAMP), which aims to enhance and build on current arrangements. One of the key objectives of the programme is to enhance the provision of real time air quality data to the public. The AAMP will more than double the capacity of ambient air quality monitoring in Ireland over the period 2017 to 2022, and enhance the provision of real time air quality data to the public. My Department has committed funding of some €5 million over the lifetime of the programme.

Hourly monitoring of PM10 and PM2.5 in Enniscorthy has been provided as part of this overall expansion of the national ambient air quality monitoring network. The new monitoring station in Enniscorthy, which is operated by Wexford County Council in partnership with the EPA, has recorded six exceedances of the daily PM10 limit value of 50 ug/m³ so far this year. During 2018 the station's annual average value exceeded the World Health Organisations (WHO) guideline value for PM2.5, along with other stations in the national monitoring network. However, it did not exceed the EU annual limit value for PM2.5.

In the most recently published report on Irish air quality, Air Quality in Ireland 2017 – Indicators of Air Quality, the EPA outlines that the WHO PM10 24 hour guideline value was exceeded at 11 monitoring stations, the PM2.5 24 hour guideline value was exceeded at 9 monitoring stations, and the PM2.5 annual guideline was exceeded at 1 monitoring site. The 2017 data showing that the burning of solid fuel is the biggest threat to good air quality in Ireland, followed by emissions from vehicle exhausts.

In relation to air pollution more generally, recent scientific evidence indicates that it is more

damaging at lower concentrations than was previously understood. With this in mind, I am committed to bringing forward Ireland's first ever National Clean Air Strategy. The Strategy, which I intend to publish this year, will provide the policy framework necessary to identify and promote integrated measures across Government that are required to reduce air pollution and promote cleaner air, while delivering on wider national objectives. Domestic solid fuel use will be addressed in the context of the strategy.

Electricity Transmission Network

581. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the breakdown of the allocation in 2019 for the national smart energy metering programme; the date in 2019 the programme will be rolled out; if this will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he has been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6790/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Smart Meter Upgrade is being implemented through a phased approach. Phase one of the upgrade will commence in Q3 2019 with 250,000 smart-ready meters to be rolled out by the end of 2020. A further 1 million meters will be rolled out in phase two by the end of 2022 and the rollout of remaining meters will be concluded by end of 2024.

The Smart Meter Upgrade is not funded from the Exchequer. Its costs will be included in the costs of distribution networks in the same way as all other electricity infrastructure investments are paid for and subject to approval by the energy regulator.

Electricity Generation

582. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the breakdown of the allocation in 2019 for converting west Offaly and Lough Ree power plants to more sustainable low-carbon technologies; the date in 2019 the plants are expected to be converted; if this will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he has been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6791/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The cost of developing electricity generation plant is borne by project developers, within an open competitive market. There are no Exchequer funds allocated for this purpose. Both Lough Ree and West Offaly power plants, operated by the ESB, currently benefit from the support scheme for peat, which is funded by a Public Service Obligation levy. This levy is charged to all electricity customers by their electricity suppliers. The levy consists of the estimated eligible costs that generators are forecast to incur, less the level of market revenue which is forecast to be earned. This support scheme will expire at the end of 2019.

Both West Offaly and Lough Ree have been awarded support for biomass co-firing, up to 30% of their capacity, under the Renewal Energy Feed in Tariff Scheme (REFIT 3), provided the applications for planning permission for the two plants are successful. The support for biomass co-firing under this scheme is €99.57 per megawatt hour (MWh).

Climate Action Fund

583. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the breakdown of the allocation for the Climate Action Fund for 2019; the date in 2019 the fund will be rolled out; if this will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he has been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6793/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): On 28 November 2018, I announced the seven successful projects from the first Call for Applications under the Climate Action Fund. Having completed the assessment stage, the seven projects must now undergo the project validation process. The validation process will include more detailed examination of the projects, agreement of project outputs and payment timelines.

The total investment by these projects will exceed €300 million. The capital support for these seven projects will be up to €77m with €15m allocated for 2019.

The Climate Action Fund will have an allocation of at least €500 million over the period to 2027. This will be financed primarily through repurposing part of the existing petroleum products levy (also known as the NORA levy). This levy is collected by the National Oil Reserves Agency from fuel suppliers at a rate of 2 cents per litre.

The scope, structure and timeframe of future calls for applications have not yet been determined. To assist development of future calls, my Department held a workshop on 30 January 2019 with all those who applied under the first call. Feedback gathered at this workshop will help shape future calls.

The Climate Action Fund will not be impacted by the re-profiling of capital expenditure arising from funding pressures at the National Children's Hospital.

Waste Disposal Charges

584. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position regarding the provision of an annual support towards the cost of pay-by-weight bin charges for homes disposing incontinence pads; when the scheme will be announced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6945/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): 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.

Question No. 585 answered with Question No. 563.

Biofuel Obligation Scheme

586. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on the way in which the target of blending under the biofuel obligation scheme that all road transport fuel, liquid or gaseous must contain a blend of 10% biofuels is

to be achieved in the case of compressed natural gas; if all sales of compressed natural gas are meeting the blend requirement; and if not, the remedial actions required to remedy the situation. [7000/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Biofuels Obligation Scheme, administered by the National Oil Reserves Agency, is the principal support for the uptake of biofuels in Ireland. The scheme was introduced in 2010 and requires suppliers of liquid road transport fuel to ensure that biofuels make up a certain percentage of annual fuel sales. It works on the basis of tradeable certificates with two certificates awarded per litre of sustainable biofuel if that biofuel is produced from wastes or residues and one certificate per litre for all other sustainable biofuels.

For each calendar year, a fuel supplier must hold sufficient biofuel obligation certificates to demonstrate compliance. Suppliers can meet their obligation either by placing sufficient amounts of biofuel on the market themselves, or by purchasing certificates from other suppliers with a surplus. The number of certificates required is determined by the biofuel obligation rate which, for 2019, is set at 10% by volume. This means that at the end of the year, a fuel supplier must hold ten biofuel certificates for every 90 litres of fossil fuel they place on the road transport fuel market this year.

Suppliers of gaseous transport fuels, such as compressed natural gas, are not currently subject to the above obligation. However, if a supplier was to place a renewable gaseous fuel, such as biomethane, on the road transport market, that supplier would be eligible to receive biofuel certificates for this fuel provided it meets the sustainability criteria set out in the scheme.

My Department plans to hold a public consultation on the Biofuels Obligation Scheme later this year which will provide the opportunity for stakeholders to input into the development of the scheme.

Road Projects Data

587. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €25 million allocation for 2019 for the Fresh Start agreement; the date in 2019 the funding will be made available; the date the first part of the A5 road project will be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6861/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Government is committed to delivering Project Ireland 2040 within the overall multi-year resource envelope that has been set out. For 2019, the capital allocation has increased by €1,325 million or just over 22% above the 2018 allocation as stated in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019.

The planning and implementation of the A5 upgrade project is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland authorities. Following on from the outcome of judicial review proceedings regarding the scheme last year, my Department continues to liaise with the Northern Ireland Department for Infrastructure (DfI) regarding next steps in relation to the project and the timeframes involved.

DfI now intends to issue for consultation an Addendum to its previously published Environmental Statement. This should result in a new decision which may in turn be the subject of a further legal challenge. In this context it is not possible to state definitively when construction of Phase 1a of the A5 project will commence.

Allowing for the time required for public consultation on the scheme statutory documentation, a new DfI decision on the scheme and the possibility of a further legal challenge, it is understood that late 2019 is the earliest that construction could start subject to a decision to proceed with the scheme and the outcome of any further legal challenges. In the event of a further legal challenge, it could be early 2020 before construction could start.

It is envisaged that payments from the Irish State will be based on an agreed protocol and would be linked to the achievement of construction stage milestones. In that context, the provision of funding in the financial year 2019 is no longer considered appropriate and accordingly it has been identified as a budgetary adjustment which could be made this year without direct impact on the progress of projects included in Project Ireland 2040.

Driver Test Waiting Lists

588. Deputy Sean Sherlock asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of persons awaiting a first driver test and second test, respectively in each driver test centre here; the length of time applicants are waiting in each centre; and the category of waiting lists in tabular form. [6252/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

Road Network

589. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will request TII to investigate the surface of the motorway between Roscrea, County Tipperary and Annacotty, County Limerick (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6291/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. Under the Roads Acts 1993-2015, the planning, design, maintenance 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.

Cycling Facilities Funding

590. Deputy Sean Sherlock asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the specific cycling allocations made by county in addition to projects since he announced funding in budget 2019. [6306/19]

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, including cycling infrastructure.

The allocation of funding in respect of individual projects is managed by the NTA in conjunction with the relevant local authorities, accordingly I have referred your question to the NTA for a more detailed reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Public Transport Provision

591. Deputy Sean Sherlock asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has met officials from Cork City Council regarding planned transport provisions following the expansion of the city in June 2019. [6307/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the development and implementation of public transport infrastructure and services in the regional cities, including Cork.

The Deputy may be aware that the draft Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy is currently being finalised by Cork City Council and Cork County Council, in partnership with the NTA. The 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 draft Strategy will shortly be published for public consultation and I look forward to its finalisation and adoption by the relevant local authorities.

My Department will obviously engage with the NTA and other relevant bodies, including the local authorities, with regard to implementation of the finalised Strategy.

Driver Licences

592. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a person (details supplied) in County Donegal holds a valid driver licence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6327/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): It is not appropriate to answer the Deputy's question due to data protection laws. The person concerned may contact the Road Safety Authority directly to enquire about the status for their driving licence.

Rail Services Provision

593. Deputy Brendan Ryan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the upgrade to the northern commuter Connolly-Drogheda line (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6371/19]

594. Deputy Brendan Ryan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the plans in the short-to-medium term to alleviate the congestion on the northern commuter rail line, including an increase in extra direct bus services to the city centre; if the necessary physical infrastructure and funding are in place to provide for the upgrade; the timeline and delivery regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6372/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 593 and 594 together.

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

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

Tourism Data

595. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of tourists that visit County Tipperary annually by nationality; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6378/19]

596. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the value of tourism to County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6379/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 595 and 596 together.

The collection and dissemination of official statistical information, including information relating to tourist numbers and expenditure, is a matter for the Central Statistics Office. The CSO does not publish tourism performance figures for individual counties. However, I understand that Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority, does estimate individual county performance based on CSO data. I have asked Fáilte Ireland to reply directly to the Deputy with any further information it may have on this matter. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Trans European Transport Network Programme

597. 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; if so, if he has made representations in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6400/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The 2013 EU TEN-T Regulation states that a review of the TEN-T network is to take place no later than the end of 2023.

I refer the Deputy to my recent response to this question provided on 22 January 2019, in which I stated that my Department will make 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. This was also outlined at last week's Joint Oireachtas Committee on Brexit and the implications of Brexit for the transport sector.

I am very concerned about the implications of Brexit for Ireland's transport connectivity and trade and am of the view that it is timely for the EU to now consider an early review of the TEN-T network.

Rural Transport Programme Data

598. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of users of the LocalLink service in each of the areas it is in operation in each of the years 2016 to 2018. [6428/19]

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 securing the provision of public passenger transport services nationally. It also has national responsibility for integrated local and rural transport, including management of the Rural Transport Programme, which now operates under the Local Link brand.

In light of the NTA's responsibilities in this matter, I have referred the Deputy's Question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

599. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the 2018 sports capital grant application decisions will be made in the case of a club (details supplied). [6437/19]

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 €162m in funding.

186 of these applications were for projects that were deemed invalid under the 2017 round of the programme that subsequently submitted corrected documents. These applications were assessed first and €7m in allocations to 170 projects were announced on the 17th January.

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.

Ports Policy

600. **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 Irish ports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6444/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): 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.

I am 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.

Finally, 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 month, about the infrastructural 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.

Bus Services

601. Deputy John McGuinness asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the request from an organisation (details supplied) that consideration be given to the provision of dedicated bus corridors along the arterial routes into Dublin; if the project could be funded from the Climate Action Fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6462/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department is aware of the views of the organisation referred to by the Deputy.

Following recent meetings at which this matter was raised, my Department committed to liaising with both Transport Infrastructure Ireland and the National Transport Authority and reverting directly to the organisation on the matter.

In line with that commitment, my Department will revert to the organisation in due course.

Driver Test

602. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of a HGV test for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6492/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

Road Projects

603. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be provided to carry out a noise survey at a location (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6542/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. Under the Roads Acts 1993-2015, the planning, design and operation of individual roads is a matter for the relevant road authority in relation to local and regional roads, or for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), in conjunction with the local authorities concerned, in relation to national roads.

Noting the above position, I have referred the question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Ministerial Advisers Data

604. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of advisers and special advisers employed by his Department in 2017 and 2018 and to date in 2019; the areas of expertise covered by such advisers; the annual salaries associated with same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6579/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I have appointed two advisers, a Special Adviser and Press Adviser, since I took up office. Both advisers are remunerated on the Principal Officer standard pay scale (PPC) in line with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform guidelines on the appointment of Ministerial advisers.

Services for People with Disabilities

605. Deputy Lisa Chambers asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps that will be taken to ensure that persons who need assistance boarding and exiting trains using ramps and so on will still do so safely and conveniently in view of the new proposals to remove staff from stations nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6583/19]

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 issue raised by the Deputy is a matter for the public transport operator, Irish Rail. I have

therefore forwarded her question to Irish Rail for direct reply to her. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

Bus Éireann Services

606. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of passengers per hour on the new Bus Éireann Ballincollig-Carrigaline route; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6584/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter for Bus Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Airport Security

607. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the categories of staff that are considered a risk and/or subject to physical security checks by private security firms when entering Dublin Airport and buildings at the airport for work; the categories of staff that are not considered a risk and are not subject to physical security checks by private security firms when entering the airport and its buildings for work; the number of civil servants permanently assigned to duties at the airport by Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6595/19]

609. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of authorised officers assigned to Dublin Airport; the details by number of authorised officers, rank and or grade by the authority and or Department they originate from; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6612/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 607 and 609 together.

The only authorised officers at Dublin Airport are the airport police and members of An Garda Síochána, who are designated as such under Section 48 of the Air Transport Navigation Act, 1998. The Deputy will appreciate that information in relation to the number of An Garda or airport police serving at Dublin Airport as she has sought is an operational matter and is security sensitive.

The principal regulation in Europe for setting out the standards for civil aviation security is Regulation (EC) No. 300/2008, and Ireland is required to adhere to the baseline requirements laid out in this Regulation, including a requirement that:

“ All persons other than passengers, together with their items carried, shall be screened upon entering critical parts of security restricted areas in order to prevent prohibited articles from being introduced into these parts.”

As such, all categories of persons are subject to security screening. The Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) conducts an annual risk assessment concerning the status of exemptions from security screening held by all categories of persons in Ireland. The specifics of this risk assessment are highly confidential and will not be revealed, but I can assure you that they are robust. The results of this IAA assessment were put to the National Civil Aviation Security Committee (NCASC) and subsequently endorsed by its members. The NCASC is comprised of Government Departments - including Department of Justice and Equality, the Department of Foreign

Affairs and Trade and the Department of Defence - and State agencies including the Revenue Commissioners, An Garda Síochána and the Irish Aviation Authority. The purpose of the Committee is to advise the Minister and Government on aviation security policy.

As regard security searches at Dublin Airport, these are carried out by the Airport Search Unit (ASU). The ASU are staff hired specifically for the purpose of security screening and are trained and certified in accordance with EU regulations. They are members of the daa staff and are not provided by a private security firm.

Sports Funding

608. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of grant funding provided to each national sport governing body in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6609/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): Sport Ireland is the statutory body with responsibility for the promotion, development and co-ordination of sport and the allocation of funding to National Governing Bodies of Sport. I have, therefore, referred the Deputy's question to Sport Ireland for direct response. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.

In addition, National Governing Bodies of Sport have benefitted from funding under the Sports Capital Programme during the period in question. Details of all allocations and payments to all clubs and organisations under the Sports Capital Programme (SCP) since 1998 to 2018 are published on the Department's website, <http://www.dttas.ie/sport/english/sports-capital-programme>.

To date in 2019 two payments have been made under the Sports Capital Programme to National Governing Bodies of Sport and these are set out in the table below.

National Governing Body	Amount
Irish Clay Target Shooting Association	€28,500
Fencing Ireland	€11,000

Question No. 609 answered with Question No. 607.

Appointments to State Boards

610. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of boards or agencies his officials have been appointed to; if there are guidelines or protocols for members of staff being appointed to boards or agencies; if so, when same were last updated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6654/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Officials of my Department are appointed to the Marine Casualty Investigation Board (MCIB) in compliance with the Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Casualties) Act 2000.

Section 9 (1) of the Act defines the composition of the Board of the MCIB. It comprises three persons appointed by me, the Chief Surveyor and the Secretary-General of my Department or his nominee.

Subject to legislative requirements, appointments to the other State Boards under the aegis of my Department are made in accordance with the Department of Expenditure and Reform (DPER) “Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards” and my Department’s “Principles and Procedures for State Board Appointments”. The DPER guidelines were updated in 2014 and my Department’s “Principles and Procedures” in 2017.

Sports Organisations

611. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the progress made to date on implementing the governance code of community, voluntary and charitable organisations in the context of sports bodies; the engagement he has had with an association (details supplied) in respect of same in 2018 and to date in 2019; if he has had engagements with Sport Ireland in the context of withholding funding to bodies that fail to subscribe to the code; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6660/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The governance of National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) is a matter for the NGBs themselves and Sport Ireland as the statutory body with responsibility for governance oversight of NGBs.

Minister Ross and I have made it very clear that all sporting bodies in receipt of public funding must work towards compliance with the Governance Code for the Community, Voluntary and Charity Sector. The Government’s National Sports Policy 2018-2027 recognises the importance of good governance for the effective and efficient running of sport and it includes an action that Sport Ireland will oversee a process to have all NGBs and Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) adopt the Governance Code by the end of 2021. My Department and Sport Ireland have underlined that future funding for NGBs and LSPs will be conditional on compliance with the Governance Code.

I have had no engagement with the association mentioned by the Deputy regarding its compliance with the Governance Code. However, I understand that the association is on the journey to adoption of the Code and I welcome the recent changes it has made regarding term limits for Board members as a positive step on that journey.

I have referred the Deputy’s question to Sport Ireland for direct reply in relation to progress made by supported sporting bodies in implementing the Governance Code for the Community, Voluntary and Charity Sector. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.

Road Safety Authority Data

612. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of inspections for cabotage activity of foreign HGV operators carried out by the RSA and An Garda Síochána in each of the years 2016 to 2018; the number of prosecutions arising from such inspections; the countries of origin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6732/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The enforcement of cabotage regulations is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. This question has been forwarded to the RSA for their direct attention and reply. An Garda Síochána is under the authority of the Minister for Justice and Equality.

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Road Safety Authority

613. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has conducted an assessment of the effectiveness of the RSA as a regulatory agency to determine if it is performing its statutory functions in an effective manner; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6734/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Road Safety Authority's statutory functions are set out in the Road Safety Authority Act 2006. My Department has a thorough oversight framework in place to ensure the effective delivery of these functions and to monitor the agency's performance on an consistent and ongoing basis.

This framework was drawn up in line with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (available to read at www.per.gov.ie/en/revised-code-of-practice-for-the-governance-of-state-bodies/). Provisions include the drawing up and regular reviewing of Performance Delivery Agreements, the implementation of Oversight Agreements, and monthly meetings between the Road Safety Authority and officials from my Department.

State Properties

614. Deputy James Browne asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a location (details supplied) rests within the ownership of the State or its part-owned company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6764/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter for Córas Iompair Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to CIÉ for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Transport Infrastructure Provision

615. Deputy Tony McLoughlin asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if contact will be made with the NTA to seek funding in order to provide new bus shelters at the stop serving a location (details supplied) in County Sligo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6807/19]

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, including the installation of bus shelters.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in the matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for a direct reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 days.

Transport Infrastructure Provision

616. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the allocation in 2019 for the investment in the inter-urban rail network; the dates in 2019 28 rail carriages will re-enter service; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6878/19]

617. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the allocation in 2019 for the LocalLink programme; the date in 2019 the suspension on the purchase of diesel-only buses will be enacted; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6879/19]

619. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €2 billion allocation for 2019 for the DART expansion programme; the date in 2019 a new contract will be awarded; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6881/19]

620. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €75 million allocation for 2019 for the heavy rail enhancement programme; the date in 2019 the city centre resignaling project is expected to be completed; the date in 2019 the Pearse Street re-roofing will commence; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6882/19]

621. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €2 billion allocation for 2019 for BusConnects; the date in 2019 the planning process will begin; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6883/19]

623. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €150 million allocation for 2019 for the national train control centre; the date in 2019 the project will commence; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6885/19]

635. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €150 million allocation for 2019 for the systems integration and support programme; the date in 2019 the existing Leap ticketing system will be extended to debit and credit cards and e-ticketing deployment; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6897/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 616, 617, 619 to 621, inclusive, 623 and 635 together.

The Government is committed to delivering Project Ireland 2040 within the overall multi-year resource envelope that has been set out. For 2019, the capital allocation has increased by €1,325 million or just over 22% above the 2018 allocation as stated in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019.

With regard to implications arising from the National Children's Hospital project, the Government is currently considering how the additional cost pressures will be accommodated within the multi-year envelope, with a minimum of disruption to the planned rollout and delivery of important infrastructure projects under Project Ireland 2040, which I am pleased to report are proceeding at a strong rate. At this time, there are no implications for the allocations for the public transport-related projects referred to by the Deputy from the financing of the National Children's Hospital.

In terms of investment in the inter-urban heavy rail network, funding to be provided in 2019 to Iarnród Éireann is in line with the allocations provided by Project Ireland 2040 which importantly means that the 'steady state' level of investment is met, as measured on an annualised basis.

In relation to the other projects and programmes referred to, the National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the development and implementation of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) and for securing the provision of public passenger transport services nationally.

In light of the NTA's responsibilities in the programmes and projects referred to by the Deputy, I have referred the Deputy's questions to the NTA for a more detailed direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Greenways Funding

618. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €56 million allocation for 2019 for the greenways strategy; the projects to be delivered in 2019; the dates in 2019 these projects will be completed; if they will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6880/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The allocation for Greenways for the years 2019 to 2021 is €52.3m. €13.3m has been allocated for 2019.

A funding call for Greenways under the recently published Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways closed on November 30th 2018 and my officials are currently examining the applications. I expect to be in a position to allocate funding to the selected projects under this call in Quarter 2. However, as they have not been chosen yet, I have no further details as to their likely commencement and completion dates.

At present funding is in place for a number of previously funded Greenways and it is expected that the Maynooth to Athlone section of the Galway to Dublin Greenway will be completed in 2019.

The Government is committed to delivering Project Ireland 2040 within the overall multi-year resource envelope that has been set out. For 2019, the capital allocation has increased by €1,325 million or just over 22% above the 2018 allocation as stated in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019.

At this time, there are no implications for the allocation for this programme from the financing of the National Children's Hospital.

Questions Nos. 619 to 621, inclusive, answered with Question No. 616.

Road Projects Expenditure

622. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €200 million allocation in 2019 for the N22 Ballyvourney to Macroom route; the date in 2019 building will commence; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6884/19]

624. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €115 million allocation in 2019 for the Dunkettle interchange; the date in 2019 construction will commence; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6886/19]

625. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €100 million allocation in 2019 for the N25 Dungloe to Glenties road; the date in 2019 the project will be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6887/19]

627. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €39 million allocation in 2019 for the N56 Mountcharles to Inver Road route; the date in 2019 the project will be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6889/19]

629. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €42 million allocation in 2019 for the Listowel bypass; the date in 2019 it will be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6891/19]

636. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €592 million allocation in 2019 for the M11 Gorey to Enniscorthy motorway; the date in 2019 the project will be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6898/19]

637. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €385 million allocation in 2019 for the N25 New Ross bypass; the date in 2019 the project will be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6899/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 622, 624, 625, 627, 629, 636 and 637 together.

The Government is committed to delivering Project Ireland 2040 within the overall multi-year resource envelope that has been set out. For 2019, the capital allocation has increased by €1,325 million or just over 22% above the 2018 allocation as stated in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019.

With regard to implications arising from the National Children's Hospital project, the Government is currently considering how the additional cost pressures will be accommodated with-

in the multi-year envelope, with a minimum of disruption to the planned rollout and delivery of important infrastructure projects under Project Ireland 2040.

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 construction of individual national roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

At this time, there are no implications for the allocation for this project or programme from the financing of the National Children's Hospital.

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.

Question No. 623 answered with Question No. 616.

Questions Nos. 624 and 625 answered with Question No. 622.

Road Projects Expenditure

626. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €52 million allocation in 2019 for the Coonagh to Knockalisheen route; the date in 2019 the project will commence; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; and if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6888/19]

630. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €18 million allocation in 2019 for a facility (details supplied); the date in 2019 it will be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6892/19]

632. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €7 million allocation in 2019 for the Portlaoise southern distributor road; the date in 2019 the project will be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6894/19]

633. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €5 million allocation in 2019 for the Laytown to Bettystown link road; the date in 2019 the project will be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6895/19]

634. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €4 million allocation in 2019 for the Dingle relief road; the date in 2019 the project will be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6896/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 626, 630 and 632 to 634, inclusive, together.

The Government is committed to delivering Project Ireland 2040 within the overall multi-

year resource envelope that has been set out. For 2019, the capital allocation has increased by €1,325 million or just over 22% above the 2018 allocation as stated in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019. With regard to implications arising from the National Children's Hospital project, the Government is currently considering how the additional cost pressures will be accommodated within the multi-year envelope, with a minimum of disruption to the planned rollout and delivery of important infrastructure projects under Project Ireland 2040.

The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from the Council's own resources supplemented by State road grants.

Each local authority is the contracting authority for the purpose of implementation of the regional and local road improvement projects included in Project Ireland 2040 and is responsible for the project schedule.

The figures mentioned in the Deputy's Parliamentary Questions are the total estimated cost of each project. As regards grant expenditure to date and 2019 allocations, the Regional and Local Road allocation and payment booklets available in the Oireachtas library provide details of grant payments and allocations. The Capital Tracker published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform provides information on the status of the projects. The relevant link is:

<https://www.per.gov.ie/en/investment-projects-and-programmes-tracker/>

At this time, there are no implications for the allocation for this project or programme from the financing of the National Children's Hospital.

Question No. 627 answered with Question No. 622.

Sports Facilities Expenditure

628. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €26 million allocation in 2019 for the national indoor arena phase 2; the date in quarter 1 of 2019 it will be completed; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6890/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Government is committed to delivering Project Ireland 2040 within the overall multi-year resource envelope that has been set out. For 2019, the capital allocation has increased by €1,325 million or just over 22% above the 2018 allocation as stated in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019. With regard to implications arising from the National Children's Hospital project, the Government is currently considering how the additional cost pressures will be accommodated within the multi-year envelope, with a minimum of disruption to the planned rollout and delivery of important infrastructure projects under Project Ireland 2040, which I am pleased to report are proceeding at a strong rate.

Sport Ireland, which is funded by my Department, is the statutory body with responsibility for the development of the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus at Abbotstown.

Work on the development of Phase 2 of the National Indoor Arena commenced in July 2017. Phase 2 comprises 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. The cost of the project is €26m, €6m of which was allocated in 2017, with €18m allocated in 2018 and €2m allocated for completion of the project in 2019. The project was due for completion in mid-2019 but it is currently progressing ahead of schedule and is now expected to be ready for handover to Sport Ireland in March 2019.

At this time, there are no implications for the allocation for this project from the financing of the National Children's Hospital.

Question No. 629 answered with Question No. 622.

Question No. 630 answered with Question No. 626.

Sports Facilities Expenditure

631. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €16 million allocation in 2019 for the velodrome and national badminton centre; the date in 2019 building will commence; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6893/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Government is committed to delivering Project Ireland 2040 within the overall multi-year resource envelope that has been set out. For 2019, the capital allocation has increased by €1,325 million or just over 22% above the 2018 allocation as stated in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019. With regard to implications arising from the National Children's Hospital project, the Government is currently considering how the additional cost pressures will be accommodated within the multi-year envelope, with a minimum of disruption to the planned rollout and delivery of important infrastructure projects under Project Ireland 2040, which I am pleased to report are proceeding at a strong rate.

Sport Ireland, which is funded by my Department, is the statutory body with responsibility for the development of the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus at Abbotstown.

Under the National Development Plan 2018-2027, €16m has been committed to develop a National Velodrome and Badminton Centre at the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus in 2020 and 2021. The proposed facility will comprise a 250-metre cycling track, 12-16 Badminton Courts in the in-track area, spectator seating and ancillary facilities including office space. Sport Ireland has begun preparation on the tendering process and anticipates that a tender will be published in Q3/Q4 of 2019.

At this time, there are no implications for the allocation for this project from the financing of the National Children's Hospital.

Questions No. 632 to 634, inclusive, answered with Question No. 626.

Question No. 635 answered with Question No. 616.

Questions Nos. 636 and 637 answered with Question No. 622.

Driver Test Data

638. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the level of training undertaken by driver test examiners nationally; the frequency examiners are retrained in the rules of the road and the way in which to conduct a test; and his plans to put an amnesty in place for older drivers that may not have a full driver licence. [6940/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

Public Transport Fares

639. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if Leap cards will be introduced for commuters at stations in south County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6961/19]

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 ticketing technology.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in the matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for a more detailed reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 days.

Driver Test Waiting Lists

640. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of persons awaiting driver test dates by county; the average waiting time; and the longest waiting time, in tabular form. [6962/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

Public Transport Fares

641. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of his engagement on the proposed plans for free inter-rail travel across the EU for students including those over 18 years of age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6964/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The proposal for free InterRail across the EU referred to by the Deputy is a European Commission initiative, which was launched following a proposal from the European Parliament. I understand that just over 14,500 free travel passes have been allocated to 18-year-olds from across the European Union for travel in 2019.

The passes were allocated by means of an online competition and the successful applicants will be able to travel up to a maximum of 30 days and visit up to four different country destina-

tions between April and October of this year.

The Commission is planning to launch the next application round in summer 2019. Specific dates and further information will be announced on the European Youth Portal in due course.

Public Transport Fares

642. Deputy Declan Breathnach asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will consider allowing the use of Leap cards on rail and bus services to areas outside of the short hop zone in north County Dublin and County Louth in view of the fact that the short hop fare zone does not extend beyond Balbriggan going north from Dublin city; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that Leap cards are accepted on private coach services to these areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6974/19]

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 regulation of fares in relation to public passenger transport services. I have, therefore, referred 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.

Road Safety

643. Deputy James Browne asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding safety measures at Kyle Cross between Enniscorthy and Wexford on the N11; if TII has examined this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6992/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. Under the Roads Acts 1993-2015, the planning, design and construction 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.

Ministerial Meetings

644. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the most recent occasion he formally met a person (details supplied); the issues discussed; and when he will next meet formally with the CEO. [6997/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I met with Dalton Philips, CEO of daa, on Friday, 23 November 2018. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for daa to present to me the company's plans for the short to medium-term development of Dublin Airport.

I am scheduled to meet the CEO again next Thursday, 14 February 2019, when I attend the sod-turning ceremony for the new North Runway at Dublin Airport.

Transport Policy

645. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to allow consumers who choose to utilise renewable compressed natural gas made from biomass to fuel their vehicles the same benefits as those being extended to electric cars in the interest of encouraging rural transport changes for which range anxiety is a major issue. [7001/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Firstly, I would highlight to the Deputy that battery technology in electric vehicles (EVs) has substantially developed over recent years. Models currently available in Ireland can achieve ranges of up to 400km on a single charge. As battery technology continues to improve, it can be assumed that in time all consumers, including those based in very isolated rural areas, will be able to confidently transition away from traditionally fuelled vehicles to EVs. It is clear that this transition is already underway, with a marked increase in EV sales in the first month of this year. Of course, EVs are not the only alternative fuel or technology available to reduce transport emissions. A wider range of alternative fuels and technologies, particularly for the heavy duty sector, must be incorporated into the national fuel mix if we are to decarbonise the sector.

The potential future role of compressed natural gas (CNG) and biomethane is currently being evaluated by the Low Emission Vehicle Taskforce, which is jointly chaired by my Department and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. CNG is particularly considered a suitable alternative to diesel in the freight sector. It is reported to emit few emissions, particularly NOx, SOx and particulate matter and importantly, acts as a pathway fuel to renewable biomethane which can dramatically reduce CO2 emissions in the transport sector. The anaerobic digestion industry, which produces biomethane, is also an important developing industry which could support a circular economy between the transport and agricultural sectors, while improving national fuel security and contributing towards sectoral targets to 2030 under the Renewable Energy Directive.

It is important to note that a number of valuable measures are already in place to encourage the uptake of CNG and biomethane vehicles in Ireland. In Budget 2015 the Government committed to maintaining the duty levels for natural gas and biomethane as a propellant at the EU minimum rate of €2.60 per GJ for a period of eight years, putting natural gas in a very competitive price position with diesel. In Budget 2019 an accelerated capital allowance scheme was also introduced for gas-propelled vehicles and related equipment. This enables businesses to write down the purchase cost of such vehicles or equipment up-front in the year of purchase rather than spread over 8 years. Furthermore, the on-going deliberations of the Low Emission Vehicle Taskforce will include, inter alia, the role of further incentives, potential obligation schemes, and the requirement for additional fuelling infrastructure in promoting alternative and low emitting fuels including CNG. It is expected that the Taskforce will deliver its findings and recommendations to the Government later this year.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

646. Deputy Peter Burke asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of a sports capital grant (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7035/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) is the primary vehicle for Government support for the development of sports and physical recreation facilities and the purchase of non-personal sports equipment throughout the country.

Given the substantial investments made under the programme, it is a requirement that where grants or cumulative grants reach a certain threshold, the State's investment is protected by way of deeds of covenant and charge against the grantee's property. This provides the Department with a guarantee that grant aided facilities will continue to be used for sporting purposes. The Office of the Chief State Solicitor acts on behalf of the Department to ensure that all legal requirements are completed.

In order for the Department to issue formal approval and allow for the subsequent payment to the club referred to by the Deputy, the Chief State Solicitor's Office must confirm that the legal formalities are complete. I understand the Chief State Solicitor's Office have been in communication with the Club's solicitor in order to get all outstanding matters resolved. Furthermore, officials from the Sports Capital Division in my Department have also been in direct contact with the club to give guidance as to aspects of the grants process they have to complete in order to progress the application.

Once my Department receives confirmation that the legal formalities have been complete, there will be no undue delay in paying the grant subject to the other terms and conditions of the SCP being adhered to.

Road Network

647. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of a TII licence application (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7049/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. Under the Roads Acts 1993-2015, the planning, design and management 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 this matter to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Services for People with Disabilities

648. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the plans the NTA has in place to provide wheelchair accessible buses and infrastructure on the route 64 service from Galway to Derry, specifically at the Donegal town, Ballyshannon and Sligo stops; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7076/19]

649. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the NTA filled the recently advertised position of transport accessibility manager; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7077/19]

653. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which the remit of the transport accessibility manager of the NTA will be achieved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7081/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 648, 649 and 653 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport.

Under the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008, the National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for promoting the development of an integrated, accessible public transport network.

In light of the NTA's responsibilities in this matter, I have forwarded your questions to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Services for People with Disabilities

650. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the person or body responsible for the provision of the physical infrastructure at bus stops to accommodate wheelchair users; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7078/19]

651. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there is a specific budget for the provision of the physical infrastructure at bus stops to accommodate wheelchair users; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7079/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 650 and 651 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 provision of bus stops and the Accessibility Retrofit Programme.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in the matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for a more detailed reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 days.

Road Projects Expenditure

652. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding has been committed specifically for the construction of Fintra bridge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7080/19]

654. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated final cost for the refurbishment of Tír Chonaill bridge, Donegal town, County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7082/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 652 and 654 together.

The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from local authorities' own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.

Questions - Written Answers

Before the financial crisis, local authorities could apply on a regular basis for grants for Specific (schemes costing less than €5m) and Strategic Improvement Grants (schemes costing more than €5m) for the strengthening, widening or realignment of regional and local roads. However, the extent of the cutbacks in grant funding during the crisis meant this grant scheme had to be curtailed from 2013 because expenditure on maintenance/renewal was falling well short of what was required to adequately maintain the regional and local road network.

The current Capital Plan does provide for the gradual build-up in funding for the road network but it will take some years yet to reach the level required even for the basic maintenance and renewal of the network. For this reason, there continues to be very limited scope for funding new or additional projects under the Specific and Strategic Grant Programmes.

Any projects proposed by local authorities for consideration under these Grant Programmes are assessed by the Department on a case-by-case basis. All projects put forward by local authorities for consideration must comply with the requirements of the Public Spending Code and the Department's Capital Appraisal Framework (CAF) and it is important for local authorities to prioritise projects within their overall area of responsibility with these requirements in mind.

As regards the Tir Chonaill bridge, Donegal town, the 2019 grant allocation for the rehabilitation of the bridge is €900,000. The estimated total cost of the project is €1.8 million.

In relation to Fintra bridge, an allocation of €150,000 is being provided in 2019 for the scheme which is at route option selection stage.

Question No. 653 answered with Question No. 648.

Question No. 654 answered with Question No. 652.

Railway Stations

655. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the action taken to date to address the severe shortage of car parking spaces at Sallins train station, County Kildare; the progress on the issue to date; when it is expected that substantive action will be taken on the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7086/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure and services in the Greater Dublin Area. Iarnród Éireann receive Exchequer funding via the NTA in relation to the provision of car parking at train stations on the heavy rail network in the GDA, including Sallins railway station.

I have therefore forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Traffic Management

656. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when plans will be advanced to combat the traffic congestion on the M50 route; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7087/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation

to the national roads programme. 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 to you in respect of improvement measures for the M50. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Swimming Pool Programme Applications

657. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when an application for grant aid for a swimming pool in north County Kildare is likely to be accepted and supported either through the sports capital programme or otherwise with particular reference to the need to accommodate the growing population in each of the main towns and adjoining areas in addition to an increasing student population; if negotiations have been advanced in respect of the previously aired project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7088/19]

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 local authorities towards the capital costs of new swimming pools or the refurbishment of existing pools.

In January 2016, my Department contacted local authorities and sought expressions of interest in a limited round of swimming pool allocations. There were three expressions of interest received for new pools, two of which were valid , one in Lucan and Ballyogan in Dublin. The third was in North Kildare but was not valid as the Council did not have title to the proposed site. Following an examination of the valid proposals it was decided to include a new swimming pool in Lucan in the LASPP.

The National Sports Policy was published on 25th July 2018 and provided for a Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF) with at least €100 million available over the coming years. The fund was launched in November 2018 and is open to applications until 17 April 2019. The fund will initially focus on the requirements and development plans of National Governing Bodies of Sport and Local Authorities, all of which received letters inviting them to make applications. Swimming Pool projects will be considered for funding. The full details of the programme are available on the Department's website.

Tourism Promotion

658. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he can identify options for the promotion of tourism here during the off season with particular reference to the need to compete with other countries and locations in the same or alternative markets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7089/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The matter raised by the Deputy is an operational matter for the board and management of Tourism Ireland. Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy's question to Tourism Ireland for direct reply. Please contact my private office if you have not received a reply within ten working days.

Transport Policy

659. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he continues to evaluate the transport system, that is, road and rail, public and private, to ensure the development of efficient and effective transport in all areas nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7090/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, last year Government launched Project Ireland 2040 which sets out both the planned spatial development and investment framework for the coming years.

Within that framework, Government has committed to major investments in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the transport network. These investments reflect the needs which have been identified by my Department and its various agencies, during the development of Project Ireland 2040.

The investment committed to within the National Development Plan, as part of Project Ireland 2040, will result in the delivery of a number of significant projects and programmes, such as:

- The BusConnects programme of improved bus services and infrastructure in all major cities, including significantly enhanced cycling facilities also;
- The MetroLink; and
- The DART Expansion programme.

Those projects and programmes will be complemented by other planned investments, such as the significantly enhanced funding allocated toward the heavy rail network nationally, the development of a new National Train Control Centre, the roll-out of strategic cycle networks in the major cities and a programme of investment in national and regional roads as detailed within Project Ireland 2040.

The Deputy may wish to be aware that my Department is currently conducting two further pieces of analyses –

1. a review of public transport policy, as committed under the Programme for a Partnership Government; and
2. the Planning Land Use and Transport - Outlook 2040 (or PLUTO 2040) study, which forms part of my Department's response to Project Ireland 2040.

Both of these work-streams will be subject to public consultation in 2019 and will be a very useful addition to our evaluation of the transport needs of the country.

In addition to this Department-led work, each of the three regional assemblies is currently developing a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy to support delivery of the National Planning Framework. Development of these strategies includes an evaluation of the needs of the transport network in each region and outlining potential developments to improve performance.

Finally, at a metropolitan level there are transport strategies either in place, as in the case of Dublin and Galway, or under development, as in the case of Cork and Limerick, which detail the planned development of transport networks in the relevant urban areas over the next 20 to 30 years.

As the Deputy can see, a significant amount of analysis has been completed, and is continu-

ing, in order to ensure we plan appropriately for the delivery of the transport infrastructure and services required in the coming years.

Question No. 660 answered with Question No. 63.

Brexit Preparations

661. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he expects to develop facilities at ports and airports in order to enhance access to the European Union and the global community in the aftermath of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7092/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As an island nation, Ireland is entirely dependent on maritime and aviation networks for trade, tourism and the movement of people. Safeguarding the continuing free flow of trade is a priority for my Department in preparing for Brexit.

In this context, the National Development Plan sets out a range of Investments that will strongly support the continued development and improvement in Ireland's ports and State airports by the relevant commercial State bodies, consistent with sectoral priorities already defined through National Ports Policy and National Aviation Policy, in addition to continued Exchequer support for the small regional airports.

Significant investment currently and over the coming years in Ireland's airports and ports will play a major role in safeguarding and enhancing Ireland's international connectivity which is fundamental to Ireland's international competitiveness, trading performance in both goods and services and enhancing its attractiveness to foreign direct investment.

In addition to this, and In light of the UK's intention to leave the EU on 29 March 2019, physical infrastructure will be required for customs, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) and health checks and controls at Dublin Port, Rosslare Harbour and Dublin Airport.

The establishment of these controls for both a withdrawal agreement and a no-deal exit scenario is being undertaken by the OPW and overseen by an Interdepartmental Group at Secretary General level, chaired by the Secretary General of the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform. The Group has focussed on these three locations for which we are heavily dependent on connectivity to the UK.

In 2018, my Department, in conjunction with the Irish Maritime Development Office, commissioned a Ports Capacity Study to assess capacity within the Irish port system to meet present and future demand. Work on the study is ongoing.

The Department has also assessed the maritime capacity for direct sailings between Ireland and continental EU ports as a potential alternative route for trade currently using the UK Landbridge. Based on consultations with the shipping sector and wider, the preliminary assessment is that sufficient capacity will be available on direct routes to continental ports from end March 2019, and should demand for further capacity arise, the shipping sector can respond quickly to meet such demands.

Tourism Industry

662. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the

extent to which he expects the tourism industry to develop in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7093/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): 2018 was another record-breaking year for tourism in Ireland and marked 8 years of consecutive growth in overseas visit numbers. In 2019 Tourism Ireland's aim is to grow overseas tourism revenue by 6% while Fáilte Ireland will continue to develop Ireland's tourism offering and provide enterprise supports to the industry. I have referred the Deputy's question to the tourism agencies for further details of their plans for 2019. Please contact my private office if you have not received a reply within ten working days.

Question No. 663 answered with Question No. 63.

Sports Events

664. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he continues to promote Ireland as a sports event centre with particular reference to encouraging such events here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7095/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The hosting of sports events, both participative and spectator sports, can provide great opportunities to showcase Ireland and drive international visitor numbers. In addition, the media coverage of sports events helps to put Ireland onto travel itineraries as a holiday destination.

Accordingly, I am very supportive of the work of the tourism agencies and the national governing bodies of sport to attract international events, subject, of course, to an assessment of the costs and benefits involved in any State financial support, in particular the number of overseas visitors.

Fáilte Ireland provides financial assistance, subject to eligibility criteria, to applicants who are proposing to bid to host international events (including sporting events) in Ireland that would attract significant numbers of international visitors. When an event with international tourism appeal is confirmed for Ireland, Tourism Ireland would then promote it in relevant markets overseas.

In terms of forthcoming sporting events, as the Deputy is aware, following a successful collaborative bid from the Football Association of Ireland, Dublin City Council and my Department, Ireland will host four games as part of the UEFA EURO 2020 football tournament in June 2020. Ireland will also host the UEFA European Under 17 Championships in 2019 and, in American Football, Navy and Notre Dame will return to Ireland in 2020 for a high profile US college football game having previously played here in 2012.

Minister Ross and I also support efforts to explore possibilities to host other major sporting events. With regard to soccer, we welcomed the announcement by the FAI and IFA of their intention to submit a joint bid to host the UEFA European Under 21 Championships in 2023. In addition, the national football associations of England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland are in discussions about the feasibility of bidding to host the 2030 FIFA World Cup and those considerations are at an early stage. In the sport of golf, we are exploring the opportunities that may exist for hosting the Ryder Cup in Ireland in the future.

Rural Transport Services Provision

665. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he has continued to evaluate rural transport requirements with a view to bringing transport to persons rather than forcing persons to converge on towns and villages as the population increases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7096/19]

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.

As I advised the Deputy in response to his identical Questions on 06 November, 2018 (ref no 45347/18) and 12 December, 2018 (ref no 52455/18) the National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for securing the provision of public passenger transport services nationally. It also has national responsibility for integrated local and rural transport, including management of the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) which now operates under the Local Link brand.

Noting this, I forwarded the Deputy's Question of 06 November to the NTA for direct reply and as I said in my reply to the Deputy's Question of 12 December, I am advised that the NTA replied to the Deputy on 12 November last.

Road Projects

666. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the timescale for the provision of vital major road networks nationally in the commuter belt or elsewhere with a view to maximising access, reduction of delays and alleviation of traffic bottlenecks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7097/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) is a statutory body with responsibility for the delivery of the national roads programme. Under the Roads Acts 1993-2015, the planning, design and construction of individual roads is a matter for the relevant road authority in relation to local and regional roads, or for TII, in conjunction with the local authorities concerned, in relation to national roads.

Noting the above position, I have referred the question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Brexit Issues

667. Deputy Lisa Chambers asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has formally discussed with his European counterparts the prospect of more direct maritime links between Ireland and continental Europe; if so, the details of these discussions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7122/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I have met a number of my counterparts in relation to direct maritime connectivity to continental ports.

I met my French counterpart, Minister Elisabeth Borne, on Brexit matters in Dublin on 23 November 2018. I highlighted the importance of transport connectivity and Ireland's concerns in particular in relation to the continued use of the UK landbridge when the UK leaves the EU. We discussed also the potential implications for ports both in Ireland and in France given the

levels of trade that both of our countries have with the UK. Minister Borne shared many of my concerns and said that France, like Ireland, was preparing for all scenarios, including facilitation of EU and Irish traffic at Calais.

In May 2018, I met both Professor Péter Balázs, the EU Coordinator for the North-Sea Mediterranean TEN-T Corridor, and Brian Simpson, the EU Coordinator for the Motorways of the Sea programme. Brexit and maritime connectivity was a key point on the agenda and we discussed their views in particular in relation to CEF and Motorways of the Sea funding and opportunities. Both Coordinators were cognisant of the unique challenges facing Ireland as a result of the UK's decision to leave the European Union.

In October 2017, I met the EU Transport Commissioner, Ms Violeta Bulc, during her visit to Ireland and raised with her Ireland's concerns in relation to the implications of Brexit for transport and connectivity.

Brexit Issues

668. Deputy Lisa Chambers asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has assessed the capacity of Irish ships to take additional freight, both load on and load off and roll-on roll-off; if so, the details of this assessment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7123/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department has assessed the maritime capacity for direct sailings between Ireland and continental EU ports as a potential alternative route for trade currently using the Landbridge. Based on consultations with the shipping sector and wider, the preliminary assessment is that sufficient capacity will be available on direct routes to continental ports from end March 2019.

I briefed Government on this in January 2019 and indicated that I will keep the matter under review, in light of the evolving situation, and revert to Government with a further report before the end of February.

There are four shipping lines operating direct services from Irish ports to the Continent offering up to 20 crossings per week. Over 20 shipping operators provide scheduled shipping services from Ireland. This includes four companies providing year round scheduled passenger services between Ireland and the UK and France.

Shipping services are market driven and ferry operators have in the past responded to economic developments and increased or decreased capacity in response to these developments.

There have already been responses from the shipping Companies. CLdN launched a new 234m Ro-Ro freight ferry, the M.V. Celine, with a capacity of 8,000 lane metres on the Rotterdam-Zeebrugge-Dublin route in October 2017. The Port of Cork saw the addition of a new route in May 2018 with Brittany Ferries' commencing the service to Santander and Roscoff with the Connemara, whose capacity is 27,414 GT. The deployment of the Irish Ferries ferry, W B Yeats, on the Dublin-Cherbourg route will add significant capacity to this route. The Company has also ordered a second larger ship for delivery in 2020 which will further increase its freight capacity.

Bus Éireann Fleet

669. Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport

the difference in area dimension of the door space on the new bus fleet in operation in Waterford city since December 2018; the width between the driver area and the baggage area on the same buses as opposed to those which have since been removed from service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7132/19]

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, including PSO bus fleet procurement.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in the matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for a more detailed reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 days.

Child Abuse Reports

670. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the serious incident review that she and the Minister for Justice and Equality commissioned in 2018 into the handling of alleged incidences of child sexual abuse in the Munster area. [6449/19]

680. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the serious incident review that she commissioned in 2018 into the handling of alleged incidences of child sexual abuse in the Munster area. [6768/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 670 and 680 together.

The Deputy is referring to an independent review of the management of a complex and serious case of alleged child abuse and neglect involving sixteen children in four families, which I intended to commission, with the agreement of the Minister for Justice and Equality.

This review was intended to be a short, focused, independent 'Serious Incident' review of the actions taken in the case, acknowledging the fact that there is no evidence of any mishandling of the case by either Tusla or An Garda Síochána.

Terms of reference for such a review were drawn up last year following work by my officials and officials in the Department of Justice and Equality, with the assistance of the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection, Dr Geoffrey Shannon.

Given the complex and unusual nature of this case, and, above all, the importance of ensuring that this non-statutory review does not risk prejudicing the on-going investigation and criminal prosecution, these Terms of Reference were jointly submitted by Minister Flanagan and I for the consideration of the Attorney General.

Having considered all relevant matters surrounding the proposed review, the Attorney General has recommended that no such review be undertaken at this time. The Attorney General cited a number of considerations, most notably the significant potential for the review to have a prejudicial effect on ongoing criminal proceedings.

In light of the Attorney General's advice, Minister Flanagan and I have agreed to postpone the review rather than risk affecting matters before the courts. Matters may be revisited at a later date to determine if further action is warranted and, if so, the form that such action might take.

Child and Family Agency Investigations

671. Deputy Peter Burke asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will direct Tusla to investigate the case of two children (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6273/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I can advise the Deputy that I have referred the matter to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, for their appropriate attention.

I must remind the Deputy that I am not in a position to intercede directly as there is an obligation that Tusla performs its functions independently. I am also precluded from giving a direction to Tusla that interferes with the exercise of professional judgement in a particular case. These aspects are referred to in section 8(11) and section 47(5), respectively, of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013.

The Deputy may also be aware that it would not be appropriate for me to comment on matters which have been subject to court decisions.

Early Childhood Care and Education Data

672. Deputy Ruth Coppinger asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the level of funding for 2017 and 2018, respectively, for programmes (details supplied). [6313/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Investment in early learning and care and school age childcare has grown over the last number of years; between 2017 and 2018 there was a 23% increase in expenditure across the childcare programmes referenced in the Deputy's question.

The following table outlines the amount spent on each programme across 2017 and 2018.

Childcare programme*	2017	2018	Variance
	€m	€m	€m
Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)	€256.6	€275.6	€19.0
Training and Education Childcare (TEC)	€14.1	€10.4	-€3.7
Community Childcare Subvention Targeted (CCS & CCSP)	€56.4	€105.3	€48.9
Universal Childcare Subsidy (CCSU)	€7.4	€19.2	€11.8
Programme Supports Payment	€18.3	€18.7	€0.4
Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) (inclusive of Better Start AIM Inclusion Specialists)	€20.2	€29.9	€9.7
Totals	€373.0	€459.1	€86.1

*Please note the above figures exclude service delivery costs paid to Pobal to administer the programmes.

It should be noted that Training and Education Childcare (TEC) is a demand led scheme; the reduction in expenditure on this programme in 2018 reflects the downturn in registrations in comparison to 2017.

It should also be noted that the outturn for 2018 is provisional pending the completion of 2018 appropriation accounts.

[1] Funding for Higher Capitation on ECCE (in both 2017 and 2018) was c. 8.5% of the ECCE expenditure; in 2019, it is forecast that this percentage will be broadly in line with the previous two years.

Child and Family Agency Policy

673. Deputy John McGuinness asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 516 of 15 May 2018, the progress in providing the same level of insurance through Tusla to foster carers as they had with the HSE; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6394/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the Deputy is aware, foster carers are no longer covered by a commercial public liability insurance policy. Attempts by Tusla to secure continuing commercial cover have proved unsuccessful.

As I have mentioned in previous replies, pending a permanent solution, all foster carers have an indemnity on an individual basis where required. This is on an ex-gratia basis as a temporary measure to address immediate individual cases while the overall indemnification issues are being resolved.

Again, the Deputy will be aware that, I fully support extending State indemnity to foster carers. My Department has been in discussion with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on the matter, and my intention is to include foster carers under the General Indemnity Scheme operated by the State Claims Agency as soon as possible. In this regard, work is ongoing with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel to draft the necessary Order for Government.

This process has taken longer than expected due to a number of technical issues arising in the course of the approvals process. These issues need to be resolved to ensure that foster carers will have the necessary cover to carry out their very important role. I am currently awaiting confirmation from the Office of Parliamentary Council that the last of these issues is now settled. When this is confirmed and the draft Order is finalised, it will be possible to proceed to its submission for Government approval in the usual manner.

I have spoken to the Irish Foster Carers Association (IFCA) on this matter, most recently at a meeting on 17 January, and recognise that this is of considerable interest to the association and to all foster carers. My officials have kept IFCA up to date on a continuous basis. In addition, I understand that Tusla has also made publicly available the information provided to IFCA so as to communicate the position to those foster carers who are not members of that association.

I am hopeful that this matter will be resolved shortly.

Child Abuse Reports

674. Deputy Sean Sherlock asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her officials are engaged with an organisation on a matter (details supplied). [6554/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I can assure the Deputy that my officials are receiving regular updates (on a monthly basis) from Scouting Ireland in respect of the historic file review. I met with representatives of Scouting Ireland on 28 January to be updated on the Independent barrister's report into issues surrounding an allegation of sexual assault by an adult volunteer against another adult volunteer. My officials met with Scouting Ireland on 7 February to discuss the detail and actions taken in relation to the

latest available figures on the allegations of abuse. My officials are also being regularly updated on any internal policy changes.

I have requested that my officials continue to monitor the implementation of the outstanding recommendations of Jillian van Turnhout's report over the coming months. As the Deputy may be aware, the report contained a number of recommendations in the areas of safeguarding, management of the organisation, governance proposals and charities regulation. A further progress report detailing the implementation of the recommendations currently outstanding must be submitted by Scouting Ireland to me by 31 March 2019 in advance of the April 2019 AGM.

I have already decided to review my decision on funding to Scouting Ireland at the end of April 2019. Scouting Ireland is currently being provided with interim funding up until the end of April 2019. I will undertake a further review of funding for Scouting Ireland beyond April 2018 following receipt of an updated progress report from the organisation in March 2019.

Affordable Childcare Scheme

675. Deputy Brendan Griffin asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if the new affordable childcare scheme roll-out will be postponed until January 2020 in view of the significant administration requirements faced by childcare providers each September (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6562/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The new Affordable Childcare Scheme will launch in October 2019, replacing all previous targeted childcare programmes with a single, streamlined and user-friendly scheme. Ultimately, this streamlining will tangibly reduce the overall administration which childcare providers will be required to undertake.

To allow for continuity of service, the existing childcare programmes will continue to operate until the launch of the Affordable Childcare Scheme.

Applications for the existing programmes can still be made up until the new Scheme goes live in October. After this time, no new applications for these existing schemes will be allowed.

To make the transition as smooth and safe as possible, families can choose to make the switch to the new Scheme immediately on its launch or to remain on their existing programme for a final programme year.

The free preschool programme, ECCE, will not be affected by these changes.

As part of the development of the Affordable Childcare Scheme, considerable, sustained engagement has taken place with consultative and focus groups to inform the design and development of the system. Childcare providers have been, and continue to be, integral to this process.

My Department will shortly be rolling out a comprehensive programme of information, training and supports for parents, providers and other stakeholders. Training for childcare providers will be provided across multiple platforms, including classroom-based and online, up until the launch date. This training will be tailored and timed to suit the needs of busy childcare providers, and has been designed to ensure that childcare providers are well prepared to operate the Scheme in advance of its launch.

The Affordable Childcare Scheme will subsidise the cost of childcare for tens of thousands of parents, many of whom, to date, have not been able to access such support. As such, it is

imperative that DCYA acts as quickly as it can to introduce the new scheme, whilst of course offering supports to providers to assist them with the transition. It is important to note that the new scheme is also increasing investment in childcare services and accounts for some of the 117% increase in budget to the childcare sector over the last 4 years, from circa €260m in 2015 to €575m in 2019.

Ministerial Advisers Data

676. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of advisers and special advisers employed by her Department in 2017 and 2018 and to date in 2019; the areas of expertise covered by such advisers; the annual salaries associated with same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6565/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Following commencement of this Government on the 6th May 2016, I was appointed as Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. I appointed two Special Advisers. Both appointments were made in accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Instructions for Ministerial Appointments.

Following the appointment of our current Taoiseach on the 14th June 2017, I retained my Ministerial appointment to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and re-appointed both as my Special Advisers with effect from that date.

The duties assigned to Special Advisers are set out in paragraph 2 of Section 11 of the Public Service Management Act 1997 and are as follows:-

11(2) A Special Adviser to a Minister or to a Minister of State, as the case may be, shall—

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

(i) providing advice,

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

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

(b) be accountable to the Minister or the Minister of State, as the case may be, in the performance of those functions.

One the these Special Advisers provides advice on communications while the other advises on matters of policy.

Both my Special Advisers have been placed on the Principal Officer Standard Scale - PPC and are both currently on the 5th point of this scale.

Child and Family Agency Data

677. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further

to Parliamentary Question No. 236 of 6 December 2018, if a response regarding the number of complaints and-or referrals to Tusla made by sports bodies (details supplied) from 2014 to date has been received; the number of complaints and-or referrals made regarding sports bodies and-or persons working for the sports bodies from 2014 to date; the number of active investigations outstanding and-or ongoing concerning the sports bodies; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6627/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I apologise for the delay in responding to the Deputy. I have received clarification from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, on this matter. Tusla has advised that information in relation to specific sporting bodies is not gathered routinely and referral data relating to individual bodies is not collated. The focus of data collected at referral is the child at the centre of the concern.

Tusla does capture information on the general category of referrers and this is published in its annual review of adequacy report. The majority of referrals come from An Garda Síochána, followed by HSE/Tusla, schools and voluntary organisations.

Tusla's social workers are available to provide advice and consultation to referrers, and to receive information relating to a child welfare or protection matter. Tusla is committed to responding to all service users when they provide information on such matters.

Appointments to State Boards

678. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of boards or agencies her officials have been appointed to; if there are guidelines or protocols for members of staff being appointed to boards or agencies; if so, when same were last updated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6640/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): With regard to boards or agencies directly under the remit of my Department, there is one official from my Department serving on the Oberstown Board of Management. The legislative basis for this is Section 167(4)(a) of the Children Act 2001 which states:

“(4) Of the members of each board of management at least—

(a) one shall be an officer of the Minister..”

My Department follows the guidelines and protocols set out in Circular 12/2010: “Protocol for Civil Servants nominated to the Boards of non-commercial State bodies”.

Child and Family Agency Staff

679. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of social workers allocated to the Ballymun area by type of service provided; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6666/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla has advised me that it is not possible to provide the number of social workers allocated specifically to the Ballymun area, given that the teams operating within this area also cover Dublin 1, Dublin 3 and Dublin 9. Tusla has provided me with a breakdown of social workers in the Dublin North City area covering the aforementioned districts.

In the Dublin North City area there are a total of 53.5 (whole time equivalent) social workers covering Dublin 1, Dublin 3 and Dublin 9. This figure includes:

- 43.5 Frontline Social Workers;
- 7.5 Social Work Team Leaders;
- and 2.5 Principal Social Workers.

The services provided are as follows:

- 19 Social Workers are responsible for Child Protection;
- 23 Social Workers are responsible for Children in Care;
- and 11.5 (WTE) Social Workers are responsible for Foster Care.

Question No. 680 answered with Question No. 670.

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Foster Care Supports

681. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if financial support is provided in County Donegal to foster parents of those who, on reaching 18 years of age, continue to be cared for into adulthood and require mental health and disability services; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6934/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Every year more than 500 young people leave the care of the State. These young people are offered a wide range of services from different State actors including income supports, health supports, accommodation and education.

The aftercare provisions of the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015 came into force on the first of September 2017. This means that there is now a statutory obligation on Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, to prepare an aftercare plan for each eligible child and young person. This plan encompasses the range of supports that a young person may need from all service providers, including Tusla, to help them make the transition to independent adult life.

For young people with a disability or mental health support need, aftercare planning forms the basis of discussions between Tusla and the HSE to effectively manage the transition from child to adult services, based on assessed need. This is facilitated by Tusla via the local Aftercare Steering Group, with the HSE participating in the planning process and taking responsibility for the provision of the required services.

Following national consultation in 2017, a standardised aftercare allowance was introduced on the first of January 2018. The allowance currently amounts to €300 a week. Continuing in further education or training entitles the young person to receive the standardised aftercare allowance even after they turn 21. Where a young person in education or training remains with their former foster carer, the aftercare allowance is payable to the foster carer and a living allowance is agreed with the foster parent, the aftercare worker and the young adult. Where the young person continues with education or training and is in independent living, they directly receive the allowance.

Finally, and as the Deputy is aware, the provision of services for adults with disability or mental health related needs fall within the remit of the Health Service Executive.

Children in Care

682. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if there are sufficient private residential services to meet the demand required by Tusla; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6965/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla advise that there are currently 21 private providers nationally who operate 90 children's residential centres offering various placement types for children in the care of the State. As of 8th February, 2019, there were 224 young people in private residential care.

In deciding to place a young person in a residential centre, Tusla must take into account a number of variables to determine if the placement is suitable. Such factors include the individual requirements of the young person in need of a placement, the existing requirements of the young people currently in the residential centre and the staffing, additional supports, geographical profile, age/gender and purpose and function of the centre in question.

Tusla have also indicated that there are 38 young people who currently require placement in a private residential setting.

The requirements for private residential placements to meet the changing, complex and individual needs of children and young people vary on a daily basis. Due to this shifting pattern of complex need there may not be sufficient placements, at a given time, in private residential care to meet placement demand.

Tusla's National Private Placement Team (NPPT) review private residential centre vacancies on a daily basis. In the event of private centres reaching their capacity; or having no appropriate vacancies, the NPPT team continue to review vacancies daily and, as suitable vacancies arise, the appropriate referral and supporting information is issued to the identified private service provider.

For children awaiting private placements, it should be noted that Tusla actively manage their needs. For some, this takes place in a temporary residential setting. Others are supported in their community until a private residential placement, appropriate to their need, is available.

Child and Family Agency Services

683. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason a person (details supplied) has not received correspondence from Tusla or an educational welfare officer. [7103/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Educational Welfare Service (EWS) of Tusla has advised my Department that the EWS has not received a referral in relation to this student. The Educational Welfare Officer covering the region contacted the school principal and the principal has confirmed the school had not made a referral to Tusla EWS.

The Educational Welfare Officer advised the school principal that she is available to meet the student and his parents/guardians to discuss options available to the student if he is no lon-

ger attending school.

Local Drugs Task Forces

684. Deputy John Curran asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the expenditure and allocations attributable to drugs programmes that were made available in each of the past five years; the projects and programmes supported by the funding in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7112/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Responsibility for 21 youth related projects receiving funding under Local Drug Task Force (LDTF) funding transferred to my Department in 2011. These projects, targeting young people under the various pillars of the National Drug Strategy, provide a range of supports for young people by way of targeted drug prevention and awareness programmes as well as referrals.

The Value for Money and Policy Review of the Youth Funding programmes 2014 examined four of the targeted funding schemes, the Special Projects for Youth scheme, the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund 1 & 2, and Local Drug Task Force projects scheme. The review involved an in-depth scrutiny of a complex area to do with the impact youth service provision has in young people's lives.

Overall, the review had three key messages:

- The youth programmes can provide a significant contribution to improving outcomes for young people and should be considered for on-going public funding.
- The current model of performance management, governance and scheme design are not fit for purpose and needed complete reform
- A single scheme should replace the current four schemes with a clear focus on targeted young people.

The review makes a number of recommendations for the future operation of a new youth funding schemes to ensure an evidence-informed and outcomes focussed programme is designed to secure the optimal outcomes for young people.

As a result of the VFMPR report my Department is managing the most significant reform of youth services ever undertaken. This will provide an opportunity to identify need and to focus funding on young people most in need of intervention.

In advance of the introduction of a new single targeted funding scheme in 2020, a transition phase in 2019 will see the funding previously provided under the four funding programmes, including the LDTF funding, collapsed into one funding stream for 2019 to assist with preparations for the new scheme in 2020.

The tables below set out below are the Local Drug Task Force funding allocations for the past five years.

LDTF	2018	2017	2016
CDYSB Projects			
Administration	n/a	n/a	€33,336
Ballyfermot Youth Service - LDTF	€89,850	€77,450	€73,762
Bonnybrook Youth Project (Sphere 17)	€123,264	€120,864	€115,108

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LDTF	2018	2017	2016
BRYR (Ballymun Regional Youth Resource)	€114,271	€106,871	€101,782
Charlemount Community Association (SAYS)	€48,420	€46,558	€44,341
Cork Street & Maryland Community Project (DAYS - Donore Avenue Youth Service)	€31,013	€49,051	€46,716
Crosscare (Ballybough)	€51,162	€49,194	€46,852
Crosscare - L.E.A.P.P.	€129,272	€126,872	€120,830
Finglas Youth Resource Centre	€84,918	€82,518	€78,589
St. Michaels Youth Project	€47,681	€45,847	€45,183
St. Andrew's Youth Resource Centre	€54,340	€47,442	€43,664
SWICN - South West Inner City Network	€43,503	€41,830	€39,838
Sub-Total	€817,694	€794,497	€790,001
Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB Projects - Co Dublin			
Administration	n/a	n/a	€17,859
Ballyogan Youth Project	€44,489	€42,778	€40,741
Blanchardstown Peer Drug Ed. Prevention Prog.	€52,773	€50,743	€48,327
Clondalkin Travellers Development	€36,139	€34,749	€33,094
Shanganagh/Rathsallagh Youth Project	€54,237	€52,151	€49,667
St. Aengus Neighbourhood Youth Project	€53,334	€51,283	€48,841
Youth Support in Whitechurch	€39,629	€38,105	€36,290
Youth Skills/Peer Education	€37,300	€35,865	€34,157
Sub-Total	€317,901	€305,674	€308,977
Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB Projects - Dun Laoghaire			
Administration	n/a	n/a	€5,102
Alternative High	€41,522	€39,925	€38,023
Drug Prevention	€41,522	€39,925	€38,023
Sub-Total	€83,044	€79,850	€81,148
Total	€1,218,639	€1,180,021	€1,180,126
LDTF 2015	2015		
CDYSB Projects			
Administration	€32,523		
Ballybough Youth Project	€45,709		
Ballyfermot Youth Service - LDTF	€71,963		
Bonnybrook Youth Project (Sphere 17)	€112,301		
BRYR (Ballymun Regional Youth Resource)	€99,299		
Catholic Youth Care (Awareness Finglas Cabra)	€117,883		
Charlemount Community Association (SAYS)	€43,260		
Cork Street & Maryland Community Project (DAYS - Donore Avenue Youth Service)	€45,576		
Finglas Youth Resource Centre	€76,672		
St. Andrew's Youth Resource Centre	€44,081		
St. Michaels Youth Project	€42,599		
SWICN - South West Inner City Network	€38,867		
Sub-total	€770,732		

LDTF 2015	2015
Co. Dublin ETB Projects	
Administration	€17,423
Ballyogan Youth Project	€39,747
Blanchardstown Peer Drug Ed. Prevention Prog.	€47,148
Clondalkin Travellers Development	€32,287
Shanganagh/Rathsallagh Youth Project	€48,456
St. Aengus Neighbourhood Youth Project	€47,650
Youth Skills/Peer Education	€33,324
Youth Support in Whitechurch	€35,405
Sub Total	€301,441
Dun Laoghaire ETB Projects	
Administration	€4,978
Alternative High	€37,096
Drug Prevention	€37,096
Sub Total	€79,169
Total	€1,151,342
LDTF	2014
CDYSB Projects	
Administration	€32,523
Ballybough Youth Project	€45,709
Ballyfermot Youth Service - LDTF	€71,963
Bonnybrook Youth Project (Sphere 17)	€112,301
BRYR (Ballymun Regional Youth Resource)	€99,299
Catholic Youth Care (Awareness Finglas Cabra)	€117,883
Charlemont Community Association (SAYS)	€43,260
Cork Street & Maryland Community Project (DAYS - Donore Avenue Youth Service)	€45,576
Finglas Youth Resource Centre	€76,672
St. Andrew's Youth Resource Centre	€44,081
St. Michaels Youth Project	€42,599
SWICN - South West Inner City Network	€38,867
Sub-total	€770,732
Co. Dublin VEC Projects	
Administration	€17,423
Ballyogan Youth Project	€39,747
Blanchardstown Peer Drug Ed. Prevention Prog.	€47,148
Clondalkin Travellers Development	€32,287
Shanganagh/Rathsallagh Youth Project	€48,456
St. Aengus Neighbourhood Youth Project	€47,650
Youth Skills/Peer Education	€33,324
Youth Support in Whitechurch	€35,405
Sub Total	€301,441
Dun Laoghaire VEC Projects	
Administration	€4,978

LDTF	2014
Alternative High	€37,096
Drug Prevention	€37,096
Sub Total	€79,169
Total	€1,151,342

Childcare Services

685. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will address matters (details supplied) regarding childcare centres; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7127/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I wish to thank the Deputy for the matters raised. There appears to be three main areas of concern which centre on the following: the Board of Pobal, the Affordable Childcare Scheme and attendance records for childcare places under my Department's programmes. I will address these separately below.

Part 1: Pobal Board:

Pobal operates under the aegis of the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD). The Board of Pobal are appointed by the Minister of Rural and Community Development via the Public Appointments Service process. Consequently, any decisions regarding the structure of Pobal require the consideration of my cabinet colleague, Minister Ring, the officials of his department, and the Pobal Board. Notwithstanding this fact, Pobal does indeed administer a number of programmes and schemes on behalf of my Department and consequently, my officials liaised with their counterparts in DRCD with respect to the make-up of the Pobal Board upon its latest renewal.

On foot of this interdepartmental engagement, it is my understanding that my cabinet colleague has due regard for the benefits of direct expertise on the board of Pobal, recognising the importance of appointing persons from diverse backgrounds; with knowledge pertaining to the activities of Pobal. This due regard takes place in the context of ensuring a significant cohort of Pobal's board are equipped for the proper governance of the company, with respect to risk management, finance, governance, audit, etc. In the context of these multi-faceted concerns, I can confirm that the newly appointed Pobal board takes cognisance of the important role early learning and care and school age childcare plays in the overall delivery of Pobal's services. Accordingly, there are now four members of Pobal's board with extensive experience of the early years and youth sectors at policy and practitioner level:

- Ms. Patricia Ball O'Keeffe - qualified solicitor and consultant on child and family law issues

- Ms. Ann Hanley – Cavan County Childcare Committee employee

- Ms. Mary Mooty – extensive experience in the youth and childcare sectors and presently employed by Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board

- Mr. Fintan Breen - National Programme Co-ordinator for the Leadership for Inclusion in Early Years (LINC) programme developed under the ECCE Access and Inclusion Model

It should be noted for the sake of clarity, that my Department sets policy and Pobal implements this and administers schemes on behalf of my Department. The services Pobal provides

to my Department are managed under a multi-level governance framework, specifically service level agreements, programmes of work, and individual programme agreements, all of which are monitored closely via regular high level management meetings.

Part 2: Affordable Childcare Scheme:

The DCYA is planning for the Affordable Childcare Scheme to launch in October 2019, replacing all previous targeted childcare programmes with a single, streamlined and user-friendly scheme. Ultimately, this streamlining will tangibly reduce the overall administration which childcare providers will be required to undertake.

To allow for continuity of service, the existing childcare programmes will continue to operate until the launch of the Affordable Childcare Scheme.

Applications for the existing programmes can still be made up until the new Scheme goes live in October. After this time, no new applications for these existing schemes will be allowed.

To make the transition as smooth and safe as possible, existing registrants / families can choose to make the switch to the new Scheme immediately on its launch or to remain on their existing programme for a final programme year.

The free preschool programme, ECCE, will not be affected by these changes.

As part of the development of the Affordable Childcare Scheme, considerable, sustained engagement has taken place with consultative and focus groups to inform the design and development of the system. Childcare providers have been, and continue to be, integral to this process.

My Department will shortly be rolling out a comprehensive programme of information, training and supports for parents, providers and other stakeholders. Training for childcare providers will be provided across multiple platforms, including classroom-based and online, up until the launch date. This training will be tailored and timed to suit the needs of busy childcare providers, and has been designed to ensure that childcare providers are well prepared to operate the Scheme in advance of its launch.

The Affordable Childcare Scheme will subsidise the cost of childcare for tens of thousands of parents, many of whom, to date, have not been able to access such support. As such, it is imperative that DCYA acts as quickly as it can to introduce the new scheme, whilst of course offering supports to providers to assist them with the transition. It is important to note that the new scheme is also increasing investment in childcare services and accounts for some of the 117% increase in budget to the childcare sector over the last 4 years, from circa €260m in 2015 to €575m in 2019.

Part 3: Attendance versus registration only

For all of the early learning and care and school age childcare programmes funded by my Department, funding is provided based on children's attendance rather than registration. This reflects our responsibility to protect public funds by ensuring that the childcare places which are being publicly subsidised are being used.

It is the responsibility of service providers to ensure that they communicate with parents to ensure that children are registered for the level of childcare for which they actually attend. Neither Pobal nor my Department expect service providers to act as "truancy officers", however, in cases where a child's pattern of attendance is consistently below what they are registered for, then the service provider is expected to update PIP to reflect this.

I appreciate that recording attendance and updating PIP can be difficult for providers, and therefore how to guides, instructional videos and a good practice guide to keeping attendance records are available from Pobal. Further support is available from City and County Childcare Committees.

I acknowledge that there are financial implications for services where programme payments are reduced based on reductions in attendance. If these financial consequences affect the continued viability of a service, a range of supports are available through local City/County Childcare Committees and through Pobal's Case Management system. I would therefore recommend that affected services contact both Pobal and their local CCC, who will offer support.

The forthcoming information and training sessions mentioned above, will I believe, provide assurances to service providers re the how the design of the scheme recognises the needs of parents/families and indeed providers.

Local Authority Boundaries

686. Deputy Sean Sherlock asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his plans to keep areas in County Cork that are due to move to the control of Cork City Council within his remit for funding programmes such as TidyTowns and community development. [6308/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The responsibility for the detailed planning and implementation of the re-organisation process, arising from the Cork boundary change, rests primarily with the local authorities concerned.

My Department is now considering, in collaboration with the Local Authorities concerned, the implications the boundary changes may have in relation to schemes and programmes delivered on its behalf via the local authorities, and what provisions may be required in that context.

Community Services Programme

687. Deputy Jan O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if a review of the community services programme is taking place; when the review will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6330/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Community Services Programme, or CSP, supports around 420 community organisations to provide local services through a social enterprise model, with funding provided as a contribution to the cost of a manager and an agreed number of full-time equivalent positions. More than €46 million is available to support community organisations under the programme in 2019.

The CSP transferred to my Department from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection in January 2018. While the primary focus for 2018 was ensuring continuity of service, a review of the programme was considered timely given my Department's role and its policy responsibility for social enterprise and for local development and community development.

My Department consulted with key stakeholders and CSP supported organisations on the scope of the review in October and November last year. This consultation helped shape the terms of reference for the review and the procurement of an independent third party to review the programme. Subject to a successful tender process, I expect a reviewer to be appointed

before the end of February.

The review will consider how the programme fits with overall Government priorities as well as with my Department's other community programmes and policy objectives, and will help inform decisions on the future shape and structure of the programme.

The review will take six months and I expect it will be completed in early Autumn 2019.

Charitable and Voluntary Organisations

688. Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the standards required to be implemented by community groups that publish community newsletters or newspapers and are in receipt of funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6403/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Department for Rural and Community Development was established to support the creation of vibrant and sustainable communities across this country. Key to achieving this is supporting the development and promotion of the modern and efficient services needed for such communities to thrive.

My Department does not provide direct funding towards the publication of newsletters or newspapers, but does provide a broad range of supports to communities in Ireland in terms of core funding or for specific project based work.

The funding provided relates to programmes such as the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, Community Services Programme, Libraries Capital Investment Programme, Scheme to Support National Organisations, the LEADER Programme and others.

Community groups communicate independently to engage with the public and where such communications are assisted by State funding they should be in line with the stated criteria of the funding programme in question and the contract terms and conditions in each case.

Ministerial Advisers Data

689. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of advisers and special advisers employed by his Department in 2017 and 2018 and to date in 2019; the areas of expertise covered by such advisers; the annual salaries associated with same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6577/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department was established on 19 July 2017. Since then, there have been three advisers employed by my Department, details of which are outlined below:

1. Press Adviser:

A Press Adviser was appointed on 14 August 2017. The main responsibilities of this post include the following:

- Provision and oversight of press information and liaising on my behalf (working with the Department's Press Officer and Press Office staff);

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- Liaising, on my behalf, with the Government Press Office (working with the Department's Press Officer and Press Office staff), and with Department Officials on media aspects of policy;
- Adviser on external communications and publicity on my behalf;
- Focal point, along with my Policy Adviser, for political clearance and transmission of speaking and briefing material for all "Order of Business" purposes and circulation of such material to me and more widely as appropriate;

Liaising with a team of Media Advisers across Government;

- Clearance of all Ministerial speeches and news releases.

This salary for this post is at the level of the Principal Officer Standard pay scale, sanctioned at €89,356. The Press Adviser continued employment with my Department throughout 2018 and is currently employed in this role.

2. Special Adviser

A Special Adviser was appointed on 11 September 2017 who remained in the employment of my Department until 31st May 2018, when his secondment period ended. This salary for this post is at the level of the Principal Officer Standard pay scale, sanctioned at €94,521.

This Special Adviser was replaced by a new appointee on 11th June 2018, who is still employed by my Department. This Adviser is employed at the level of the Principal Officer Standard pay scale, sanctioned at €99,375.

The main responsibilities of the Special Adviser post include the following:

- Assisting in the management of my programme of work;
- Liaising, on my behalf, with relevant Department Units in relation to the Department/Government priorities and timelines for dealing with the stated policies and priorities;
- Attendance at weekly pre-Government meeting of Ministerial Special Advisers;
- Liaising with a team of Advisers across Government;
- Attendance at relevant Senior Official and Cabinet Committee meetings;
- Focal point, along with my Press Adviser, for political clearance and transmission of speaking and briefing material for all "Order of Business" purposes and circulation of such material to me and more widely as appropriate;
- Liaising with the Secretary General's Office in regard to the provision of observations on Government Memoranda.

In addition to the Advisers employed by my Department I also avail of the services of a further Adviser, who provides me with support and advice from time to time in an unpaid capacity from 2017 to date.

Appointments to State Boards

690. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of boards or agencies his officials have been appointed to; if there are guidelines or protocols for members of staff being appointed to boards or agencies; if so, when same were

last updated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6652/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Department of Rural and Community Development was established on 19 July 2017 to provide a renewed and consolidated focus on rural and community development in Ireland.

The Department is committed to adhering to guidelines and protocols in relation to appointments to boards or agencies. The key policy in place in this regard is the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, as published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), in August 2016.

This policy provides that board appointments must be made in compliance with the Public Appointments Service process set down in the Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards published by DPER, except where the manner of such appointment is otherwise prescribed in the specific statutory provisions relating to the State body.

I can confirm that one official from my Department is a member of the board of the National Digital Research Centre.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

691. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the breakdown of the €315 million allocation for 2019 for the rural regeneration and development fund; the date in 2019 the fund will roll out; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun of the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6917/19]

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 and the various allocations over that period will be confirmed as part of the annual budgetary process. Certain projects under the fund are multi-annual and this will also be provided for.

Discussions have and do take place between the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and my Department on a regular basis, in relation to expenditure. The allocation for the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund was €55 million for 2019. I do not expect the overall 4 year allocation for the Fund to be impacted by any re-profiling taken to address capital funding shortfalls elsewhere, including the National Children's Hospital. My Department remains focused on delivering on its mission with the aid of the vote allocated to us for that purpose. Indeed, in respect of the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, an announcement will take place this week detailing the remaining successful projects from the first call under the Fund, with a second call for applications under the Fund taking place later in the year. I am satisfied that funding commitment is available to enable these projects to be delivered over the next four years.

Departmental Budgets

692. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the expenditure and allocations attributable to drugs programmes that were made available in each of the past five years; the projects and programmes supported by the funding in tabular form;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7115/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department was established on 19 July 2017, to provide a renewed and consolidated focus on rural and community development in Ireland. It has not had expenditure or allocations attributable to any drugs programmes from 2017 to-date, this would be primarily the responsibility of my colleague, the Minister for Health.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

693. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development when measure 2 of the outdoor recreation infrastructure scheme will become open for applications; if the request of a walk group (details supplied) will be considered for funding when an application is made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7129/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme is part of the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development and provides funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure or the necessary maintenance, enhancement or promotion of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in Ireland.

Last May last, I launched the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme for 2018 under three separate measures, with funding of between €20,000 and €500,000 available for projects of different scale under the scheme.

Arising from applications received for funding under the 2018 scheme, I approved over 230 projects for funding of almost €21 million, including 78 projects for funding of €10.8 million on 8th January this year.

Since I introduced the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme in 2016, I have approved almost 600 projects for funding of over €41 million. This investment has funded walkways, blueways, trails and other outdoor infrastructural projects around the country.

I propose to launch the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme for 2019 during the first quarter of 2019, to continue investment in projects that will benefit visitors and locals alike in rural areas.

The Walks Scheme currently covers 39 trails, with payments made to approximately 1,900 private land-holders to maintain those trails. The Programme for a Partnership Government includes a commitment to increase the number of walks covered by the scheme. In line with this commitment, funding for the scheme was doubled in Budget 2019 - from €2 million to €4 million - to allow this expansion to proceed.

I am initiating a review of the operation of Walks Scheme which will inform decisions regarding the expansion of the scheme. In order to be in a position to bring new trails on to the scheme as soon as possible, however, I will also be inviting Local Development Companies and Local Authorities to submit expressions of interest in respect of trails that meet specific qualifying criteria, for consideration for inclusion in the scheme.

I intend to publish details of this process in the coming weeks, to enable my officials to identify the initial trails for inclusion in the expanded scheme, with additional walks to join the Scheme on an incremental basis thereafter.

Illness Benefit Payments

694. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if moneys will be lodged directly to the bank account of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6237/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Person concerned indicated on her Illness Benefit application form that she wished to have her Illness Benefit payment paid to her employer's bank account and the Department acted on this instruction.

Her payment instruction has now been changed to her personal bank account as requested and her Illness Benefit payments will be issued directly to her.

Any issue arising from the original instruction is a matter between the person concerned and her employer.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

Illness Benefit Applications

695. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied). [6239/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned is currently in receipt of Illness Benefit. A request from her to complete a study course while on Illness Benefit has not been received to date.

The person concerned was contacted by telephone on February 6th, advised of the information needed in order to process her request and given an address for her to send this information. Once full details of her course are received, her request will be processed and a decision issued to her.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Household Benefits Scheme

696. Deputy Bríd Smith asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 277 of 24 January 2019, if the telephone support allowance is only available to pensioners who qualify for the fuel and the living alone allowances; if so, the reason such an allowance is not available to couples who would receive it based on a means test; the estimated cost to extend same to pensioners who qualify for the fuel allowance but do not live alone; and her plans to extend the allowance in the coming period. [6241/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Telephone Support Allowance (TSA) is a weekly payment of €2.50. Approximately 129,000 customers are in receipt of the TSA payment. The estimated full year cost of the scheme is over €16 million.

To receive the allowance a customer of my department must be in receipt of a qualifying payment and also in receipt of the Living Alone Allowance and the Fuel Allowance. Qualifying payments for the allowance are State Pension (Contributory and Non-Contributory), Widow's,

Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Contributory Pension Invalidity Pension, Disability Allowance, Blind Pension, Disablement Pension (Incapacity Supplement), Deserted Wife's Benefit and Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Contributory Pension under the Occupational Injuries Scheme.

The primary objective of the TSA is to allow the most vulnerable people at risk of isolation, including the elderly and those with disabilities, access to personal alarms or phones for security. Therefore the criteria for the allowance were framed in order to direct the limited resources available to my Department in as targeted a manner as possible. People who live alone would be considered amongst those most at risk of social isolation, and this payment, along with the Living Alone Allowance (LAA), are also in part a recognition of the greater challenges facing those living alone in avoiding poverty. The deprivation rate of couples over 65 is less than half that recorded among those over that age who live alone.

The number of pensioners eligible for Fuel Allowance but not LAA is 78,960 which would result in an estimated full year cost of extending TSA to this cohort of €10.265 million. Any decision to extend in this manner would have to be considered in the context of overall budgetary negotiations.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

697. Deputy Sean Sherlock asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the position regarding an appeal for a domiciliary care allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare. [6251/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): An application for Domiciliary Care Allowance was received from the person concerned on the 26th February 2018. The application was not allowed as the child was not considered to satisfy the qualifying conditions for the allowance. A letter issued on the 18th June 2018 setting out the decision of the deciding officer to refuse the allowance.

A review of the decision was requested on the 19th July 2018 and the person concerned was notified on the 8th October 2018 that the review had been completed but the original decision was unchanged.

An appeal was subsequently registered by the Social Welfare Appeals Office on the 9th November 2018. As part of the appeals process applications are further re-examined by a deciding officer and a revised decision made if warranted. The person concerned will be notified of the outcome of this review, if the decision is not revised the case will be referred for consideration by the Social Welfare Appeals Office.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Review

698. Deputy Billy Kelleher asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her views on whether the value of community not-for-profit employment services must be protected in a reconfiguration of public employment services in 2020. [6258/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):

Community non-profit employment services have a strong track record of delivering quality services in communities throughout Ireland. The recently-published Indecon Reports on Local Employment Services and Job Clubs highlighted these strengths.

The process of procuring contracted public employment services for 2020 and beyond is still in its early stages but my officials work closely with all providers of the public employment services to understand which models work best in activating jobseekers and others seeking to return to the labour market.

In this context, my officials will work to design a procurement model that will balance the need for value for money for taxpayers with the importance of preserving high-quality labour activation services.

One-Parent Family Payment Applications

699. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress to date in the determination of an application for a one-parent family payment in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6277/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): A decision on the person concerned's application for One Parent Family Payment was finalised on 8 February 2019 and a letter communicating the decision of the Deciding Officer was posted to the person concerned.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Supervisors

700. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the negotiations taking place with representatives of community employment supervisors in regard to pension rights that may resolve the issues before strike action occurs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6296/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy is aware Community employment (CE) scheme supervisors are planning to withdraw their labour on 18th February for one day. I understand that this arises due to a claim by CE supervisors and assistant supervisors, through their union representatives, for the allocation of Exchequer funding to implement a 2008 Labour Court recommendation relating to the provision of a pension scheme.

I would like to clarify that CE supervisors are, or were employees of private companies in the community and voluntary sector that receive state funding. They are not employees of my Department or public servants and it continues to be the position that it is not for the State to provide funding for such pension scheme provision.

However, a detailed scoping exercise was carried out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in 2017 in order to comprehensively examine and assess the full potential implications of providing such a pension scheme. This exercise clearly highlighted that the provision of any such pension scheme presents very significant issues for the Exchequer, with a potential cost to the State of between €188 million per annum and €347m depending on the size of the sector, which is difficult to ascertain.

It is important to note that this cost excludes any provision for immediate ex-gratia lump sum payment of pension as sought, which could, depending on the size of the sector, entail a further Exchequer cost of up to €318 million.

Employers, including CE sponsoring organisations, are legally obliged to offer access to at least one Standard Personal Retirement Savings Account (PRSA) under the Pension (Amendment) Act 2002.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory)

701. Deputy Martin Ferris asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if consideration will be given to simplifying the process of pension recalculation (details supplied). [6337/19]

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 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, starting with those aged 71 or over. Due to the numbers 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. If required to complete a review, additional information is being requested in writing from pensioners in relation to unexplained gaps in their social insurance record. These information requests also explain how to access my Department's on-line service to provide the relevant information.

From mid-January, almost 24,000 requests for additional information have issued to review pensioners.

The online pension review application is the most recent service to be added to MyWelfare. The online application was prototyped and repeatedly tested with pensioners before being launched. It only requests data needed to complete the review, the questions are short and the wording used has all been tested with pensioners. Of the pensioners eligible for the pension review, 87% have already taken the first (of two steps) required to access the Department's online services, by completing the SAFE Registration process

The information request issuing also contains a phone number the pensioner may call if they are unable to complete the online form. Their contact details will be taken and a paper application form will issue to them when paper forms become available. When the form is returned, the person's state pension (contributory) pension will be reviewed and they will be informed of the outcome in writing.

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, together with 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.

Invalidity Pension Applications

702. Deputy Willie O'Dea asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made in respect of an invalidity pension application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6342/19]

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 15 February 2018. Payment will issue to her nominated post office on 21 February 2019. Any arrears due from 15 February 2018 to 20 February 2019 will issue as soon as possible. The lady in question was notified of this decision on 5 February 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Benefit Applications

703. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's benefit by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6344/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's benefit (CARB) is a PRSI based payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

An application for CARB was received from the person concerned on 14 January 2019. The application is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Payments

704. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6345/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The gentleman concerned was awarded Invalidity Pension (IP) from 14 June 2018 at the maximum weekly personal rate of €203.50 with first payment issuing to his nominated bank account on 14 June 2018.

The gentleman concerned was in receipt of an increase for qualified children (IQC) on his claim for Illness Benefit. A review of his entitlement to IQC was carried out and it was disallowed as his spouse's means were deemed to be in excess of the statutory limit for receipt. He was notified on 24 July 2018 of this decision and of his right of review and appeal to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office.

The gentleman concerned remains in receipt of IP at the maximum personal rate.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

705. Deputy Brendan Howlin asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6358/19]

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 31 October 2018.

They requested a review of the decision by a deciding officer (DO) and submitted additional medical evidence for consideration on 13 November 2018.

On 6 February 2019 they were asked to supply supporting documentation required by the deciding officer in order to make a decision on her eligibility. On receipt of this information a decision will be made and she will be notified of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

706. Deputy John McGuinness asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a claim for a disability allowance now under appeal will be expedited and approved in the case of a person (details supplied). [6397/19]

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 12 December 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.

Community Employment Schemes Supervisors

707. Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if supervisors and assistant supervisors of community employment schemes can transfer to another scheme operated by a different sponsoring organisation when a scheme closes; if they must be made redundant before taking up a new position; if the entitlements they have built up in their time on the initial schemes will be honoured by the second employer if they transfer; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6414/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Work schemes such as Community Employment (CE) are positive initiatives that enable the

long-term unemployed to make a contribution to their communities whilst up-skilling themselves for prospective future employment. This scheme helps to break the cycle of unemployment and improve a person's chances to return to the labour market.

CE schemes are typically sponsored by groups (known as sponsors organisations) wishing to benefit the local community. My Department agrees participant numbers annually with each CE sponsor organisation who are the employer and who are then responsible for the recruitment of participants and for identifying suitable work placements.

If schemes are unable to fill their participant places, my Department can give consideration to merging the scheme with another scheme in order to ensure viability. In these circumstances, the Supervisor or Assistant Supervisor can transfer directly to the new scheme if there is a position of the same rank available and their rights are then protected by legislation. A business taken over by another employer as a result of a legal merger or the transfer of the rights of the employees are protected by the following legislation, the European Communities (Protection of Employees on Transfer of Undertakings) Regulations 2003.

Generally a redundancy situation for a supervisor/assistant supervisor would only arise if the scheme closed with no agreement for an amalgamation with another scheme or if there was no position at the same rank on amalgamation.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

708. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if pension entitlements in the case of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed under the total contributions approach and home caring periods; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6436/19]

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 will be reviewed under recently enacted legislation. Given the numbers involved, the reviews will take a number of months to complete.

The person concerned was assessed as having a reduced rate entitlement to state pension (contributory) in 2013. The person was informed at that time that they were financially better off to remain as a qualified adult on their spouse's claim.

Individuals with an underlying entitlement to reduced rate state pension (contributory) but who are beneficiaries of a higher rate increase for qualified adult (IQA) payment will be reviewed. Letters are expected to issue to these individuals in Quarter 2 2019.

Where, following review, if the rate of state pension (contributory) is the highest rate payable, the person will be transferred to that payment and arrears, backdated to 30 March 2018, or their 66th birthday if later, issued without delay. However, if her existing rate as a beneficiaries of a increase for qualified adult (IQA) is still higher she will continue to receive that rate.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Questions - Written Answers
Treatment Benefit Scheme Data

709. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons who availed of dental benefit through the treatment benefit scheme in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6451/19]

710. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons who availed of optical benefit through the treatment benefit scheme in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6452/19]

711. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons who availed of aural benefit through the treatment benefit scheme in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6453/19]

712. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons eligible for dental benefit through the treatment benefit scheme in 2018; the percentage of eligible persons who availed of the scheme in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6454/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 709 to 712, inclusive, together.

Qualification for treatment benefit (TB), which includes dental, optical and medical appliances (hearing aids), is based on the person having paid the required number of PRSI contributions since starting employment and also having the required number of contributions or credits in the relevant tax year. The number of contributions required to qualify varies with age.

Dependent spouse/partners of qualified persons can also qualify for the benefit.

It is estimated that 2.5m people currently pay or have paid the relevant PRSI classes that can qualify them and their dependent spouse for TB.

Applications for dental benefit in 2018 as a percentage of those potentially qualified were circa 32%.

The table below shows the number of TB applications processed, under each of the benefits (dental, optical and hearing aids), along with the amount paid in respect of these benefits in 2018:

Scheme	Number of applications awarded	Expenditure
Dental	804,375	€46.91m
Optical	451,249	€32.72m
Medical Appliance (hearing aids)	14,689	€12.74m
Total	1,270,313	€93.38m

Carer's Support Grant

713. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the decision to refuse a carer's support grant in the case of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; if the appeal can be expedited in view of new medical evidence; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6485/19]

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 reg-

istered in that office on the 9th January 2019. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When these papers have been received from the Department, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral appeal hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

714. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of working hours allowable for a person to qualify for carer's allowance and/or benefit in 2003; the changes to the working hours allowable in the period up to 2018 of each; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6493/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): A primary qualifying condition for the Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit payments is that the applicant provides full-time care and attention to a person in need of such care. However, in order to support a carers continued attachment to the workforce and broader social inclusion, carers may engage in some limited employment, education or training, while still being regarded as being in a position to provide full-time care. During this time of employment, education or training, adequate provision must be made for the care of the relevant person.

In 2003, the number of hours per week that carers could engage in employment, education or training outside the home was 10. As part of Budget 2006, this was increased from 10 to 15 hours per week. There has been no further change since then.

Any further changes to this condition would need to be considered in a budgetary context and would also need to maintain a reasonable balance between the requirement to provide full-time care for the care recipient and the needs of the carer.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Support Grant

715. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the carer's respite grant is means-tested; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6494/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Carer's Support Grant (formerly known as the Respite Care Grant) is an annual payment of €1,700 a year for each care recipient paid in a single lump sum with no requirement to satisfy a means test.

The grant is paid automatically to people in receipt of Carer's Allowance, Carer's Benefit, Domiciliary Care Allowance or Prescribed Relative's Allowance. Other people who are not in receipt of a social welfare payment but who are providing full time care and attention are also eligible and can apply for a standalone Carer's Support Grant. The grant is paid annually on

the first Thursday in June.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Payments

716. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the case of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed. [6502/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The person concerned was paid Partial Capacity Benefit up to the 11th January 2019 at a rate of €99 per week. This amount is 50% of her Illness Benefit rate and is paid where a person's restriction on capacity to work is assessed as moderate. She is currently in receipt of Jobseeker's Benefit.

As the person concerned requested to be moved from Partial Capacity Benefit to Illness Benefit, the Department wrote to her on the 4th December 2018 requesting the information needed in order to process her claim and to increase her payment to the full Illness Benefit rate of €198 per week. The Department has not, to date, received the information sought.

In the meantime, the Department has used the medical certificates received from the person concerned to pay her the full Illness Benefit rate for the dates she was medically certified as unfit for work. However, she should still provide the information requested on 4th December 2018 in order to ensure that the full amount due to her has been issued.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

Disability Allowance Eligibility

717. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a refusal to grant a disability allowance to a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6541/19]

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, his application for disability allowance (DA) was disallowed on the grounds that the medical qualifying condition was not satisfied. The person in question was notified of this decision on 30 November 2011.

It is open to this gentleman to make a new application for DA and his eligibility will be examined taking all available evidence into account.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

Ministerial Advisers Data

718. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of advisers and special advisers employed by her Department in 2017 and 2018 and to date in 2019; the areas of expertise covered by such advisers; the annual salaries associated with same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6570/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Under Government guidelines I am permitted to appoint a maximum of two Special Advisors.

Since I took up my appointment as Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, three special advisers have been employed by my Department. All my advisers have worked across a wide range of areas within the remit of the Department including Employment Law, Employment Supports and Activation, Pensions Policy and Social Protection.

The details of their employment and annual costs are set out in the below table:

Name	Role	Annual Salary	Start- End Date
Denise Duffy	Special Advisor to the Minister	€92,862	Jun-17 to Date
Alex Connolly	Special Advisor to the Minister	€107,109*	Oct-18 to Date
Gerry Mullins	Special Advisor to the Minister	€84,973	Oct-17 to Jul-18

*Mr. Connolly is on secondment from Fáilte Ireland for the duration of his appointment and retains his conditions of service from that Body.

Disability Allowance Eligibility

719. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the eligibility for a disability allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6586/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Entitlement to Disability Allowance (DA) is based on satisfying medical, means and residency conditions. The person must be between the age 16 and 66.

Medical eligibility for DA is assessed on a case by case basis and is determined by its severity, and resultant effects on activities of daily living and work-related activities. Eligibility is not based solely on diagnosis or treatment but rather is assessing the person's eligibility for the relevant scheme in accordance with the relevant statutory conditions.

The person concerned has applied previously for DA and, based on the evidence provided, their application was disallowed on the grounds that they did not satisfy the medical condition for the payment. It is open to the person concerned to submit a new application for DA with any new medical evidence they may have and a deciding officer will make a decision on their entitlement.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

EU Regulations

720. Deputy Willie O'Dea asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the details of recent media reports that Ireland is seeking an opt-out from proposals for an EU regulation regarding national ID cards and biometrics; the reason Ireland is seeking to opt out of measures at EU level that mirror measures being introduced at the national level with respect to the public services card; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6621/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): A Proposed Regulation on strengthening the security of ID cards and of residence documents was submitted by the Commission on 17 April 2018. Irish officials at the Permanent Representation in Brussels engaged extensively in discussions on the proposed Regulation to ensure that the institutions and EU Member States were fully informed about Ireland's national law with regard to the areas covered by the proposed Regulation.

Ireland does not issue identity cards to its citizens and has no provision to do so under national law therefore the proposed Regulation does not apply to Ireland.

My Department has no plans to introduce any requirement for the fingerprinting of individuals as part of SAFE registration.

Appointments to State Boards

721. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of boards or agencies her officials have been appointed to; if there are guidelines or protocols for members of staff being appointed to boards or agencies; if so, when they were last updated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6645/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The statutory bodies operating under the aegis of my Department are the Citizens Information Board, the Low Pay Commission, the Pensions Authority, the Pensions Council and the Social Welfare Tribunal.

Officials from my Department have been appointed to the Boards of three of these bodies – the Citizens Information Board, the Pensions Authority and the Pensions Council. Appointments to the Boards of these bodies are made in accordance with the relevant governing legislation as well as the Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, November 2014).

Carer's Allowance Payments

722. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person (details supplied) in Dublin 11 will receive the payments that she is owed without further delay. [6664/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As a result of an Appeals Officer's decision, carer's allowance was awarded to the person concerned on 7 February 2019 with effect from 10 January 2019. The first payment will issue to her nominated post office on 14 February 2019.

Arrears for the period from 10 January 2019 to 13 February will also issue on 14 February 2019.

The person concerned was notified of the outcome on 7 February 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals Data

723. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 1113 of 15 January 2019, the steps she will take to reduce the number of incorrect decisions made by deciding officers when examining carer's allowance, disability allowance and domiciliary care allowance applications that necessitate appeals and prolong financial hardship for vulnerable applicants; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6665/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Deciding Officers (DOs) are appointed under social welfare legislation to decide, among other things, whether a person is eligible to receive a social welfare payment or not. They make these decisions based on the evidence available to them at the time.

If a person is not satisfied with the decision of a DO, they can appeal that decision to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office.

It is absolutely not the case that all successful appeals are as a result of an incorrect decision by a DO. In most cases, additional evidence may be made available to the Appeals Officer (AO) which was not available to the DO, or the appellant's circumstances may have changed since the DO made their decision.

This is especially true in the schemes that have a condition relating to disability or care requirements.

Work is ongoing within my Department on a number of fronts aimed at improving the quality of first-instance decision making, reducing the number of appeals being received and reducing the time taken within my Department to prepare the appeal submission. These include:

- Better information gathering at initial claim stage which leads to better decisions.
- Better explanation of the reasons for any decision in order to make it easier for customers to understand decisions and reduce unnecessary appeals.
- A significant programme of training for decision makers on all aspects of their decision making function.
- Social welfare forms are constantly being monitored to ensure that they capture the necessary information at claim stage.
- Significant resources have also been directed towards the training of deciding officers and appeals officers which, it is hoped, will reduce the number of appeals being received and will also impact positively on appeal processing times.

Finally, any person who experiences financial difficulties while awaiting a decision on an application or an appeal should contact their local Intreo Centre to see if they may be entitled to a means-tested supplementary welfare allowance payment.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

724. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the benefits available to a person who becomes unemployed and who had been paying class S PRSI contributions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6731/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The main social welfare schemes for people who are unemployed are the jobseeker's allowance and benefit schemes which provide income support for people who have lost work and are unable to find alternative full-time employment. The 2019 Estimates for my Department provide for expenditure this year on the jobseeker's schemes of €1.95 billion.

Jobseeker's allowance is a means tested payment which has always been available to all jobseekers including employees and those in self-employment. A person may qualify for jobseeker's allowance if their business ceases or if they are on low income as a result of a downturn in demand for their services. Where self-employed people satisfy the appropriate means test and any other specific qualifying conditions, they have eligibility in the same way as employees. If a self-employed person is engaged in farming they may qualify for the means-tested farm assist payment which is currently paid to approximately 6,600 farmers.

The new scheme for the self-employed, which I announced as part of the 2019 Budget measures, will extend a PRSI insurance based benefit similar to jobseeker's benefit to the self-employed who pay class S contributions and who lose employment. This measure which will be introduced later this year builds on other significant improvements for the self-employed in recent years such as access to invalidity pension and treatment benefits. This measure is part of the Government's stated aim of creating a supportive environment for entrepreneurship, including providing an income safety net to employees and the self-employed alike.

Applicants will have to satisfy the qualifying conditions for the new jobseeker's benefit support including a PRSI contribution requirement. The specific details of this scheme are currently being examined as part of the legislative process.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Eligibility

725. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the steps a person should take who does not qualify for a social welfare payment due to his or her spouse's earnings although they are estranged but compelled to live under the same roof due to the housing crisis; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6749/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Social welfare legislation provides that all income (including earnings) and assets belonging to the claimant and his or her spouse, partner or cohabitant are assessable for social welfare means testing purposes.

Where a person remains living in the same household as their spouse, social welfare inspectors have a key role in investigating and advising the Department's deciding officers on whether a couple are separated for means testing purposes. In this regard, no single criterion can necessarily support a decision that a couple are separated or not. The criteria for assessment include, but is not limited to:

- the duration of the relationship;
- the basis on which the couple live together;
- the degree of financial dependence of either adult on the other and any agreements in respect of their finances;

- the degree and nature of any financial arrangements between the adults;
- whether there are one or more dependent children;
- whether one of the adults cares for and supports the children of the other;
- the degree to which the adults present themselves to others as a couple.

If the deciding officer considers the couple to be separated, then the earnings of the spouse/partner would not be included in the means assessment. However, any maintenance payments (including the payment of rent/mortgage) would then be assessable.

It is open to the claimant to appeal a decision made by the Department to the Social Welfare Appeals Office within 21 days of the decision.

Invalidity Pension Applications

726. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied); when a decision will be made; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6772/19]

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 referred to on 08 November 2018. A Deciding Officer of the Department wrote to him on 11 February 2019 requesting confirmation of the date he ceased self employment and his preferred payment option. His claim will be finalised as soon as possible on receipt of the requested information.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

727. Deputy Paul Kehoe asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if assistance will be offered to a person (details supplied) regarding a carer's allowance review; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6806/19]

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.

It was decided in this case that this condition has not been satisfied.

The person concerned was notified on 17 January 2019 of this decision, the reason for it and of their right of review and appeal.

They requested a review of that decision on 29 January 2019 and this review is currently under way.

Once the review is completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome. In the meantime, if their means are insufficient to meet their needs they should contact their local Intreo Centre to see if they may be entitled to a means-tested supplementary welfare allowance payment.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

728. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6814/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 18th January 2019. 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 4th February 2019 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.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

729. Deputy Brendan Griffin asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a decision has been made on an invalidity pension appeal by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6815/19]

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 including that adduced at the oral hearing, has decided to allow the appeal of the person concerned. 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.

Carer's Allowance Applications

730. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6817/19]

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.

An application for CA was received from the person concerned on 24 October 2018.

It is a condition for receipt of a CA that the person being cared for must have such a disability that as a result they require full-time care and attention. This is defined in legislation as requiring from another person, continual supervision and frequent assistance throughout the day in connection with normal bodily functions or continual supervision in order to avoid danger to him or herself and likely to require that level of care for at least twelve months.

The evidence submitted in support of this application was examined and the deciding officer decided that this evidence did not indicate that the requirement for full-time care was satisfied.

The person concerned was notified on 7 February 2019 of this decision, the reason for it and of his right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

731. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6819/19]

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 (DA) from this lady on 18 January 2019. On completion of the necessary investigations on all aspects of the claim a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

The processing time for individual DA claims may vary in accordance with their relative complexity in terms of the three main qualifying criteria, the person's circumstances and the information they provide in support of their claim.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Applications

732. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied); when a decision is likely; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6820/19]

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 28 January 2019. The deciding officer (DO) is satisfied that the medical conditions for the scheme are satisfied.

On 08 February 2019, in order to process the claim, the DO issued a request asking that the gentleman concerned provide a P45 or letter from his employer confirming the last date of his employment. As the gentleman in question has claimed an increase for a qualified child (IQC) the DO has requested further information from him in order to assess eligibility for the IQC.

As soon as this information has been received the IP claim will be finalised as quickly as possible and he will be notified directly of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Applications

733. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied); when a decision is likely; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6821/19]

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 referred to on 04 October 2018. This claim was disallowed on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on the 05 February 2019 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Payments

734. Deputy Seán Haughey asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person (details supplied) will receive illness benefit payments on a weekly basis at the full rate in view of the fact the person is receiving sporadic payments at present; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6831/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned has been awarded Illness Benefit at the maximum rate and should continue to submit medical certification from his doctor for the period he is absent from work due to illness. As payment to the person concerned is due each Thursday, he should ensure that he submits a medical certificate that covers the period from Thursday to the following Wednesday each week. This ensures that he receives the full rate on a weekly basis.

The person concerned is currently paid up to date and is medically certified until the 14th February 2019.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

Social Welfare Eligibility

735. Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the social welfare payment a person (details supplied) is eligible to receive. [6837/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): It is open to the person concerned to apply for any scheme that is provided by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. Once an application is received a decision will be made by the relevant scheme to ascertain if the person concerned is eligible for payment.

Attempts to contact the person concerned have been unsuccessful, and if the Deputy is in contact with the person concerned they should be advised to contact their local Intreo Centre where information is available on all schemes and services offered by my Department.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

State Pensions

736. Deputy Paul Murphy asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to allow those who have reached 65 years of age and are retired to apply for the full State pension; the cost of such a reform; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6935/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): It is well known that people are living for much longer. This is very positive. As a result of this demographic change, the number of State pension recipients is increasing year on year. This has significant implications for the future costs of State pension provision which are currently increasing by approximately €1 billion every 5 years.

The purpose of changes to the State pension age is to make the pension system more sustainable in the context of increasing life expectancy. This sustainability is vital, if the current workers, who fund State pension payments through their PRSI, are to receive a pension themselves when they reach retirement age. Therefore, the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011 provided that State pension age will be increased gradually to 68 years. This began in January 2014 with the abolition of the State pension (transition) which was available to people aged 65 who satisfied the qualifying conditions. This measure standardised the State pension age for all at 66 years. This will increase to 67 in 2021 and to 68 in 2028. Reversing the 2014 change could be expected to cost a sum in the region of €100 million per annum, depending upon the impact it would have upon retirement.

In most cases, it is hoped that workers will continue to work up to State pension age. Where this is not possible and a person exits the workforce before reaching State pension age they may apply for either the jobseeker's benefit or jobseeker's allowance schemes. Jobseeker's payments are currently paid to eligible jobseekers aged 18 to 66 years.

Jobseekers Benefit is payable subject to the person satisfying the general scheme conditions. This entitlement is normally paid for 9 months (234 days) for people with 260 or more PRSI contributions paid and for 6 months (156 days) for people with fewer than 260 PRSI contributions paid. Arrangements are in place to provide that jobseekers whose benefit expires in their 65th year can generally continue to be paid benefit up until pensionable age (66 years) provided they satisfy the necessary contribution conditions. The jobseekers schemes are kept under review and any further changes, including entitlement beyond the 66th year, will be considered

in that context.

It is important to note that there is no legally mandated retirement age in the State, and the age at which employees retire is a matter for the contract of employment between them and their employers. While such a contract may have been entered into with a retirement date of 65, in the context of the previous State pension arrangements, there is no legal impediment to the employer and employee agreeing to increase the duration of employment for one or more years, if both parties wish to do so. In this regard, the Workplace Relations Commission has produced a Code of Practice on Longer Working and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) has published guidance material for employers on the use of fixed-term contracts beyond normal retirement age.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

737. Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason compensation payments awarded to persons as a result of medical negligence in the circumstances of birth here are taken into account when assessing means for entitlements; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6946/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Social welfare legislation provides for the manner in which a person's means are assessed for social assistance schemes. In summary, any income or capital, with some exceptions and disregards, belonging to the person and his/her spouse, partner or co-habitant is assessable for social welfare means testing purposes.

Social welfare legislation provides for the disregard of certain compensation awards when assessing the means of a person. These disregards include, for example, all income derived from compensation awarded by the Hepatitis C and HIV Compensation Tribunal, the Residential Institutions Redress Board and in relation to disability caused by Thalidomide. Any payment made by the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board is also disregarded for social welfare means test purposes. In addition, ex gratia payments made to women who were admitted to and worked in the Magdalens Laundries, or through the Symphysiotomy Payment Scheme are also disregarded.

All compensation or court awards which are not specifically provided for in social welfare legislation are assessed in the normal manner. However, most social assistance schemes (such as Jobseeker's Allowance and State Pension Non-Contributory) have an initial capital disregard of €20,000. In the case of Disability Allowance, the first €50,000 in capital is disregarded.

Any changes to the means assessment of social assistance schemes would have to be considered in the overall policy and budgetary context.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

738. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if all required documentation has been received by the relevant section of her Department in respect of a carer's allowance review in the case of a person (details supplied); the information outstanding; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6952/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):

During the course of a review of their entitlement to carer's allowance (CA), it was determined that the person concerned had not notified the Department of changes in their financial circumstances. When Department officials requesting documentation pertaining to these changes, the person concerned failed to supply them.

On 13 November 2018, the person concerned was notified that their entitlement to CA from 22 May 2014 to date was under review and that should a Deciding Officer decide that she was not entitled to CA during that period or that she was entitled to lower rates than was paid, she would be liable to refund any monies paid to which she was not entitled. She was offered the opportunity to furnish any statement or evidence she wanted to supply in the matter.

On 7 February 2019, a Deciding Officer reviewed all the evidence and decided that the person concerned was no longer entitled to CA as she had failed to show that her means were not less than the statutory limit and had failed to supply documentation that was requested from her. In addition it was decided that she was not entitled to CA from 1 December 2016 to 13 February 2019 for the same reasons.

As a result, it was further decided that she had been overpaid an amount of money which she is liable to refund to the Department.

The person concerned was notified on 7 February 2019 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Waiting Times

739. Deputy Brendan Griffin asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if additional resources will be provided to reduce the three-month delay in sending carer's allowance appeals to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6954/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Where a person is unhappy with the decision of one of the Department's Deciding Officers, they can appeal that decision to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO).

As part of the appeal process all evidence submitted is reviewed by a different Deciding Officer to see if a revised decision is warranted. This can take some time in the case of carer's allowance (CA) applications, primarily due to the nature of the CA scheme but also in cases where additional medical evidence has been submitted in support of the appeal. In 2018, 440 cases were reviewed by a Deciding Officer in the appellant's favour, which meant that a full appeal was not required.

Where the original decision is confirmed, a submission is prepared to explain the Deciding Officer's decisions and this submission is forwarded to the SWAO.

At all times every effort is made to complete reviews and ensure, where necessary, that appeals proceed as quickly as possible.

Anyone experiencing financial difficulties while awaiting a decision on a review or an appeal of any social welfare payment should contact their local Intreo Centre and enquire as to their entitlement to a payment under the Department's Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) scheme.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Eligibility

740. Deputy Mary Butler asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the entitlements persons (details supplied) under EU regulations are entitled to in terms of optical and dental benefits; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7032/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Qualification for optical and dental benefit is based on satisfying certain PRSI conditions, including having paid the required total number of contributions since first starting work, along with having the required number of contributions paid or credited in the relevant tax year on which the claim is based.

The persons concerned made applications for optical benefit in January 2019. These applications were refused as they did not have the required total number of contributions paid.

A social insurance record in the EU may help the persons concerned to qualify for benefit, provided they have at least one PRSI contribution paid, at Class A, E, H, P or S, since returning to Ireland. Unfortunately, they do not have any contributions recorded as paid since returning to Ireland and therefore do not qualify for benefit.

If the persons concerned have a Medical Card, they should contact their local HSE office which will advise on entitlements under the HSE scheme.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

741. Deputy Mary Butler asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason October 1946 was chosen as the cut-off date for those affected by pension anomalies since the changes in legislation in 2012; her plans on making changes to this date; if she will consider inclusion of those born prior to this date whose pensions were affected; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7033/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): In January last year I announced a new Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to calculating the entitlement of pensioners who reached state pension age on or after 1 September 2012 (i.e., those born on or after 1 September 1946) and who have a reduced rate pension entitlement based on post Budget 2012 rate bands.

People whose pensions were decided prior to 1 September 2012 were not affected by the Budget 2012 rateband changes. As a consequence, people whose pensions were calculated under the 2000-2012 ratebands were subject to a significantly more generous regime than those who qualified before or afterwards, as a Yearly Average of only 20 contributions per year (out of a maximum of 49) could attract a 98% pension. The effect of the Budget 2012 rateband changes, as it impacted upon those new pensioners since September 2012, will be familiar to anyone who followed the debate on this matter over the last 6 years. If pre-September 2012 pensioners were also allowed avail of HomeCaring Credits, their arrangements, as a group, would continue to be significantly more generous than those of post-2012 pensioners. There would also be a very significant cost which would be expected to be of the order of several hundred millions of euros each year. This in turn could significantly impact funds for future pension increases with

consequential implications for pensioner poverty.

For those with insufficient contributions to meet the requirements for a State pension (contributory), they may qualify for a means tested State pension (non-contributory), the maximum personal rate for which is €232 (over 95% of the maximum rate of the contributory pension). This rate of payment does not include rent allowance, household benefits or fuel allowance. Alternatively, if their spouse is a State pensioner and they have significant household means, their most beneficial payment may be an Increase for a Qualified Adult, based on their personal means, and amounting up to 90% of a full contributory pension.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Workplace Relations Commission

742. Deputy Tony McLoughlin asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the appeal by a person (details supplied) to the WRC has now been submitted correctly; if the case will be expedited; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7098/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I understand that the Deputy's question relates to an appeal submitted to the Workplace Relations Commission. This matter comes within the remit of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. I understand that that Department has agreed to accept this question on transfer and to reply to the Deputy.

JobPath Data

743. Deputy John Curran asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons that engaged with JobPath and secured full-time employment that lasted for less than three, six and nine months and less than one year, respectively; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7109/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): JobPath is a service that supports people who are long-term unemployed to obtain and sustain paid employment. The service was launched in 2015 on a 'rolling basis' with referral numbers gradually increasing over time.

There are two phases to the service. During the first phase, of 12 months duration, a personal advisor (PA) provides practical assistance in searching, preparing for, securing and sustaining employment. The second phase starts if the jobseeker is successful in finding work. During this phase the PA continues to work with the jobseeker for a further period of at least three months, and up to 12 months. In addition to the two phases jobseekers may also undertake training while with the service and this may extend the period the jobseeker is supported through the service for up to a further 6 months.

In designing the JobPath service, the Department took steps to ensure the focus would be on sustained employment outcomes, rather than the traditional measurement of such contracts i.e. outcomes based on jobseekers being 'placed into / starting' employment. As a result the Department only makes payments for full time employment outcomes that last a minimum of 13 weeks. The Department is therefore not reporting on or making payments for any job sustainability outcomes of less than 13 weeks e.g. full time employment of 12 weeks duration - which will have been beneficial to the Jobseeker.

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It should also be noted that jobseekers are supported by the service for up to 30 months and as such the duration of the client journey necessitates the requirement of a cohort based approach to reporting in order to produce accurate outcome data. For this reason, the number of clients entering employment and sustaining employment is expected to increase over time.

In regard to individual client's employments which last less than 3, 6, 9 and 12 months, my Department does not collate and process such specific data and the information requested is currently unavailable. However the total number of jobseekers who engaged with JobPath, and had sustained full-time employment for 13, 26, 39 & 52 weeks up to the end of 2018 is shown in table 1 below.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Table 1: Clients engaged with JobPath and full time employment outcomes

-	Number
Total number of Job starts	40,689
13 weeks or more	
Number of job starts which occurred over 13 weeks ago	38,410
Number of those which sustained for 13 weeks	27,653
26 weeks or more	
Number of job starts which occurred over 26 weeks ago	33,886
Number of those which sustained for 26 weeks	20,400
39 weeks or more	
Number of job starts which occurred over 39 weeks ago	29,409
Number of those which sustained for 39 weeks	15,254
52 weeks or more	
Number of job starts which occurred over 52 weeks ago	24,873
Number of those which sustained for 52 weeks	11,334

Social Welfare Appeals Status

744. Deputy Joe Carey asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a person (details supplied) will be informed of the decision of an oral hearing; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [7141/19]

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 including that adduced at the oral hearing, has decided to allow the appeal of the person concerned. 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.

Wind Energy Guidelines

745. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the need to bring forward new guidelines on wind farms will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6367/19]

749. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the new guidelines governing wind turbines will be published in view of the fact that the current wind energy guidelines were issued in 2006; the reason for the delay in publishing the new guidelines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6269/19]

750. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his views on whether it is appropriate for planning to be lodged with local authorities or An Bord Pleanála for large-scale wind farms in cases in which the height of the turbines far exceeds the approved height in the 2006 wind energy guidelines until such time as the new guidelines are published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6270/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 745, 749 and 750 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. 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 which, together with the normal statutory requirements of the Planning Acts, which apply to wind energy development projects in the same manner as other proposed developments, provide an adequate framework through which wind energy developments can continue to be considered by planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála.

Irish Water

746. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the agency responsible for auditing the financial accounts of Irish Water on an annual

basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6238/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In accordance with the Water Services Act 2013, as amended, the Companies Act 2014, as amended, and Irish Water's Constitution, Irish Water appoints auditors to audit its financial accounts. Deloitte has been appointed to audit Irish Water's accounts and its current term of appointment concludes with the 2018 financial year end audits. The Ervia Board's decision to appoint Deloitte as Irish Water's auditors was on the basis of Ervia's appointment of Deloitte as auditors to audit the financial accounts of Ervia. The appointment of the same auditor across Ervia and its subsidiaries, including Irish Water, is considered to be the most practical approach for Ervia.

In accordance with the Gas Act 1976, as amended, the appointment of auditors for Ervia is currently being considered for the 2019 financial year end audits and beyond, and such a decision necessitates my approval. The appointment of the same auditor across Ervia and its subsidiaries, including Irish Water, will be addressed as part of this Ministerial consent process in due course. Account will also be taken of the ongoing consideration of the potential role for the Comptroller and Auditor General, as outlined in my reply to Question No. 209 of 6 February 2019.

Social and Affordable Housing Eligibility

747. Deputy Jack Chambers asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details of the new affordable home purchasing scheme (details supplied) being introduced; the qualifying criteria to be eligible for the scheme; when the scheme will be open to applicants; the way in which potential house buyers can apply for the scheme; if it is only open to first time buyers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6245/19]

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.

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.

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.

To be eligible for the Scheme the applicant must be a first-time buyer, having never previously purchased or built a dwelling in the State, or owned or be beneficially entitled to an interest in any dwelling or land in the State or elsewhere, but there are limited exceptions to this, such as in the case of separation, divorce and nullity. This Scheme complements other Government actions which help first-time buyers to buy a home, such as the Help to Buy Scheme and the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Administration

748. Deputy Paul Kehoe asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if improvements will be introduced to the tenant purchase scheme to enable Part V tenants who are in a financial position to purchase their homes participate in the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6262/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, are designed to enable the development of mixed tenure sustainable communities. Part V homes are 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 very important in promoting social integration.

Local authorities may also, within the provisions of the Regulations, exclude certain houses which, in the opinion of the authority, should not be sold for reasons such as proper stock or estate management. It is a matter for each individual local authority to administer the Scheme in its operational area in line with the over-arching provisions of the governing legislation for the scheme, and in a manner appropriate to its housing requirements.

In line with the commitment given in Rebuilding Ireland, a review of the first 12 months of the Scheme's 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.

Questions Nos. 749 and 750 answered with Question No. 745.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

751. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to State-backed housing projects that have been delayed due to the sale of the loans of the contractor to vulture funds; if so, the projects, such as in the case of a company (details supplied); his plans to intervene to ensure the timely completion of such projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6433/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Delivery of social housing is achieved using a range of different delivery programmes and financing arrangements. This includes supporting both local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) to engage with contractors for the construction of new social housing homes.

Details of the loan finance arrangements of contractors would not be known to my Department. I understand that the specific company referred to by the Deputy was experiencing serious financial difficulties and following a series of hearings at the High Court the company successfully exited Examinership on 15 November 2018.

Neither I, as Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, nor my Department, is a party to any contract with this company. I understand that the relevant AHBs and local authorities are working with the company to progress the delivery of the much needed new social housing homes across the 4 projects involved; indeed one of the projects has already been completed. While there are likely to be delays in the completion of some of the other 3 projects, I am satisfied that the local authorities and AHBs concerned are pursuing all relevant avenues to minimise such delays and to expedite progress.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

752. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if Part V housing output for 2018 by local authority will be provided. [6443/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department monitors social housing delivery on an ongoing basis and publishes data each quarter which provides a detailed breakdown on the wide range of initiatives underway, including a county by county breakdown of Part V social housing by local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs).

The latest published information, up to end Q3 2018, is available on my Department's website at:

<https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision>.

Full year 2018 data is currently being finalised and will be published shortly.

Ministerial Advisers Data

753. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of advisers and special advisers employed by his Department in 2017 and 2018 and to date in 2019; the areas of expertise covered by such advisers; the annual salaries associated with same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6574/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I have appointed two special advisers in my Department since my appointment as Minister, both of whom work across a wide range of areas within the remit of my Department including Housing, Planning, Local Government, Water Services and Electoral Reform as well as liaising with the media and other Government Departments and advisers.

The names and salary details of both advisers are set out in the following table.

Name	Payscale
Jack O'Donnell	Principal Officer (Standard) PPC pay scale (€85,823 - €105,552).
Jennifer Carroll Mac Neill	Principal Officer (Standard) PPC pay scale (€85,823 - €105,552).

Ms Carroll Mac Neill has recently taken up a new appointment outside my Department and the process of formally appointing a new adviser, who will also be appointed to the Principal Officer (Standard) PPC pay scale, is underway.

My predecessor in this Department also appointed two special advisers whose details are set out in the following table.

Name	Salary Scale
Caitriona Fitzpatrick	Principal Officer (Standard) Non PPC Scale €75,647 – €92,550 Post 1st April 2017 €77,849 - €95,487
Bob Jordan	Principal Officer (Standard) PPC Scale €79,401 – €97,194 Post 1st April 2017 €81,767 - €100,333

Social and Affordable Housing

754. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 631 of 27 November 2018, the date on which a commencement notice will issue for the project; if his attention has been drawn to a significant delay in commencing the project in respect of the provision of four units; if his officials have met the local authority in the context of its regular quarterly meetings; the issues that were raised and or discussed at the meeting; the status of the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6580/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): As indicated in my previous replies on this matter, the management of the social housing project concerned and all other individual social housing projects are matters for the local authorities and AHBs implementing the projects. My Department is not directly involved with the ongoing management of issues that arise in the implementation of any individual project.

In relation to the specific project concerned, I understand that the local authority has now terminated the contract with the building contractor and is to re-tender the project.

The quarterly meetings between the local authorities and my Department are technical meetings with a focus on architectural/design/quantity surveying issues arising on the social housing construction projects of the local authorities. Contractual issues relating to projects raised at the quarterly meetings remain the responsibility of the parties to the contract to resolve; those being the local authority and the contractor in question.

Traveller Accommodation

755. Deputy Eoin Ó Broin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the actions he has taken to remedy the five grounds of the European Social Charter violated by Ireland in terms of the provision of Traveller accommodation highlighted by the European Committee of Social Rights in May 2016; and his views on the recent monitoring report by the committee published on 23 January 2019 that found that Ireland has failed to redress the violations and is still out of conformity with the charter. [6628/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, local 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.

In line with the commitment in Rebuilding Ireland, and reflecting the disappointing level of overall funding drawdown in recent years, and having regard also to relevant findings in relation to the European Social Charter referred to by the Deputy, the Housing Agency, in 2017, commissioned a review of funding for Traveller-specific accommodation to date. This review had regard to targets contained in local authority TAPs and actual delivery, the status of accommodation funded and funding provided for accommodation maintenance and other supports.

Following its consideration of the review, the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee recommended that an Independent Expert Group be established to examine and make recommendations on issues regarding Traveller accommodation policy, strategy and implementation. That Expert Group has now been established and has been tasked with reviewing the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 and all other legislation that affects

the delivery of Traveller Accommodation. I have asked the Expert Group to bring forward recommendations that will improve the delivery of Traveller accommodation nationally.

My Department will consider any recommendations made by the Expert Group that improve the delivery of Traveller accommodation nationally and help to ensure that full use is made of the increasing level of funding available for investment in Traveller accommodation.

Appointments to State Boards

756. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of boards or agencies his officials have been appointed to; if there are guidelines or protocols for members of staff being appointed to boards or agencies; if so, when same were last updated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6649/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

There are currently Department officials appointed to seven agencies or boards under my Department's aegis; the Housing Finance Agency, the Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency, the Local Government Management Agency, the National Oversight and Audit Commission, the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, the Property Registration Authority and the Land Development Agency.

As with all Government Departments, officials appointed to these bodies are governed by the provisions of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016 as well as the rules outlined in Circular 12/2010: Protocol for Civil Servants nominated to the boards of non-commercial State Bodies.

Urban Renewal Schemes

757. Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the eligibility criteria for applications to the urban regeneration and development fund for the development of community arts centres; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6662/19]

764. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details of the €100 million capital allocation to the urban regeneration and development fund; the date in 2019 the fund will roll out; if it will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6876/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 757 and 764 together.

The Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) was launched as part of Project Ireland 2040 to support the compact growth and sustainable development of Ireland's five cities, regional drivers and other large urban centres. The first call for proposals under the Fund was launched in July 2018 and in November, I announced details of the 88 successful proposals for funding, details of which are published on my Department's website at the following link:

www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/urdf_-_2019_funding_allocations_0.pdf

My Department has been engaging with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on a regular basis in respect of the URDF and Project Ireland 2040 delivery. The Government is committed to delivering Project Ireland 2040 within the overall multi-year resource envelope that has been set out. For 2019, the overall Exchequer capital allocation across Government has increased by €1,325 million or just over 22% above the 2018 allocation as stated in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019. With regard to implications arising from the National Children's Hospital project, following on from discussions at Government today, my colleague, the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform has outlined how the additional cost pressures will be accommodated with a minimum of disruption to the scheduled roll-out of key infrastructure projects under Project Ireland 2040. Among the measures contributing to the accommodation of the increased costs is an updated profiling of expenditure under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, which indicates that €13m of drawdown under the Fund can be reprofiled from 2019 to 2020 without causing delays to projects.

With regard to funding eligibility of community arts centres, the objective of the URDF is to support compact and sustainable development in order to enable a greater proportion of residential and mixed-use development to be delivered within the existing built-up footprints of our cities and towns and to ensure that more parts of our urban areas can become attractive and vibrant places in which people choose to live and work, as well as to invest and to visit. I would welcome, therefore, any types of proposals that assist in fulfilling this objective, which can include the development of community arts centres if integrated within a broader strategy for the area in question. The types of proposals eligible for funding included, but were not limited, to the following:

- Active land management, including the acquisition, planning, design, enabling through servicing, decontamination or otherwise, of areas, sites and buildings;
- Measures to address building vacancy;
- Building refurbishment, redevelopment and/or demolition;
- The development of areas, sites and buildings and the strategic relocation of uses or activities;
- Public amenity, planting, streetscape/public realm, parks, recreational facilities, safety, security and/or crime prevention works;
- Infrastructure related to housing, economic or skills development (including enterprise and tourism), transport and services infrastructure;
- Infrastructure that enables improved accessibility, in particular sustainable modes such as walking and cycling, public transport and multi-modal interchange, but also including roads, bridges and car parking;
- Transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society, in an urban context.

My Department is currently engaging with successful applicants in respect of the progression of their proposals in 2019. As the process of finalising agreements with successful applicants is currently ongoing, project conditions will only be concluded after this process which can, in part, involve commercially sensitive information or proposals subject to a formal consent or acquisition process at a later point.

It is expected that a second call for proposals for 2020 funding will be launched later in Q1 2019 and a workshop for applicants will be organised in advance. It is envisaged that this application period will run until summer 2019.

Housing Assistance Payment Administration

758. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the position on an existing tenant renting in the private sector who becomes eligible for housing assistance payment in the course of his or her tenancy; the obligations on the landlord in that situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6663/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

Under the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), a tenant sources their own accommodation in the private rented market. The tenancy agreement is between the tenant and the landlord and is covered by the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 (as amended). The accommodation sourced by tenants should be within the prescribed maximum HAP rent limits, which are based on the household size and the rental market within that area.

The earliest date a HAP payment will be payable to a landlord is the date a complete and valid HAP application has been received by the local authority. Limerick City and County Council provide a highly effective transactional shared service for HAP on behalf of all local authorities. This HAP Shared Service Centre (SSC) manages all HAP-related rental transactions for the tenant, local authority and landlord. Once a HAP application has been received and confirmed as valid by the relevant local authority, it is then processed by the HAP SSC.

A landlord or an agent acting on behalf of a landlord is not legally obliged to enter into a tenancy agreement with a HAP recipient. However, on 1 January 2016, the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015 introduced “housing assistance” as a new discriminatory ground. This means that discrimination in the provision of accommodation or related service and amenities against people in receipt of rent supplement, HAP or other social welfare payments is prohibited. Further information is available at <https://www.ihrec.ie/your-rights/i-have-an-issue-with-a-service/i-have-an-issue-about-accommodation/>.

If a person feels that they have been discriminated against by a landlord or their agent, they can make a complaint under the Equal Status Acts to the Workplace Relations Commission; further information is available on the Commission’s website, <https://www.workplacerelations.ie>.

At the end of Q3 2018 there were more than 40,000 households having their housing needs met via HAP and over 25,000 landlords and agents in receipt of monthly HAP payments.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

759. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of new social and affordable homes constructed in the Dublin 1, 7 and 11 areas (details supplied) in the past five years in tabular form. [6832/19]

760. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of new social and affordable homes that will be constructed in the Dublin 1, 7 and 11 areas (details supplied) over the next five years in tabular form. [6833/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 759 and 760 together.

Social housing delivery data is available on a local authority basis but not by Dublin postal code. Details in relation to social housing delivery for the last five years to end Q3 2018 is available on my Department’s website at the following link: <https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision>.

Details in relation to targets on a local authority basis for 2018 and 2018-2021 can be accessed on the Rebuilding Ireland website at: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/minister-murphy-publishes-social-housing-delivery-targets-for-local-authorities-2018-2021/>.

Targets are reviewed annually and, following Budget 2019, the number of social housing homes to be delivered in 2019 under Rebuilding Ireland is as follows:

Rebuilding Ireland Targets	2019
New build	4,982
Part V	1,260
Voids	303
Total: Build	6,545
Acquisition	1,325
Lease	2,130
Total: Build, Acquisition and Lease	10,000
Rental Accommodation Scheme	600
Housing Assistance Payment	16,760
Total	27,360

The breakdown of the 2019 targets by local authority is currently being finalised and will be published shortly.

A number of different schemes operated under the broad term ‘affordable’ in the period to 2012, prior to being stood down. Data relating to activity under the various schemes (the Part V Scheme, the Shared Ownership Scheme, the 1999 Affordable Housing Scheme and the Mortgage Allowance Scheme) is available on my Department’s website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/affordable-housing/affordable-housing-and-part-v-statistics>.

In order to underpin progress in the area of affordable housing, I commenced Part 5 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 on 18 June 2018, the effect of which is to place affordable dwelling purchase arrangements on a statutory footing.

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.

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.

In order to support local authorities in delivering affordable homes, €310 million is being made available from 2019 until 2021 under the Serviced Site Fund (SSF). The SSF will fund facilitating infrastructure on local authority sites. At a maximum funding rate of €50,000 per affordable home, at least 6,200 affordable homes will be facilitated.

On foot of the first call for SSF proposals which issued to local authorities in Dublin, the Greater Dublin Area, Cork and Galway City, approval was issued in December 2018 for ten

projects at a cost of €43m, which will support the delivery of some 1,400 affordable homes. Infrastructure works on these projects will begin as soon as possible and delivery of affordable homes is anticipated from early 2020 onwards.

A second call for proposals will issue to local authorities shortly. In order to inform that process, all local authorities wishing to be considered for funding have been asked to submit economic assessments of the requirement and potential to deliver affordable homes from their sites.

The Government is also committed to the introduction of a not-for-profit, cost rental sector in Ireland. Together with delivering more affordable and predictable rents, cost rental will make a sustainable impact on national competitiveness and the attractiveness of our main urban centres as places to live and work.

There are currently two cost rental projects at Enniskerry Road in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown and St. Michael's Estate in Inchicore, which will deliver 50 and 330 cost rental homes respectively. The experience on these projects will inform a national cost rental framework under which similar projects will be rolled out on a wider scale. My Department is engaged with the National Development Finance Agency, the European Investment Bank and the Land Development Agency to develop the optimum funding and delivery mechanisms to support cost rental delivery at scale in Dublin and other urban areas.

The Government, through Rebuilding Ireland, remains fully focused on increasing supply, and the latest CSO report on housing completions, to end 2018, shows significant progress in this regard. The CSO report can be accessed at: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/ndc/newdwellingcompletionsq42018/>.

Commercial Rates Calculations

761. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the methodology used in the calculation of commercial rates will be examined (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6836/19]

767. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will address matters (details supplied) concerning commercial rates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7128/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 761 and 767 together.

The Valuation Acts 2001 to 2015 provide for the valuation of all commercial and industrial property for rating purposes. The Commissioner of Valuation is independent in the performance of his functions under the Acts and the making of valuations for rating is his sole responsibility. I, as Minister, have no function in decisions in this regard.

Having a modern valuation base is very important for the levying of commercial rates on a fair and equitable basis across all economic sectors. The Valuation Acts provide for the revaluation of all rateable property within a rating authority area so as to reflect changes in value due to economic factors such as differential movements in property values or other external factors and changes in the local business environment.

A valuation for commercial rates purposes is arrived at by estimating the Net Annual Value (NAV) of the property, at a specified valuation date. The term “net annual value” has a legal

definition and is set out in section 48 of the Valuation Act 2001 as the rent for which, one year with another, the property might, in its actual state, be reasonably expected to let from year to year, on the assumption that the probable average annual cost of repairs, insurance and other expenses (if any) that would be necessary to maintain the property in that state, and all rates and other taxes payable in respect of the property, are borne by the tenant. This definition of Net Annual Value is applied to all rateable properties and classes of business on a nationwide basis.

Estimating the NAV of a rateable property is an evidence-based, transparent exercise. During a revaluation the Valuation Office analyses relevant market rental transactions for all rateable properties including service stations in accordance with the legislation, best practice internationally as set out in published Practice Guidance Notes, well-established valuation principles and case law arising from the independent Valuation Tribunal and the higher Courts and the conclusion drawn from that analysis is applied to similarly circumstanced property using the “comparative” method of valuation which, as the name implies, employs direct comparison with other similar properties.

There are a number of avenues of redress for an occupier of rateable property who is dissatisfied with a determination of valuation made under the provisions of the Valuation Acts, 2001-2015. Firstly, before a determination is made, there is a right to make representations to the Valuation Office in relation to a proposed valuation. Later in the process, if the occupier is still dissatisfied with the determination, there is a right of appeal to the Valuation Tribunal which is an independent body set up for the purpose of hearing appeals against determinations of the Valuation Office. There is a right of appeal to the Higher Courts on a point of law. Appeals are generally made on an individual case basis, having regard to the particular circumstances of the property under appeal. However, the decision in one case can have relevance in other similar cases.

There is no provision in the legislation for taking a “class” or group appeal before the Tribunal, as each case is considered on its individual merits and by reference to the specific circumstances of the property. For these reasons, I have no plans to introduce legislative proposals along the lines indicated. However, I am advised that individual appellants can make arguments to the Valuation Tribunal in relation to their concerns about the overall valuation methodology adopted by the Valuation Office for a specific category of rateable property, should they wish to do so.

I am also informed that, as a practical measure, it is possible for a Test case to be heard by the Valuation Tribunal. In order to proceed with a Test case both parties involved, the appellant and the respondent, must agree that such an approach is appropriate. In addition, such a process must be entered into on the clear understanding of how precisely the determination of the Valuation Tribunal in the Test case would be applied to the other cases under appeal identified as being part of the test case series. All cases involved must be similarly circumstanced. A Test case is identified and nominated through mutual agreement between appellants, their representatives or agents and the Valuation Office and this is notified to the Valuation Tribunal.

The nominated case would then be heard by the Valuation Tribunal in the normal course. The Valuation Tribunal is advised of the details of the other appeals to which the outcome of the test case appeal will apply and the agreed terms of how specifically the outcome of the test case is to be applied to the other cases in the test case series. The right of appeal to the Higher Courts on a point of law for either the appellant or respondent still applies in a Test case situation.

Home Loan Scheme

762. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if an applicant can be granted a mortgage to cover 100% of construction costs on a self-build home under the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme; the rules and criteria regarding the 10% deposit in this instance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6839/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans are provided in accordance with the Housing (Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans) Regulations 2018 and the statutory credit policy issued in accordance with the Regulations. The Regulations and the credit policy stipulate that, subject to the maximum purchase price allowed, a maximum of 90% of the value of the property can be borrowed by approved applicants. In the case of a self-build property, a loan can be provided up to 90% of either the construction cost, or in the case where the site is also being purchased the construction cost plus the cost of purchasing a site. However, in both these instances, 90% of the loan being sought is the maximum amount that will be approved. A 100% mortgage cannot therefore be granted.

The low rate of fixed interest associated with the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan provides first-time buyers with access to mortgage finance that they may not otherwise have been able to afford at a higher interest rate. One of the key conditions of the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan is that prospective applicants must demonstrate that they have had inadequate loan offers from two commercial lenders.

To support prudential lending and consistency of treatment for borrowers, a Loan to Value ratio of 90% applies to the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan as per the Central Bank's prudential lending guidelines. Therefore, in order to avail of the loan, applicants must have a deposit of funds equivalent to 10% of the market value of the property.

Applicants must provide bank or similar statements (such as post office, credit union, etc.) for a 12-month period immediately prior to making an application, clearly showing a credible and consistent track record of savings. Gifts in the form of cash are permissible up to 7% of the market value of the property, where their source is verified. The cash savings of the applicant should be no less than 3% of the market value of the property.

Decisions by local authorities as to whether to advance a loan to an individual are taken on a case-by-case basis, within the criteria as set out in the credit policy. Each local authority must have in place a credit committee which makes the final decision on applications for loans. There is also an appeal procedure in each local authority so that those who are not satisfied with a decision regarding their application can have the decision reviewed.

For prospective purchasers of new-build or self-build properties, the applicant may also be eligible for the Help to Buy Initiative for first-time buyers through the Revenue Commissioners. This could provide additional assistance of up to 5% of the purchase or construction price of relevant properties, which represents a significant contribution towards the relevant deposit requirements. A range of eligibility criteria applies to applications under the Help to Buy Initiative, and full details are available on the website of the Revenue Commissioners at <https://revenue.ie/en/property/help-to-buy-incentive/index.aspx>.

Urban Renewal Schemes

763. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the breakdown of the €188 million allocation for 2019 for a project (details supplied); the date in 2019 the programme will be approved; when construction will commence in 2019; if it

will be impacted by the cost overrun with the national children's hospital; if he or his officials have been consulted by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6875/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): O'Devaney Gardens is one of three significant sites being brought forward by Dublin City Council under its Housing Land Initiative (HLI), the aim of which is to ensure the delivery of mixed-tenure homes in the Dublin City Council functional area. All three sites under the HLI are identified as strategic development and regeneration areas within the Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022.

The O'Devaney Gardens site is being progressed under the Rebuilding Ireland programme, as a multi-annual project in two phases and will provide some 700 homes by 2024 consisting of 50% Private, 30% social and 20% Affordable housing. The social housing element will be funded by the Exchequer; Phase 1A, which has been on-site since July 2018, will provide 56 social houses at a cost of €20.6m. Neither Phase 1A, the second phase of the project nor my Department's wider social housing regeneration programme will be impacted by issues associated with the National Children's Hospital.

Question No. 764 answered with Question No. 757.

Legislative Measures

765. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if matters regarding the Local Government (Rates) Bill 2018 (details supplied) will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7005/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): The Local Government (Rates) Bill 2018 is currently before the Oireachtas and completed Second Stage in the Dáil recently. Given that the current legislative basis for the levying and collection of rates is spread over a number of enactments, some dating back to the 19th century, the Bill contains proposals for modernisation of the legislation governing commercial rates. Included in the provisions are:

- the removal of the requirement for ratepayers to pay their annual bill in two instalments (moieties) and allow ratepayers to pay rates by instalments or a payment plan agreed with the local authority;
- schemes for the abatement of rates on vacant properties;
- power for local authorities to introduce rates waiver schemes to support local and national policy objectives;
- the levying of interest on unpaid and overdue rates; and
- unpaid rates to be a charge on relevant property.

Additionally, further measures could not be finalised for inclusion in the Bill as published but are currently being examined with a view to their introduction at Committee Stage. These include:

- issue, by a local authority, of a Rates Compliance Certificate where a ratepayer has discharged his rates liability or has entered into a payment plan, and for the introduction of a requirement to have a Rates Compliance Certificate in order to obtain certain statutory licences;

- to address the powers for local authorities to take legal action through the Courts to pursue unpaid rates; and
- to amend the provisions of section 56 of the Valuation Acts 2001-2015 relating to a Rates Limitation Order in the year following a revaluation of a local authority, in order to maintain the same level of rates income for the local authority in question.

Seaweed Harvesting Licences

766. Deputy Tony McLoughlin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 589 of 29 January 2019, if all applicants have received correspondence; if not, if the applicants (details supplied) will be contacted as matter of urgency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7010/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): My Department has, in recent days, written to the person referenced setting out in detail the current legal and application position in relation to the harvesting of wild seaweed. My Department outlined that in order to consider an application to harvest wild seaweed, it is now necessary to incorporate into the process a mechanism whereby applicants will need to undertake a search of the Land Registry folios in respect of the area of the foreshore they want to harvest in. Applicants will need to identify the folios of all land bordering that part of the foreshore and, with the exception of urban land and housing estates, within one mile of the foreshore in question. It will be necessary to examine all such folios to ascertain if they contain any entries showing a right to take seaweed from that part of the foreshore. Applicants will also need to undertake adequate public consultation to ensure that those with profit-à-prendre are also aware of the application.

Question No. 767 answered with Question No. 761.

Arts Funding

768. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funds available for the further development of talented young musicians; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6966/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department, and the bodies under its aegis, provide a number of supports for music and musicians. The Arts Council is the principal agency through which current funding is channelled to artists and arts organisations and has a wide number of schemes and initiatives in support of music. Details of the Council's funding of schemes and initiatives for the particular support of music can be found on its websites at the following link <http://www.artscouncil.ie/Arts-in-Ireland/Music/>.

These include funding for a number of bursaries including a music bursary award to support professional artists to develop their art practice. I understand that applicants are only eligible to apply for such funding on reaching 18.

The National Concert Hall (NCH) has a programme for Musicians and Music Students that offers a variety of initiatives to develop young musicians. These include a range of competitive bursaries including the Young Musician's Award for String Players, which is a fund of €10,000 awarded every second year and which is open to players between the ages of 13 -17; the Ber-

nadette Greevy Bursary for singers, which is a €5,000 award, part-funded by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; and the Jerome Hynes Composition Competition, which is a €2,000 bursary for young composers.

The NCH offers a wide range of other initiatives designed to foster the development of young musicians. These include masterclasses and workshops presented by visiting artists; a development orchestra called SinfoNua; the Female Conductor Programme, a major new project encouraging women into the world of orchestral conducting; and a new summer programme, the International Master Course, for high-level students and emerging professionals. For younger musicians, the NCH also partners with the Royal Irish Academy of Music on the Primary Ensemble Project, a programme supporting the development of music ensembles in primary schools.

In addition, Creative Ireland's Creative Youth Plan, launched in December 2017, seeks to ensure that every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, art and coding by 2022. This Plan is being led by my Department, the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Arts Council, all working in partnership. The Creative Schools programme is one of the key deliverables of the Creative Youth Plan. Following an open application process, 150 schools were selected for the pilot in the school year running from 2018 to 2019. These schools have approximately 38,000 pupils. Music is the focus of a number of the Creative Plans being developed by these schools in conjunction with their creative associates.

In addition to curricular provision for music at both primary and post-primary levels, the Department of Education and Skills currently supports the Music Generation initiatives, in respect of a wide number of local Music Education Partnerships (MEPs). I understand that Music Generation is being expanded nationwide over the period to 2022 and that they are currently in phase 2 of their three phase expansion plan.

Under the National Creativity Fund, developed under the Creative Ireland Programme, I recently announced the foundation of the first national youth orchestra for disabled musicians in Ireland - Le Chéile. This is a collaborative, inclusive and exciting step for the country's musical youth; the orchestra will be developed through the Royal Irish Academy of Music's (RIAM). Le Chéile will develop musical ensembles for young disabled musicians in every province in Ireland, culminating in the foundation of the Open Youth Orchestra of Ireland (OYOI) – the very first of its kind in Europe.

Funding to local authorities, under the Creative Ireland Programme in 2018, resulted in over 1200 events taking place across the county, of which over 120 were specially related to music events. A large number of these were specifically for children and young people.

In addition to the above, the following initiatives by my Department are targeted towards support for music.

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

- The National Folk Theatre, Siamsa Tire, which receives annual funding from my Department, brings to life Irish folklore through music, song and dance.

- My Department provides funding for the purchase of equipment under the Music Capital Scheme to performing groups and individual talented musicians on an annual basis. The

Scheme is managed by Music Network on behalf of my Department.

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

I would also add that my Department provides funding to many different orchestras. In terms of music and ensuring that it is a vital part of cultural life in Ireland, my department provides funding for the cross border orchestra of Ireland and the peace proms. The Department provides annual funding to the Cross-Border Orchestra Peace Proms in which 20,000 children from 250 schools across the island of Ireland participate. The Proms provide a vital platform for young people to showcase their musical talent.

Support for music and musicians will continue to be a key focus of the supports provided by my Department and its agencies, and more broadly by Government in the context of the Creative Ireland programme.

Written Answers Nos. 769-782

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Eligibility

769. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if the entitlement of a person (details supplied) under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme can be reviewed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6280/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): An application for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme has been received by my Department from the individual referred to in the Deputy's Question. With respect to 36 raised bog natural heritage area sites, the qualifying criteria for the scheme are that:

- The applicant must have had a legal interest (ownership or a turbary right (right to cut turf)) in one of these sites on 25 May 2010 and must have had the right to cut and remove turf from the property on that date;
- The applicant must have been cutting turf on the land in question during the relevant five year period up to 14 January 2014;
- The turf resource on the site has not been exhausted; and
- No turf cutting or associated activity is ongoing on the property.

The applicant was paid for Year 1 of the scheme (2014) in September 2014. I am advised that an inspection of the plot of bog in respect of which the applicant has applied for compensation is scheduled to be undertaken shortly. My Department will be in a position to further process the application when this inspection has been completed.

Waterways Ireland Expenditure

770. Deputy Brian Stanley asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding spent by Waterways Ireland on canal clearing ensuring navigation is retained effectively each year for the past five years; and the parts of the canal navigation system on which it was spent. [6320/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): The funding spent by Waterways Ireland on canal clearing ensuring navigation is retained effectively each year for the past five years; and the parts of the canal navigation system on which it was spent is shown in the Table below:

Navigation	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Grand Total
Barrow Navigation	€14,508	€11,572	€33,495	€24,893	€155,357	€239,825
Grand Barrow Navigation	€135,206	€162,541	€84,957	€181,344	€144,339	€708,387
Grand Rural Navigation	€137,002	€201,009	€180,280	€251,438	€249,722	€1,019,451
Grand Urban Navigation	€153,323	€189,398	€142,248	€128,781	€139,968	€753,718
Royal Rural Navigation	€195,463	€133,223	€141,086	€211,167	€194,621	€875,560
Royal Urban Navigation	€125,603	€84,221	€70,317	€59,687	€61,633	€401,461
Grand Total	€761,105	€781,964	€652,383	€857,310	€945,640	€3,998,402

Waterways Ireland Data

771. Deputy Brian Stanley asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of times Waterways Ireland conducted clearing in the Grand Canal through County Offaly to ensure open navigation per annum in the past five years. [6321/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): Waterways Ireland is the custodian of approximately 1,000 km of navigation located throughout the island of Ireland including the Grand Canal.

One of Waterways Ireland's strategic objectives is to develop, implement and monitor a planned and effective infrastructure and maintenance works programme.

Waterways Ireland has continued to prioritise the repair/replacement of critical assets through its Capital works programme.

A key part of this programme is the delivery of a planned programme of navigation channel maintenance which includes dredging, removal of obstructing overhead trees, weed control, bank protection and access maintenance.

Waterways Ireland has conducted on-going clearing as part of this programme, which includes dredging and weed cutting, in the Grand Canal through County Offaly, over the past five years, to ensure open navigation.

Burial Grounds

772. Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will engage with the HSE to provide conservation-led improvements to a burial ground (details supplied), carry out a study of its historic importance and ascertain the persons buried there. [6517/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): My De-

partment has received no communication from the HSE in relation to this matter.

I am not the owner of the burial ground and my Department is not, therefore, responsible for its ongoing care and maintenance. The Department's National Monuments Service would, however, be happy to provide advice and guidance, if requested, in relation to works such as those envisaged by the Deputy. Dublin City Council's Heritage Office might also be of assistance in that regard.

The burial ground is included in the Record of Monuments and Places maintained by the Department under the National Monuments Acts and is accordingly entitled to the protections of those Acts. This includes a requirement to give my Department two months advance notice of any works that might affect it.

My Department also provides financial support for the protection of heritage buildings and historic structures through grant schemes which are generally administered by the local authorities.

The Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) is a scheme for the repair and conservation of structures on the local authority Record of Protected Structures. It is designed to leverage private capital for investment in small scale conservation projects across the country and to support the employment of skilled conservation professionals, tradespersons and craftsmen and women.

The Historic Structures Fund (HSF) (formerly the Structures at Risk Fund) is for conservation and enhancement to heritage structures, in both private and public ownership, for the benefit of communities and the public.

In November 2018, I announced a total of €4.3 million in funding for the BHIS and HSF for 2019. Full details of both of the schemes are available on my Department's and on local authority websites.

Built Heritage Investment Scheme

773. Deputy Paul Kehoe asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the assistance available to a church (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6518/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): My Department provides financial support for the protection of heritage buildings and historic structures through grant schemes which are generally administered by the local authorities.

The Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) is a scheme for the repair and conservation of structures on the local authority Record of Protected Structures. It is designed to leverage private capital for investment in small scale conservation projects across the country and to support the employment of skilled conservation professionals, tradespersons and craftsmen and women.

The Historic Structures Fund (HSF) (formerly the Structures at Risk Fund) is for conservation and enhancement to heritage structures, in both private and public ownership, for the benefit of communities and the public.

In November 2018, I announced a total of €4.3 million in funding for the BHIS and HSF for 2019. Both schemes were open for applications from 28 November to 31 January and applica-

tions will be assessed with successful applicants being notified in due course.

While the closing date for the 2019 schemes has now passed, my Department will remain in contact with local authorities throughout the year to ensure the best possible use of funding, including by reallocating funds when, for example, projects do not go ahead.

Full details of both of the schemes are available on my Department's website and on each local authority's website.

In the context of a particular historic structure, the best advice for owners is to contact the local authority who will be able to advise on the various types of funding available to assist with the project. It should be borne in mind that any works at or in the vicinity of a national monument will require Ministerial Consent under Section 14 of the National Monuments Act 1930.

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

Ministerial Advisers Data

774. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of advisers and special advisers employed by her Department in 2017 and 2018 and to date in 2019; the areas of expertise covered by such advisers; the annual salaries associated with same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6567/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): Since my appointment as Minister on the 30 November 2017, and as provided for by the Public Service Management Act 1997, I have appointed two special advisers. My media adviser was appointed with effect from the 8 January 2018 and my policy adviser with effect from the 15 March 2018.

My predecessor Minister Heather Humphreys, appointed a policy and a media adviser with effect from the 14 June 2017. One special adviser subsequently left and another was appointed with effect from 18 September 2017.

All special advisers are paid at the relevant Principal Officer (Standard scale) rate in accordance with the standard arrangements put in place by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

In addition, all of the above appointments are made in accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's Instructions to Personnel Officers – Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil, which is available on the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's website.

Appointments to State Boards

775. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of boards or agencies her officials have been appointed to; if there are guidelines or protocols for members of staff being appointed to boards or agencies; if so, when same were last updated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6642/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I have been advised that, following the introduction of the Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in November 2014, there have been no Departmental officials appointed to State boards or agencies under the remit of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

The current Director of the National Archives of Ireland is on the Board of the Irish Manuscript Commission, however this is an ex-officio position associated with the role of Director of the National Archives rather than a Departmental appointment.

Departmental Staff Data

776. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of district conservation officers, wildlife inspectors, conservation rangers and ecologists recruited by her Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6778/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I am advised that the number of staff recruited in the grades requested by the Deputy are set out in the table below:

Year	Numbers Recruited
2016	No recruitment to these grades.
2017	12 Conservation Rangers . No recruitment to other mentioned grades.
2018	1 Head of Ecological Assessment. 5 Wildlife Inspectors/Ecologists.
2019 to date	No recruitment to these grades to-date but further recruitment planned during 2019.

Seirbhísí Farantóireachta

777. D'fhiabhráigh Deputy Pearse Doherty den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cén stádas atá ag an gconradh le haghaidh seirbhís farantóireachta gasta, atá le riadaradh idir Toraigh agus an tír mór; cén dáta a rachaidh an conradh reatha in éag; cathain a bhronnfar conradh úr; an dtig léi sonraí a thabhairt faoin chonradh seo, mar shampla cén dáta a thosóidh an tseirbhís nua seo; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [6918/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Tá comhaontú idir mo Roinn agus Comharchumann Thoraí Teoranta faoina maoinionn mo Roinn seirbhís sealadach farantóireachta gasta idir Thoraigh agus an mórhí. Beidh an socrú sin i bhfeidhm ar a laghad go dtí 30 Aibreán 2019. Idir an dá linn, reáchtálfайдh mo Roinn comórtas úr tairisceana d'fhonn conradh dhá bhliain don tseirbhís seo a thosódh ar 1 Bealtaine 2019, a aontú.

Forbairt na nOileán

778. D'fhiabhráigh Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sé i gceist aici maoiniú a sholáthar d'oileáin Dhún na nGall le haghaidh bóithre poiblí ar na hoileáin éagsúla; an ndeimhneoidh sí go bhfuil leithroinnt leagtha amach i

mbuiséad na Roinne i mbliana dó sin, agus an mbeidh leithroinnt bħreise ar fáil do na hoileáin i mbuiséad na bliana seo; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [6919/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Tá an cheist maidir le Clár Mionoibreaca 2019 do na hOileáin á scrúdú ag oifigigh mo Roinne faoi láthair i gcomthéacs an tsoláthair airgid atá ar fáil le caitheamh ar thograí oiléanda i mbliana agus na n-éileamh éagsúla ar an soláthar sin.

Scéim na mBóithre Áise

779. D'fhiografia Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cad iad na pleananna atá aici chun Scéim na mBóithre Áise a chur ar bun athuair, chun freastal ar thithe agus bóithre feirme i gceantair Ghaeltachta ar fud na tíre (sonraí tugtha); agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [6920/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Faoi Scéim na mBóithre Áise de chuid mo Roinne, chuirtí airgead ar fáil do na húdaráis áitiúla ar mhaithe le obair dheisiúcháin a dhéanamh ar bhóithre beaga faoi leith sa Ghaeltacht.

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

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

Scéim na mBóithre Áise

780. D'fhiografia Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cad iad na pleananna atá aici chun scéim deontais bóithre straitéiseacha a chur ar bun sa Ghaeltacht, le slí rochtana a chur ar fáil ar fud na Gaeltachta agus ar fud na tíre, ag cur i gcontas go bhfeadfaí, leis an airgead nár caitheadh sna buiséid éagsúla atá faoina cúram, maoiniú a chinntí do scéim dá leithéid; cé uair a bhféadfadh a leithéid de scéim a bheith ag feidhmiú; an mbeadh sí sásta dá gcuirfié pleán ilbhliantúil ar bun chun déileáil leis an easpa tograí bonneagair i gceantair Ghaeltachta ó cuireadh an scéim ar fionraí sa bhliain 2010; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [6921/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Mar is eol don Teachta, tá Scéim na mBóithre Straitéiseach faoina mbíodh ciste airgid á chur ar fáil ag mo Róinn do na húdaráis áitiúla ábhartha chun athchóiriú agus uasghrádú a dhéanamh ar bhóithre áirithe sa Ghaeltacht ar fionraí le tamall de bhlianta anuas.

Is ar na húdaráis áitiúla ábhartha atá an fhreagracht anois maidir le bóithre straitéiseacha sa Ghaeltacht, ach an oiread leis an gcuid eile den tír.

Film Industry

781. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when the film forum will meet; and the stakeholders that will be invited to participate. [6941/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht on the Development and Working Conditions in the Irish Film Industry recommended in July that Screen Ireland (formerly the Irish Film Board) constitute a Film Forum, with an independent Chair, in order to allow all stakeholders within the sector to meet and work together to develop mutually beneficial solutions for the industry.

Screen Ireland has been endeavouring to organise the Forum and had drawn up a list of all stakeholders to invite to the Forum. These include representatives of workers in the industry which include

- The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
- SIPTU
- Irish Film Workers Association (IFWA)
- GMBh Trade Union
- Screen Guilds of Ireland

The emergence of disputes between stakeholders have, however, impeded progress on the Forum. I understand that following the transmission of an RTÉ Prime Time programme on the film industry, ICTU and SIPTU stated that they would not attend a Forum to which the IFWA is invited, and that the Screen Guilds of Ireland gave a similar response. Based on the ICTU position, Screen Producers Ireland also indicated that it would not attend.

My Department will work with the Audiovisual High Level Steering Group to address issues raised in the audiovisual industry, and to support the industry and the people who work in it.

Public Relations Contracts Expenditure

782. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount spent on public relations services in each of the years 1 January 2015 to 1 January 2018 and to date in 2019 in her Department and agencies under her remit by amount, service provider and reason for incurring cost in tabular form. [7142/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): I am advised that the information requested by the Deputy in respect of payments made to public relations companies by my Department and bodies under its aegis during the periods in question, is set out in the tables below.

Value for money is a critical consideration in assessing whether external firms should be engaged to provide public relations services or any other services. I am also advised that all bodies under the aegis of my Department are subject to Public Procurement Guidelines.

Department Expenditure

Year	Company	Purpose	Cost
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2016	Q4 Public Relations	Publicity campaign for Irish language employment opportunities in the European Institutions	€19,680
2017	Careers Portal	Provision of services re Irish language career opportunities on www.careersportal.ie and www.saolibre.ie	€16,101
2018	Nicholas Quaife	Culture Ireland GB18 Programme	€51,400
2018	BigO	Production of video to publicise Irish language recruitment opportunities with EPSO.	€6,125
2019	Darcy Marketing and PR	Publicity for EPSO recruitment competition 2018	€17,466

As I have previously indicated to the House, the Creative Ireland programme continues to engage in citizen engagement and public awareness to get people involved in cultural and creative activities. A full annualised breakdown of cost incurred in relation to these activities is published on the Creative Ireland website.

Arts Council

Year	Company	Purpose	Cost
2016	The Communications Clinic	General Advice	€44,504
2016	Christine Monk	2016 Centenaries	€36,755
2017	The Communications Clinic	Promoting the arts and the work of the Arts Council	€45,100
2018	The Communications Clinic	Promoting the arts and the work of the Arts Council	€44,496
2019	The Communications Clinic	Promoting the arts and the work of the Arts Council	€3,690

Chester Beatty Library

Year	Company	Purpose	Cost
2015	Coyne Communications	General communication and PR Services for Chester Beatty Library	€25,651
2016	Coyne Communications	General communication and PR Services for Chester Beatty Library	€24,374
2017	Coyne Communications	General communication and PR Services for Chester Beatty Library	€24,943
2018	Coyne Communications	General communication and PR Services for Chester Beatty Library	€24,459

Crawford Art Gallery

Year	Company	Purpose	Cost
2017	DH Communications	Public Relations	€5000
2018	DH Communications	Public Relations	€6000
2019	DH Communications	Public Relations	€500

An Foras Teanga*

Foras na Gaeilge

Questions - Written Answers

Year	Company	Purpose	Cost
2015	Jamie Cunningham T/A Talente	Twitter Communications training for staff	€2,270
2017	Lorg Media	PR & Digital Marketing consultancy, training and services incl. media production	€40,504
2018	Lorg Media	PR & Digital Marketing consultancy, training and services incl. media production	€15,407
		Ulster Scots Agency	
Year	Company		Cost
2015	Audiences NI	Training to third parties on various topics inc PR	£1,755
2016	Audiences NI	Training to third parties on various topics inc PR	£1,755
2016	Digital DNA	Training to Agency staff on social media and PR	£71

* Note: An Foras Teanga - comprising Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster Scots Agency While the above figures represent the total expenditure under the funding arrangements pertaining to the bodies under An Foras Teanga, 75% of costs for Foras na Gaeilge and 25% of costs for Ulster-Scots Agency are funded from the Vote of the Department.

Heritage Council

Year	Company	Purpose	Cost
2015	MKC Communications	PR Consultation	€43,895
2016	MKC Communications	PR Consultation	€47,008
2017	MKC Communications	PR services	€26,384
2017	Dairne O'Sullivan & Annette Nugent	PR and audience development for National Heritage Week	€20,384
2018	DHR Communications	PR and Audience Development for Heritage Week.	€5,525
2018	Thinkhouse	General Communications and PR for the Heritage Council audience development for National Heritage Week	€28,026
2019	Thinkhouse	General PR Services for the Heritage Council. Particularly Adopt a Monument: call for participation	€4,484
2019	Thinkhouse	PR and audience development for National Heritage Week	€2,522

National Concert Hall

Year	Company	Purpose	Cost
2015	WHPR	Public Affairs Support	€22,550
2016	WHPR	Public Affairs Support	€1,750
2016	Christine Monk	Public Relations Support	€6,400
2017	WHPR	Public Relations	€15,750
2018	WHPR	Public Relations	€18,858
2018	Dairne O'Sullivan	Public Relations	€4,000

Year	Company	Purpose	Cost
2018	Drury Communications	Public Relations	€6,000
2019	Drury Communications	Public Relations	€6,000
2019	Dairne O'Sullivan	Public Relations	€4,000

National Gallery of Ireland

Year	Company	Purpose	Cost
2017	PHT Alternatives Ltd	Irish promotion for Caravaggio exhibition, Burton exhibition, reopening of Historic Wings, Vermeer	€5,930
2017	Kate Burvill PR	UK coverage for Vermeer exhibition, Historic Wings Reopening, Burton exhibition	€22,858
2018	DHR	Irish promotion for Nolde exhibition, Roderic O'Conor exhibition, Zurich Portrain Prize, Frans Post exhibition, Countess Markievicz exhibition, Canaletto exhibition. Support with European Museum of the Year presentation	€31,466
2018	Kate Burvill PR	UK coverage for Nolde exhibition & Roderic O Conor exhibition	€22,697
2018	Ackavana Consulting Ltd t/a Sync & Swim	Reopening of Café, Burton Exhibition	€11,980

National Library of Ireland

Year	Company	Purpose	Cost
2015	DHR Communications	Public Relations, Communications and Promotion	€98,687
2016	DHR Communications	Public Relations, Communications and Promotion	€97,393
2017	DHR Communications	Public Relations, Communications and Promotion	€113,067
2018	DHR Communications	Public Relations, Communications and Promotion	€109,090
2019	DHR Communications	Public Relations, Communications and Promotion	€9,364

National Museum of Ireland

Year	Company	Purpose	Cost
2017	Q4PR	Provision of Corporate PR to NMI Director and Board	€34,006
2018	Q4PR	Provision of Corporate PR to NMI Director and Board	€46,343

Screen Ireland

Year	Company	Purpose	Cost
2015	Q4PR	Advice for high profile media campaign including Oscar nominations for Irish Films.	€16,018
2015	Q4PR	Advice for high profile media campaign including Oscar nominations for Irish Films.	€14,348
2016	PR dept	US Publicist to raise awareness of Irish films resulting in 9 Oscar nominations.	€18,741
2018	Q4PR	Promoting Screen Ireland and Irish Film.	€13,591
2018	London Flair PR	Promotion of Irish Short Film	€2,286

Údarás na Gaeltachta

Year	Company	Purpose	Cost
2015	Digital Elevation Strategies Ltd	Development of a LinkedIn strategy for Údarás	€977
2015	Grace Ann McGarvey	Publicity Campaign to highlight and attract media coverage to the Donegal Gaeltachta as a place to set up and develop a business	€3,448
2016	Grace Ann McGarvey	Publicity Campaign to highlight and attract media coverage to the Donegal Gaeltachta as a place to set up and develop a business	€6,962
2016	Heneghan PR	To develop a strategic Information and publicity plan and campaign	€7,000
2018	H&A Marketing & PR	Development and launch of An Branda Gaeltachta- Ireland's Gaeltacht na hÉireann(Tionsnamh Branda na Gaeltachta)	€8,284

Waterways

Year	Company	Purpose	Cost
2016	The Communications Clinic	Media training	€750