

Written Answers.

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

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

Arts Funding

12. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her attention has been drawn to figures that found one third of artists and creative practitioners earn less than the national minimum wage; her views on a movement to a living wage for persons working in the arts, culture and heritage sector; the actions she is taking to achieve same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8689/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I am aware of the issues referred to in the question and I am continuing to deliver additional supports to the arts and culture sector in line with Government commitments, as evidenced in Budget 2019.

Primary support for the Arts is delivered through the Arts Council. Funding for the Arts Council has increased in recent years and now stands at €75 million in 2019, and increase of some €6.8m or 10% over 2018. The Creative Ireland Programme is also delivering additional resources to the sector, for example, through the Creative Youth Programme and the Culture and Creativity Strategies delivered by local authorities. This increase in current funding builds on the multi-annual commitment to increased capital funding of €1.2 billion over the ten year period to 2028 set out in the National Development Plan, and is in line with the Government's commitment to double funding for the sector over a seven year period.

The Arts Council, which is independent in its funding decisions under the Arts Act 2003, operates within a published 10 year strategic framework entitled Making Great Art Work. This strategy prioritises support for artists throughout their careers, by the involvement of many agencies in cultural provision, by the impact of the arts on the creative economy, and by the depth and breadth of people's engagement with the arts.

For example, the Arts Council now include as an assessment criterion, an organisation's policy on the remuneration of artists. This aims to ensure that organisations in receipt of Arts Council funding should offer fair and equitable remuneration to artists.

Furthermore, last year I launched a €200m Audio-visual Action Plan, an industry-wide, long-term plan, under the Creative Ireland Programme, to support the Government's ambition to enable Ireland to become a global hub for the production of Film, TV drama and animation, and which aims to double employment in the sector.

With regard to legal protections for workers across the arts sector, it is important to note that employees in every industry and sector are entitled to all existing legal protections.

As members will be aware legislation was introduced by my colleague, the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection. The Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2018 should improve the insecurity and unpredictability of working hours for employees on insecure contracts and those working variable hours. Employment law in general should also have a role to play in terms of existing legal protections. There are also institutions for reporting abuse of employment legislation. I am satisfied that the industry works in general to a high standard.

Departmental Funding

13. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the level of funding for arts and culture to DEIS schools, in tabular form; if she has met with the Department of Education and Skills in relation to the matter; and if a memo has been sent to Government on this matter. [8687/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department does not fund DEIS schools directly. I can confirm however that a number of DEIS Schools have received funding to enhance their arts, culture and creative programmes under Creative Ireland's Creative Youth programme.

The Creative Schools initiative is a flagship initiative of Creative Youth which is being led by the Arts Council and funded primarily by my Department and the Department of Education and Skills. This project was launched in 2018 and funding of €1m was provided for its successful roll-out. Creative Schools aims to understand, develop and celebrate the arts and creativity, as a core aspect of school life, and to foster children and young people's creativity and participation in the arts as an integral part of their education in Ireland.

A total of 150 schools across the country are now taking part in the Creative Schools Initiative. Of these, 41 are DEIS schools (33 primary and 8 post-primary), seven are special schools and four are Youthreach schools. The first Programme was rolled out in September 2018 and will run through 2019; 47 Creative Associates have been appointed to work with schools. All have been trained to enable the voice of the child throughout the Programme. Each school receives a grant of €2,000 to assist in the development of their creative plans and also receives the assistance of a Creative Associate. A list of all participating schools including the DEIS schools is available on the Arts Council website. However, I will arrange for a separate list of the 41 DEIS schools taking part in the initiative to be provided to the Deputy.

In partnership with the Minister of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Arts Council, I recently announced a joint funding package of over €6m for the implementation of a range of initiatives under Creative Youth which will have a positive impact on DEIS schools and indeed other schools right across the country. Almost €2.4m has been allocated to Creative Schools which will allow us to double the number of creative schools from 150 to 300 (which includes maintaining the current 150 for a further year). As in 2018, this process is open to all schools including DEIS schools to apply for and registration for new applicants is now open with applications accepted online from the 19th February until 21st March 2019. All information in relation to this Scheme is available on the Arts Council website and I would urge all schools to consider applying.

I can assure the Deputy that my Department works closely with the Department of Education and Skills and indeed the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Arts Council

to ensure the timely implementation of the various actions under Creative Youth.

Waterways Ireland Funding

14. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the capital spending in 2018; the funding allocated to Waterways Ireland; the projects undertaken by Waterways Ireland with the allocation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8679/19]

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

Capital spending by Waterways Ireland in 2018 within this jurisdiction totalled €7,767,325. Of this amount, €2,587,325 was contributed from Waterways Ireland’s Reserves. These, as the Deputy knows, are the accumulation of proceeds from disposal of property and receipts from third party funded projects and are used to fund additional works.

The amount of funding allocated to Waterways Ireland from my Department’s Vote for 2018 was €25,706,000 made up of €20,526,000 in Current and €5,180,000 in Capital.

The projects undertaken by Waterways Ireland in 2018 comprised a wide diversity of works with the overall objective of maintaining and indeed extending the waterways network.

For example, the largest expenditure of €1,605,934 was for maintenance of plant and machinery on the waterways. these are essential to the smooth operation of the navigations, the upkeep of the waterways, especially the canals, and the development of the general amenity of the Canal network.

€1,133,846 was spent on works on the Ulster Canal and €598,492 was used to develop the Rooskey Works Depot. This is an important new extension and the Deputy will appreciate its significance in a North South context and indeed in a Brexit context.

I will furnish the Deputy with a complete list of all Waterways Irelands 2018 Capital Projects. As the Deputy will see, there is a considerable emphasis too on the Blueway extension programme and some very ambitious objectives in that regard are being realised. Much capital investment too was focussed on the built heritage of the canal and waterways network and that indeed is to be welcomed too. The effort expended by Waterways Ireland in terms of flood mitigation works on the Shannon, in co-operation with the OPW is also especially important.

In 2018, Waterways Ireland focused on delivering its core activities and maintaining front line services. Waterways Ireland concentrated the resources available on the areas of navigation which receive the highest levels of use. A key goal for Waterways Ireland is to increase the use of the inland waterways. The number of registered users at the end of December 2018 was 15,539 with 95% of waters navigable during the boating season (mid-March to October).

Waterways Ireland Capital Projects 2018

-	Amount
Plant & Machinery	1,605,934

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-	Amount
Ulster Canal	1,133,846
Rooskey Works Depot	598,492
Royal Canal Completion Commissioning	365,118
Lock Gate Replacem't Progr	253,403
Victoria Lock Gate Replacement	191,560
Cloydagh Bank Repair & Drdging	186,300
Jetty Refurbishment	181,785
Culvert Inspections and Commence Repai	178,822
Bank Strengthening at Blackshade Bridg	175,192
Bridge Repairs	166,635
Grand Canal Dock Works	166,116
Nth Shannon B'way Phase 3 TP	133,187
Auto Pedestrian Counter	119,971
Clarendon Lock Floating	119,342
Blundell Aqueduct to 20th Lock Bank St	119,122
IT Capital South	105,891
Balroe Bank Strengthening	102,260
Royal Canal Cycleway Maynooth to Kilco	100,984
Borris Dredging	82,833
Rooskey Lock Gates	77,513
Bank Strengthening and Repair Lecarrow	72,648
Navigation Land Recover	72,622
Royal Canal Completion Commissioning	67,986
20th Lockhouse Ballyteigue	67,464
Shannon-Erne Blueway Balyconnell to Be	65,601
Milford Sluice Safe Gangway	65,555
Royal Canal Cycleway Ferns Lock to Mul	65,144
Albert Lock gates preparation work for	64,951
Specialist Inspections	61,631
Leakage Repairs Lvl 13 GC	60,692
Barrowline Dredging	60,333
Darcy's Bridge Dredging	54,896
Blackshade Bridge	52,842
Limerick preparation for Dredging in 2	50,399
Ballina Quay Landing Jetty	50,054
Killaloe Canal Wall Mooring Walkway	49,791
Barrow Way Towpath Dev	45,082
Athlone Lock gates Investigation and R	44,287
City Block 19	40,841
Lock C1-C3 Path Upgrades	33,539
Tarmonbarry Weir Reinstatement	30,000
Charlotte Quay	27,024
Areas of Tranquility	26,117
Meelick Weir/Sluice Condition survey	24,106
Mullingar Blueway Development	23,176
IT & ASSET MGT SYSTEM - SOUTH	20,826
Barrow Weir Studies	20,295
Grouting 12th Lock Grand	19,420

-	Amount
Clondra Amenity	19,378
Longford Cycleway	17,963
SE Blueway Lock 16 to Killelare	15,098
Development Mullingar Hub	14,324
Lock 14 Grouting	13,616
Improv' Grand Canal Dock	13,560
Portumna Development Project	13,240
Castlesaunderson New Mooring	12,385
Lough Owel Sluice House Development	11,082
Lough Allen	8,567
Rooskey Floating Moorings	8,127
Dredging	7,946
Blakestown Lockhouse	7,626
ALBERT LOCKHOUSE	6,925
Automation Poolboy Lock	5,559
Aghalane to Lock 1 Corraquill Trail Ex	5,368
Battlebridge Lockhouse Capital	5,166
Youngs Store Tullamore	5,166
Fenniscourt Lockhouse	5,166
Slyguff Lockhouse	5,166
Shannon Blueway Carrick to Boyle	5,162
Sallins Houseboat Facility	4,935
Banagher preparation for Dredging in 2	4,619
Red Bridge Moorings	4,428
Bagenalstown Retaining Wall	4,397
Portumna Blueway Castle Harbour	3,907
Bank & Weir Upgrades	3,888
Pumpout and Water Services Canal Netwo	3,838
Victoria Lock House	3,383
Repair Wing Wall Lock 18 GC	2,755
Rathvinden Wall replacement	2,661
Clashganny Lockhouse Development	2,589
Dredging	2,589
Visitor Centre Roof Repairs and Rental	2,463
Property Registration Legal Fees	1,672
Limerick Navigation	1,565
GreenWIN	1,378
Ballinea Harbour North Bank	1,348
Towpath Enhancement	1,348
Spencer Harbour Landbridge	1,124
Infrastructure Upgrade	935
Upgrade pumps Spencer Docks	795
Inner Lakes Canoe Trail	615
Northern Signage	430
Shannon Blueway Carrick to Drumshanbo	298
Ballyleague Angling Facilities	265
Canoe Trail Feasability Study	262
Athlone Railway Jetties	256

-	Amount
Lockhouse refurb EGR	130
Lough Derg Canoe Trail	98
Thomastown Retaining Wall	73
Shannonbridge New Moorings	42
Moorings at Ballinasloe	24
Total Spend net of third party funding	7,767,325
DCHG Sponsor Department funding	5,180,000
WI use of Reserves	2,587,325
Total	7,767,325

National Parks and Wildlife Service

15. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to further designate land for national parks and nature reserves; her further plans to expand public access to reasonable and proximate quality open space; the locations of same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8688/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): As the Deputy will be aware some 14 per cent of the terrestrial area of the State is already designated. Through the National Parks and Wildlife Service, my Department manages a property portfolio in respect of National Parks and Reserves of approximately 87,000 hectares. It is responsible for the 6 National Parks and 80 statutory Nature Reserves. The Department keeps the extent and coverage of the National Parks under ongoing review.

These important biodiversity areas are located all around the country. In 2016 my Department completed the purchase of 5,000 hectares of lands in Glenasmole. The area, known popularly as the Featherbeds, has been added to Wicklow Mountains National Park, expanding the total size of this National Park to some 22,000 hectares. The lands referred to are thus being managed as part of Wicklow Mountains National Park. 93% of this acquisition lies within the Wicklow Mountains Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Area (SPA), while it is in very close proximity to the Glenasmole Valley SAC. SACs and SPAs are the most important wildlife and habitat conservation areas in the country, considered to be important on a European as well as Irish level.

The Featherbeds are an important area for nature conservation and for public amenity. Their acquisition at a cost of approximately €163 per acre represents excellent value for the state, not just in terms of value for money but also in terms of the amenity potential, conservational benefits and environmental gains.

In late 2017 the Department announced the expansion of Ballycroy National Park to include the area known as Wild Nephin, expanding the total size of the National Park to over 15,000 hectares. This expansion is the result of a long-standing collaborative project between Coillte and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

The transfer of this property not only consolidates the National Park area but provides excellent opportunities for the future development of the Park, including improved access and trails, as well as other significant enhancements to the visitor experience at “Wild Nephin” on the Wild Atlantic Way. The Nephin land bank is contiguous with both the existing Ballycroy National Park boundaries but also the property at Altnabrockey which was purchased during 2017.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service will now manage the area and a public amenity conversion plan will be put in place. Overall, the project reflects the on-going commitment of all stakeholders to improve the recreational potential of this area whilst ensuring the highest standards of nature conservation.

The Department makes strategic land purchases from time to time in order to consolidate its sites. In that regard the Deputy is well aware of my position in relation to Lugalla. These purchase underpins the Government's on-going commitment to the preservation of our natural heritage for future generations of citizens and visitors alike to enjoy.

Their acquisition by the State is a sign of our enduring commitment to preserve our natural heritage for future generations of citizens and visitors alike to enjoy.

Departmental Programmes

16. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the Creative Schools programme 2019; and the schools in County Limerick that are participating in same. [8536/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Creative Schools pilot is one of the flagship projects of Creative Youth, which seeks to enable the creative potential of every child and young person. This Plan is led by my Department, with the Departments of Education and Skills, and Children and Youth Affairs and the Arts Council, all working in partnership.

Creative Schools aims to understand, develop and celebrate the arts and creativity as a core aspect of school life. It strives to foster children and young people's creativity, potential and participation in the arts as an integral part of their education. The initiative recognises that the arts are a powerful means through which children and young people can explore communication and collaboration, stimulate their imaginations to be inventive, and harness their boundless curiosity.

The Creative Schools pilot is up and running, reaching over 38,000 children and young people the length and breadth of the country at primary and post-primary levels and Youth reach. Of the 150 schools participating, 41 DEIS schools were chosen for inclusion in the pilot (33 primary and 8 post-primary).

On 14th February last, myself, Ministers McHugh and Zappone announced a €6M investment in the Creative Youth initiative for 2019, which will allow us double the number of participating schools to 300. Online registration and applications are now open until 21st March, after which the additional 150 schools will be selected and added to the existing participants. All information in relation to the Scheme is available on the Arts Council website.

Each participating school has access to Creative Associates who are essential in embedding inspirational and sustainable creative practices in teaching and learning. Creative Associates are a mixture of practising artists and teachers with an understanding of creativity and its potential to transform the lives of children and young people.

Participating schools, working with their Creative Associate, are completing the development of plan for arts and creativity, and implementing these plans. The Creative Associates will explore new links for schools with artists and with arts and cultural organisations, both locally and nationally, to help develop their plan. To assist this, each participating school is awarded €2,000 for implementation of their plan.

The participating schools in the current cohort of Creative Schools from County Limerick are:

- Ardscoil Mhuire
- Corpus Christi NS
- Our Lady Queen of Peace School
- Scoil na mBraithre
- Scoil nais Cathair Chinn, NS
- Scoil Naomh Mhuire

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

National Heritage Plan

17. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the Heritage 2030 public consultations; the opportunities including local meetings for groups and residents of County Offaly to contribute to the consultation process; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8518/19]

26. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the Heritage 2030 public consultations; the opportunities including local meetings for groups and residents in counties Sligo and Leitrim to contribute to the consultation process; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8510/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 17 and 26 together.

The public consultation process for Heritage Ireland 2030 is fully underway now, with consultation events being held right across the State. This is a critical phase in the development of Heritage Ireland 2030, the new National Heritage Plan for Ireland and we need to hear the views of all those we know care deeply about their heritage.

It was my intention that the 4 month consultation period would close at the end of February. Given the huge level of interest across the country I have decided to extend the consultation period by one month to allow more time for everyone to have their say.

To date 74 separate events have been arranged around the country as part of the consultation process and more are being organised all the time. Details of all of these public events are available on my Department's website.

The range of events includes public information sessions, roundtable workshops, regional sessions, heritage forums and other events being organised by local tourism and heritage organisations. Forty-five of the events arranged to date are open to the public. The Local Authority Heritage Officer network and the Heritage Council are playing a tremendous role, making use of their local and regional networks and expertise in public engagement to support our consultation.

Our heritage is a priceless and irreplaceable national asset which belongs to all of us. We want everyone to be able to enjoy this heritage, to have a sense of pride in it, and to keep it

safe for the future. The voices we are hearing in the conversations taking place as part of this public consultation illustrate the passion people have for other heritage, their monuments, their national parks, their landscapes, their nature and biodiversity.

To find out about Heritage Ireland 2030 public events in their own county, people should contact the Heritage Officer in their local authority. A list of Heritage Officers is available on the Heritage Council website www.heritagecouncil.ie.

I am aware that a small number of local authorities do not have a Heritage Officer. My Department will work with these local authorities and the Heritage Council to ensure that these counties are catered for and have a public event for people to attend. People may also contact my Department directly or make a submission through any of the channels I have already mentioned.

Our vision for heritage is a simple one - that heritage is valued and protected. Heritage Ireland 2030 is built around that vision: that the way in which we identify and protect our heritage is the best it can be. I would encourage everyone to avail of this unique opportunity to rethink how we care for our habitats, landscapes, wildlife, historic buildings and monuments, so they can be celebrated and enjoyed long into the future.

The shadow of Ben Bulbin, coasts of Sligo, the hills and vales of Leitrim and the wild peatlands and monastic lineage of Offaly show the diversity of what we are all charged with protecting for future generations. These counties at the centre and the beautiful edge of this island provide many exemplars of our built and natural heritage, driving a sense of place in the smallest villages and the urban centres. Their contribution to this strategy is essential. I am pleased that 2 events have been held in Sligo on 5 and 7 February to allow the people from that area to have their say. The Heritage Council has also arranged a regional event for Connacht in Claregalway on 19 February, and two events have been arranged in Offaly, on 23 January 18 February.

These public events are just one of four ways in which people can participate in the consultation. They are also invited to:

- go to the Heritage Ireland 2030 section on my Department's website and complete the online survey.
- send a written submission by post to Heritage Ireland 2030, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, The Custom House, Dublin 1.
- or email a submission to HeritageIreland2030@chg.gov.ie

National Monuments

18. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of progress in relation to the battlefield site of 14-17 Moore Street, Dublin 1; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8704/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): As the Deputy is aware, the project to conserve the national monument buildings at Nos. 14 – 17 Moore Street and to open them to the public to honour the leaders of the 1916 Rising was suspended in early 2016 on foot of proceedings in the High Court. The aim of the works was to restore them in a way that would have ensured that they reflected as closely as possible what they would have been like when they were occupied by the insurgents in 1916. With the agreement of the High Court a programme of works was subsequently completed to stabilise and

weatherproof the buildings. This agreed programme was completed last year.

Each of the buildings has extensive original features, including plasterwork, partitions, staircases, doors, floors, fittings and fixtures. Most significantly, they also contain physical evidence of the presence of the insurgents themselves in the form of the openings broken through from house to house during the final phase of the Rising. The intention remains to retain all of this original material.

Working with the recommendations of **The Moore Report – Securing History** as its guide, the Moore Street Advisory Group, of which the Deputy is a member, is currently engaged in discussions with the new owners of the Dublin Central site about the implementation of these recommendations and about the future of the site which surrounds the national monument. I understand that discussions are progressing very positively and that the Advisory Group has been briefed in some detail by the owner's architects on how the previous plans for the wider site are being significantly modified in a way that is seen to be more sympathetic to the traditions and history of the area and that also brings the commemoration of the events of Easter 1916 much more to the fore.

The design changes that will follow in relation to aspects such as architectural heritage, urban regeneration, community benefit and social amenity will determine how the wider regeneration work interacts with the national monument buildings themselves and how both elements are appropriately and sensitively integrated. I understand that the owners of the Dublin Central site will be applying for planning permission before the end of this year.

As the Deputy will also be aware, the Advisory Group itself has formed its own sub-committee that is specifically tasked with coming up with a vision for the national monument buildings. That sub-committee is meeting with the Department, as owner, with Hammerson which owns the surrounding site, and with other relevant bodies such as OPW, the National Museum and the National Archives to get ideas about how the national monument buildings should be presented, what they should contain by way of historical content, what use could be made of the open yards to the rear and how they will integrate with any revised proposals Hammerson comes up for the adjoining properties. The sub-group is also looking at what conservation works might proceed in the short-term to ensure that the buildings are protected from any structural deterioration or weather effects.

The State owned buildings are regularly inspected by OPW and monitored fire and security systems are in place and my Department's National Monuments Service is regularly briefed on them.

I would like to thank the Deputy sincerely for her dedicated, positive and constructive input to the work of the Moore Street Advisory Group. If there is any aspect of the management and conservation of the national monument buildings that she would like more information on I will be happy to arrange for briefing by my Department and the Office of Public Works.

Film Industry

19. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will report on her efforts to establish a film stakeholders forum to resolve ongoing disputes and issues across the industry; the stakeholders she has engaged with; the willingness of these groups to take part in such a forum; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8678/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha 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 Irish Film Workers Association 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.

It is important to underline that the State has formal institutional arrangements for the resolution of disputes in all industries. The audiovisual industry is not exempt from these arrangements which consist of the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court. The Film Forum on the other hand is intended to have a developmental role in the industry. The Oireachtas Committee specifically called for the constitution of a forum to allow all stakeholders within the sector to meet and work together to develop mutually beneficial solutions for the industry.

In the meantime, my Department along with other relevant Government Departments and State Agencies are working together in the form of the Audiovisual High Level Steering Group to bring an all-of-government approach to the implementation of the Government's Audiovisual Action Plan. The Steering Group also seeks to address issues raised in the audiovisual industry, and to support the industry and the people who work in it.

Wildlife Protection

20. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her current and planned activities to protect Ireland's biodiversity including initiatives in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8701/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department is responsible for implementing the Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2018, the primary legislation underpinning the protection of biodiversity and nature in Ireland. The Wildlife Acts afford protection to a range of habitats and species and provide for regulation and control of activities that impinge on biodiversity, such as hunting and trade.

The legislative framework in place to protect biodiversity is further strengthened by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 SI No 477/2011, which

also fall under the remit of my Department. These Regulations transpose the EU Birds Directive and the EU Habitats Directive into national law, and provide for protection of certain habitats and species across the European Union and give a framework for specific measures to be taken to target areas of concern in each Member State. The main instruments provided for are the designation of Special Protection Areas (SPA) aimed at the protection of threatened species of birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) aimed at protecting other animal species and habitats.

My Department is also responsible for developing and publishing Ireland's National Biodiversity Action Plan. The most recent Plan (Ireland's 3rd) was published in October 2017 and includes a number of actions aimed at assisting local authorities throughout the country in their efforts to protect and conserve biodiversity in their areas. Local authorities undertake much valuable work in this sphere and several, including Kildare County Council, have produced local Biodiversity Action Plans which are an important element in the overall approach to halting biodiversity loss.

My Department's National Parks and Wildlife Service will continue to monitor and protect biodiversity in County Kildare through the implementation of the existing legislative framework and in particular will continue to protect and enhance the habitat and species within the designated European Sites listed for County Kildare. These comprise seven Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and one Special Protection Area (SPA).

As it does on a national level, my Department will also continue to advise on planning, forestry and EPA licence applications in Kildare. It also engages in wildlife surveys and monitoring, carries out stakeholder liaison and maintains its educational role. My Department also has a remit to comment on a variety of licences under the Wildlife Acts with the aim of helping to protect Kildare's biodiversity.

In support of the work carried out by local authorities, I announced yesterday at the National Biodiversity Conference in Dublin Castle, a commitment in the coming years to double the funding my Department makes available for local Heritage and Biodiversity Officers to implement biodiversity actions at local level and to tackle invasive species. A pilot grant scheme was introduced in 2018 to assist local authority led biodiversity projects and I am pleased that we are in a position to extend this scheme in 2019. While many local authorities, including Kildare County Council, were not in a position to avail of this funding in 2018, I look forward to an increased take-up of the funding available in 2019.

I look forward to local authorities using the funding available for projects aimed at tackling invasive alien species in their areas. Invasive alien species are a significant threat to our biodiversity and can also have significant adverse effects in terms of the cost involved in implementing eradication or management measures. I want therefore to enable locally led works and also to raise awareness around invasive alien species and biodiversity matters more generally.

My Department is also preparing legislation to implement certain provisions of the EU IAS Regulation and this new legislation will strengthen and update existing legislative provisions around the management and control of invasive alien species in Ireland.

Finally, as well as funding commitments to support efforts to halt biodiversity loss, announced at the National Biodiversity Conference yesterday, I also announced a range of additional measures, 10 Seeds for Nature, that will raise awareness of biodiversity and strengthen the operational framework governing implementation of the legislative framework that is already in place.

Departmental Programmes

21. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the Creative Schools programme 2019; the schools in County Sligo that are participating in same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8509/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Creative Schools pilot is one of the flagship projects of Creative Youth, which seeks to enable the creative potential of every child and young person. This Plan is led by my Department, with the Departments of Education and Skills, and Children and Youth Affairs and the Arts Council, all working in partnership.

Creative Schools aims to understand, develop and celebrate the arts and creativity as a core aspect of school life. It strives to foster children and young people's creativity, potential and participation in the arts as an integral part of their education. The initiative recognises that the arts are a powerful means through which children and young people can explore communication and collaboration, stimulate their imaginations to be inventive, and harness their boundless curiosity.

The Creative Schools pilot is now up and running, reaching over 38,000 children and young people the length and breadth of the country. Of the 150 schools participating (chosen from 400 applicants or approximately 10% of all schools), 110 are primary, 30 post-primary, 7 special schools and 3 Youthreach centres. 38 DEIS schools were chosen for inclusion in the pilot (30 primary and 8 post-primary).

On 14th February last, Ministers McHugh and Zappone and I announced a €6M investment in the Creative Youth initiative for 2019, which will allow us double the number of participating schools to 300. Online registration and applications are now open until 21st March, after which the additional 150 schools will be selected and added to the existing participants. All information in relation to the Scheme is available on the Arts Council website.

Each participating school has access to Creative Associates who are essential in embedding inspirational and sustainable creative practices in teaching and learning. Creative Associates are a mixture of practising artists and teachers with an understanding of creativity and its potential to transform the lives of children and young people.

Participating schools, working with their Creative Associate, are completing the development of plan for arts and creativity, and implementing these plans. The Creative Associates will explore new links for schools with artists and with arts and cultural organisations, both locally and nationally, to help develop their plan. To assist this, each participating school is awarded €2,000 for implementation of their plan.

The participating schools in the current cohort of Creative Schools from County Sligo are:

- Carraroe NS
- Killaville NS

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

Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge

22. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Dara Calleary** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cé mhéad airgead a bheartaítear a chur ar fáil d'fheidmiú Phlean Gníomhaíochta 2018-2022; cé mhéad airgead a bheartaítear a chur ar fáil chun an Straitéis Fíche Bliain don Ghaeilge a chur i ngníomh in 2019; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [8594/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Dírim aird an Teachta ar an bhfreagra a thug mé ar Cheist Dála Uimhir 593 ar 19 Nollaig 2018 maidir leis an ábhar seo. Mar a thug mé le fios sa bhfreagra sin, is í an Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010–2030 bunchloch pholasaí an Rialtais i leith na Gaeilge. Tá úinéireacht trasRannach ag an Straitéis agus baineann an fhreagracht as í a chur i bhfeidhm, dá réir, le raon Ranna Rialtais, forais agus eagraíochtaí Gaeilge agus Gaeltachta. Is ar mo Roinn-se atá an fhreagracht iomlán as cur chun feidhme na Straitéise a chomhordú.

Tá cur i bhfeidhm na Straitéise agus, go deimhin, **Plean Gníomhaíochta 2018-2022**, d'fheidmiú na Straitéise a foilsíodh anuraidh lárnach i gclár agus i ngníomhaíochtaí éagsúla mo Roinne mar a bhaineann le gnóthaí Gaeilge agus Gaeltachta.

Tá maoiniú breise de €6.705m curtha ar fáil do mo Roinn i leith ghnóthaí Gaeilge, Gaeltachta agus Oileánda don bhliain reatha. Is fiú €55.522m dá réir an ciste iomlán airgid a bheidh le caitheamh sa réimse seo in 2019.

San áireamh tá:

- Ciste faoi leith ar fiú €3.2m in iomlán curtha ar fáil in 2019 do chur i bhfeidhm an phróisis pleanála teanga. Is ionann é seo agus ardú €0.55m thar an méid a bhí luaite leis an gciste seo in 2018. Caithfear an ciste ag tacú le hullmhú agus le feidmiú pleananna faoin bpróiseas chomh maith le bearta sonracha a dhéanamh ar bhonn lárnach a bheidh ar leas an phróisis - go háirithe mar a bhaineann sé le gnóthaí teaghlaigh, leis na luathbhlianta agus leis na healaíona tradisiúnta teangalárnaithe.

- €2m breise curtha ar fáil d'Údarás na Gaeltachta chun infheistíocht bhreise a dhéanamh i gcothabháil agus i gcruithú fostaíochta i gceantair Ghaeltachta. Anuas air sin, tá cinneadh tógtha agam suim de €0.7m nár chaith mo Roinn i 2018 a thabhairt ar aghaidh go 2019 le cur isteach i mbuiséad caipitil an Údaráis. Ciallaíonn sé seo go mbeidh buiséad iomlán caipitil de €9.7m á chur ar fáil ag an Roinn don Údarás i 2019 le caitheamh ar thograí fostaíochta.

- €0.5m sa bhreis i maoiniú reatha d'Údarás na Gaeltachta chun tacú tuilleadh le comhar-chumainn agus eagraíochtaí forbartha pobail sa Ghaeltacht den chuid is mó.

- Leithdháileadh breise de €0.980m faoin gClár Tacaíochtaí Pobail agus Teanga de chuid na Roinne chun tacú tuilleadh leis an bpróiseas pleanála teanga sa Ghaeltacht.

- Suim bhreise de €700,000 le haghaidh Scéimeanna Tacaíochta Gaeilge mo Roinne lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht.

- Leithdháileadh breise de €1.433m chun forbairt a dhéanamh ar infreastruchtúr na gcuan a fhreastalaíonn ar na hOileáin Árainn agus ar Thoraigh agus chun seirbhísí ríthábhachtacha iompair chuig na hoileáin a sholáthar.

Sa bhreis ar an soláthar de €55.522m atá luaite thuas, tá suim de €13.323m le cur ar fáil don Fhoras Teanga, a chuimsíonn Foras na Gaeilge agus Gníomhaireacht na hUltaise. Tá na figiúirí seo faoi réir chomhaontú na Comhairle Aireachta Thuaidh Theas i gcás an Fhorais Teanga.

Táim sásta dá réir go bhfuil cistíocht chúí curtha ar fáil chun cúram a dhéanamh do chur i bhfeidhm an Phlean Gníomhaíochta agus is féidir leis an Teachta bheith cinnte de go mbainfear

an leas is fear agus is féidir as an gciste suntasach sin ar leas na Gaeilge agus na Gaeltachta.

National Parks

23. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the contact she and her officials have had with executors of an estate (details supplied) with regard to the house, its surrounds and the approximate 5,000 acres of land in the estate and securing continuing public access to the lands. [8694/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): As outlined in my responses of 18th September, (Parliamentary Question No. 823), 02 October (Parliamentary Question No. 69) and 18th January there is no change to my Department's position.

While the lands in question would represent a significant addition to the stock of publicly owned heritage properties and lands, my Department could, as stressed previously, only consider acquiring this property if the price fell to within a certain range, or in the context of a donation or bequest. The sale and any apportionment of the property into lots is a commercial matter for the vendor.

This is known to the Vendors. Through the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), my Department manages a property portfolio in respect of national parks and reserves of approximately 87,000 hectares. These important biodiversity areas are located all around the country including a large area of County Wicklow, and the 5,000 hectares of lands in Glenasmole purchased in recent years.

Clearly, the Glenasmole purchase of 5,000 hectares sets a precedent, and although the circumstance pertaining are very dissimilar, it is certainly a market factor. As the Deputy will no doubt appreciate, it would not be appropriate of me to seek to negotiate indirectly or publicly. Suffice it to say that I am aware of the public-good value of this property, balanced across a range of demands across my Department.

With regard to the use of the area by hillwalkers, climbers and the public in general, as I have stated previously, I have no statutory function regarding the provision of access to private lands. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the Estate has allowed a permissive access to its hugely popular walking route for many decades and I would hope that this would continue under any new ownership arrangements and my Department has conveyed this desire directly to the vendors and their agent.

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

Arts Funding

24. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the efforts she is making to address employment and training precarity and poverty among workers and performers in the arts sector; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

[8675/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Workers in every industry and sector are entitled to all existing legal protections. These protections are equally applicable to people working in the arts and film the audiovisual industries. Legislation which is the responsibility of my Cabinet colleague Regina Doherty T.D. Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection was passed last December which strengthens the protection of people working in all sectors in Ireland.

The Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2018 is designed to improve the situation of insecurity and unpredictability of working hours for employees on insecure contracts and those working variable hours.

The new legislation requires that employers provide employees with certain terms of employment within a certain period after commencing employment. It also imposes sanctions for certain offences; to further provide for a minimum payment due to employees in certain circumstances; to prohibit contracts specifying zero as the contract hours in certain circumstances and to provide for the introduction of banded contract hours; to further provide for prohibition of penalisation and for those purposes to amend the Terms of Employment (Information) Act 1994 and the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997; to amend the Workplace Relations Act 2015; and to provide for related matters

Employment law in general should also have a role to play in terms of existing legal protections. The State has a range of institutional arrangements for reporting abuse of employment conditions.

I am satisfied that the industry works in general to a high standard.

Wildlife Protection

25. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if consideration will be given to commissioning a report into the environmental impact of the Heritage Act 2016, particularly the provisions in the Act which concern the extension of the cutting and burring season of hedge rows; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8501/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Section 40 of the Wildlife Acts 1976, as amended, prohibits the cutting, grubbing, burning or destruction of vegetation, with certain strict exemptions, from 1 March to 31 August.

Following a review of Section 40, which included consideration of submissions from interested parties, proposals were announced in December 2015 to introduce legislation to allow for managed hedge cutting and burning at certain times within the existing closed period on a pilot two year basis. The relevant legislation was included in the Heritage Bill 2016, which was enacted in July last year.

Section 7(1) of the Heritage Act 2018 provides that I may make Regulations to allow the burning of vegetation during such periods in the month of March and in such parts of the country as specified in the Regulations. My Department has published draft Regulations and best practice guidelines and interested parties were requested to submit their views to my Department on the draft documents by 31 January. The draft guidelines provide guidance to landowners on a number of issues including rotational burning, that species and habitats consideration should be to the fore in planned burning and on the need to liaise with relevant authorities and local fire service personnel. Some 30 submissions were received and these submissions are be-

ing examined within my Department.

I would expect that I will be in a position to make a decision on whether to allow burning in certain areas of the country in March before the end of February which will take account of the contents of the submissions received and the weather conditions in the recent period on the basis of data provided by Met Eireann. In the meantime, the existing provisions in the Wildlife Acts on burning remain in force.

In relation to hedgerows, Section 7(2) of the Heritage Act 2018 provides for the cutting of roadside hedges only during the month of August under Regulations. I fully recognise that hedgerows are a very important wildlife habitat, providing food, shelter, corridors of movement, nest and hibernation sites for many of our native flora and fauna. The change in timing of cutting set out in Section 7 of the Act should not interfere with any of these functions. Ireland has some 300,000 kilometres of hedgerow mainly surrounding fields and properties across the country and only roadside hedges are subject to the provisions of the Heritage Act - a fraction of the entirety of the total hedgerow resource in this country.

The Regulations will therefore require that any cutting in the month of August may only be of the current year's growth; it should not involve the use of heavy flails. This aims to ensure that any birds nests that might still be active by August will not be at risk. It is the intention that my Department will carry out studies to determine what, if any, effects there are during the pilot phase. These studies will involve the use of control areas where cutting within the prescribed period in the Wildlife Acts can be compared with cutting of the current year's growth under the Heritage Act.

I would also point out to the Deputy that both the burning and hedgerow provisions will expire after a two-year pilot period, and it follows that there will be an ongoing assessment throughout the pilot.

Question No. 26 answered with Question No. 17.

National Parks and Wildlife Service

27. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will direct the National Parks and Wildlife Service to study the proposal to create a national park in the wilderness areas of Howth peninsula in view of development pressures and the 1 million visitors to the peninsula each year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8549/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): It would appear that no proposal to create a National park in the wilderness area of Howth Peninsula has been submitted to the Department. If the Deputy would like to send one into me I will have my officials examine it. However, it must be noted that all Irish National Parks are fully state-owned and meet category II of the IUCN standard for national parks. There is a minimum size associated with such designations and it is unlikely that this estate would qualify. There are no plans to designate the area in question as a National Park. Howth Head is already afforded statutory protections in respect of developments within the designated Howth Head SAC and Howth Head Coast SPA.

National Cultural Institutions

28. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding made available to the national cultural institutions to deliver on their remit in the past three years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8505/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The following table sets out the annual funding that has been allocated to the National Cultural Institutions under the aegis of my Department over the last three years

NCI	2017Allocation	2018Allocation	2019Allocation
	€ million	€ million	€ million
Crawford Gallery	1,338,000	1,398,000	1,489,000
Chester Beatty Library	2,521,000	2,695,000	2,801,000
IMMA	5,068,000	5,648,000	5,958,000
National Concert Hall	2,709,000	2,829,000	3,048,000
Nat. Gallery of Ireland	9,394,000	10,002,000	10,547,000
Nat. Library of Ireland	7,293,000	7,563,000	7,825,000
Nat. Museum of Ireland	12,851,000	13,546,000	14,109,000
National Archives	1,606,000	1,656,000	1,706,000

I am pleased to have been able to increase the level of funding to the cultural institutions both in 2018 and in 2019.

In addition under Project 2040 - “Investment in our Culture, Language & Heritage 2018 -2027” the Government intends to invest €460 million in a significant number of capital projects in our National Cultural Institutions over the next ten years.

Looking to the future, I will be working towards an increase in the overall spend on arts and culture in line with the Government ‘s commitment to double funding for the sector. The national cultural institutions play an essential part in the cultural life of the country and they will form a central part of my plans in that regard.

Commemorative Events

29. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the plans her officials are working on for the 2019 commemorations. [4078/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): As the Minister with responsibility for leading the Decade of Centenaries commemorative programme, my priority is to ensure that the Government’s approach to the remembrance of the significant historical events and related themes of the period from 1919 to 1923 is appropriate, measured, respectful, inclusive and sensitive to the different perspectives that persist on the events of this period.

The programme will be based on a four strand approach comprising:

- A State Ceremonial Strand which will comprise a limited number of symbolic acts of national commemoration focusing on themes of remembrance and reconciliation and on the commemoration of all of those who lost their lives during this period.

- An Historical Strand which will comprise a diverse range of activities designed to encourage authentic historical enquiry about this period and promote the use of primary archival sources. Initiatives will be developed in collaboration with State partners, National Cultural

Institutions, institutions of learning and other stakeholders.

- A Community Strand, which will involve a collaborative approach – similar to that adopted for the 1916 centenary commemorations – between the State, local authority network and community organisations, including in Northern Ireland where appropriate.

- The Creative Imagination Strand, which will continue to encourage artistic and creative expression in remembrance of the significant historical events of the period from 1919 to 1923 and all of those who lost their lives.

With regard to the State commemoration programme for 2019, I can advise that it commenced with engagement by my Department on marking of the centenary of the Soloheadbeg Ambush on 21st January 2019. Tipperary County Council supported a community-led commemoration on Sunday, 20th January, as part of a broader commemorative programme across the county to mark the centenary of the Independence Struggle. My Department collaborated with Tipperary County Council to support these plans, in accordance with the most recent guidance of the Expert Advisory Group.

I approved a grant allocation of €10,000 to assist Tipperary County Council in supporting the local commemorative committee and wider community in developing their plans, in recognition of the significance of the Soloheadbeg Ambush as the generally accepted first action in the War of Independence.

Significantly, on the day of the ambush, Dáil Éireann was also convened for the first time. The Houses of the Oireachtas led on marking this centenary and delivered a diverse and inclusive public engagement programme – accessible at www.dail100.ie.

Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla

30. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cén uair a fhoilseofar an Bille chun uasdátú a dhéanamh ar Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla, 2003; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [8507/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Mar chúlra, is iarracht í an Bhille seo, trí na ceannteideil éagsúla, an timpeallacht a chruthú ina mbeidh ról níos lárnaí ag an teanga in obair an Stáit, go mbeidh an teanga níos feiceálaí agus go mbeidh fáil níos leithne ar sheirbhísí trí Ghaeilge.

Agus an Bille á thabhairt chun cinn, cuireadh tréimhse comhairliúcháin ar bun leis na bpáirtithe leasmhara. Leagadh na Ceannteidil faoi bhráid Chomhchoiste na Gaeilge, na Gaeltachta agus na hOileáin agus foilsíodh tuarascáil ag eascairt as an bpróiseas seo roimh samhraidh 2018. Tá an tuarascáil sin scrúdaithe anois ag mo Roinn i gcomhthéacs dréachtú an Bhille.

Beidh sé mar ollchuspóir sa Bhille go mbeidh 20% de na daoine nua a earcaítear don tseirbhís phoiblí inniúil sa Ghaeilge, go mbeidh gach oifig phoiblí atá lonnaithe sa Ghaeltacht ag feidhmiú trí Ghaeilge agus go mbeidh comhlachtaí poiblí in ann freastal ar an éileamh ón bpoibál ar sheirbhísí trí Ghaeilge. Is í an earcaíocht croí-lár na ceiste agus táim dóchasach gur féidir tógáil, ar bhonn chéimiúil, ar líon na bhfostaithe le Gaeilge sa stachóras agus, ag eascairt as sin, go mbeifear in ann feabhas a chur ar sholáthar seirbhísí trí Ghaeilge, mar is cóir.

Tá oifigigh mo Roinne ag obair faoi láthair i gcomhar le hOifig an Ard-Aighne chun Bille na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú) a dhréachtú. Tá an Bille san áireamh i gClár Reachtaíochta an Rialtais le foilsiú le linn an téarma seo.

Fostaíocht sa Ghaeltacht

31. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cén comhráite a bhí aici le páirtithe leasmhara maidir le cinneadh HID Global athlonnú go cathair na Gaillimhe; cén toradh a bhí ar na cainteanna sin; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [8508/19]

53. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Catherine Connolly** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cén ionchur a bhí ag a Roinn maidir leis an gcinneadh cuideachta (sonraí tugtha) a athlonnú ó shuíomh Údarás na Gaeltachta i gConamara go hoirthear chathair na Gaillimhe; cad iad sonraí na teagmhála idir an Roinn agus an Ghníomhaireacht Forbartha Tionscail [8684/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Tógfaidh mé Ceisteanna Uimhir 31 agus 53 le chéile.

I dtús báire is mian liom a threisiú uair amháin eile go bhfuil an Rialtas seo tiomanta tacú le cruthú fostaíochta agus forbairt fiontair inár bpobail Ghaeltachta. Tá infheistíocht dhíreach eachtrach a mhealladh san áireamh, ar ndóigh, chomh maith le tacaíocht do ghnóthaí agus fiontair dhúchasacha.

Ma is eol don Teachta, d'fhógair HID Global Ireland Teo. le gairid go raibh cinneadh déanta acu a nAonad Barr Feabhais Eorpach a bhunú i gCathair na Gaillimhe agus, mar thoradh air seo, a gcuid oibríochtaí a dhaingniú. De thoradh seo, táthar ag aistriú an lucht oibre atá ann cheana féin amach as an Tulaigh, Baile na hAbhann chuig ionad nua sa gcathair.

Mar atá ráite agam roimhe seo, ainneoin gur údar díomá é seo dom, tuigim nach mbeidh aon phost á chailliúint agus go mbeidh chuile fhostaí atá lonnaithe ar an Tulaigh faoi láthair in ann aistriú chuig an láithreán nua, mas mian leo sin a dhéanamh.

Tuigim ó Údarás na Gaeltachta go ndearna siad gach iarracht chun láithreacht HID Global a choinneáil agus an fhorbairt nua a éascú ag an láthair i gConamara, áit a raibh comhpháirtíocht fhiúntach idir an eagraíocht agus an comhlacht le seacht mbliana déag anuas.

Sa gcomhthéacs sin, ba mhaith liom a dheimhniú don Teachta gur tionóladh cruinniú i Meitheamh 2018 idir Údarás na Gaeltachta, an tÚdarás Forbartha Tionscail agus a gcuid máthair-Ranna agus na hAirí Humphreys agus McHugh, ar a d'fhreastail mé féin freisin. Reáchtáladh an cruinniú sin chun cumarsáid agus comhoibriú idir na gníomhaireachtaí a neartú. Sa gcomhthéacs sin, rinneadh plé ar HID Global, chomh maith le ceisteanna eile. Mar thoradh air seo agus cruinnithe breise, i mí na Nollag 2018, síníodh Prótacal Cumarsáide agus Rannpháirtíochta maidir le rannpháirtíocht chliant faoi seach idir Údarás na Gaeltachta agus an tÚdarás Forbartha Tionscail.

Mar a thuigfidh an Teachta, is faoin gcomhlacht féin a bhí sé cinneadh a dhéanamh maidir le hinfeistíocht agus cá ndéanfaí amhlaidh agus, sa gcás seo, tá cinneadh déanta ag HID Global a gcuid oibríochtaí a aistriú go Cathair na Gaillimhe.

Is fiú a mheabhru go bhfuil sé deimhnithe ag HID Global nach bhfuil siad ag fáil aon mhaoiniú ón Údarás Forbartha Tionscail maidir lena gcinneadh athlonnú go Cathair na Gaillimhe.

Ar deireadh, tuigim go bhfuil Údarás na Gaeltachta, mar chuid dá straitéis leanúnach forbartha fiontair, i mbun oibre chun cliant eile a aimsiú don áislann ar an Tulaigh agus go bhfuil an eagraíocht tiomanta forbairt bhreise a dhéanamh ar Pháirc Ghnó na Tulaí mar láthair fostaíochta.

Film Industry

32. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if producer companies in receipt of public funds and support will be required to offer training and employment to employees and trainees who were previously employed by the companies to ensure the provision of quality training and employment opportunities on all publicly funded or supported film productions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8677/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Screen Ireland is the national development agency for Irish film making and the Irish film, television and animation industry. Its statutory remit is to assist and encourage the making of film in the State and the development of a film industry in Ireland. Screen Ireland supports writers, directors and production companies across these sectors by providing investment loans for the development, production and distribution of film, television and animation projects. Screen Ireland has a vision for a vibrant, creative and sustainable Irish film, television and animation industry, with diverse voices, talent and opportunities which speaks to and connects Irish film culture with audiences at home and abroad.

In Budget 2019, I was able to allocate an additional €2 million to Screen Ireland to build on its vital work in supporting Irish film, television drama, documentary and animation. This increases its annual budget by 11% overall to €20 million.

Screen Ireland's role as a development agency for Irish creative talent means that it can focus is on the creative skills of the writers, directors, and creative producers as well as the Heads of Departments working on the production including Actors, Directors of Photography, Set and Costume Designers, Sound Recordists, Editors and Composers. Screen Ireland provides, through Screen Skills Ireland, training and skills development courses and programmes for the development of skills and is increasing its efforts in relation to training technical personnel working on films.

Screen Ireland conditions include, inter alia, full compliance with all statutory and legal and contractual obligations of the producers in connection with the production of the film which includes all the obligations of employers to employees.

In addition, I understand that Screen Ireland is considering further conditions of funding in areas such as gender equality, diversity and inclusion, dignity in the workplace, skills development and upskilling and environmental awareness.

Arts Funding

33. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the way in which she can address the financial strain on persons working in the performing arts including claims that one third of persons working in the performing arts earn less than the minimum wage; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8705/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I am aware of the issues referred to in the question and I am delivering on the commitment to deliver additional supports to the arts and culture sector in line with Government commitments.

Primary support for the Arts is delivered through the Arts Council. Funding for the Arts Council has increased in recent years and now stands at €75 million in 2019, and increase of some €6.8m or 10% over 2018. The Creative Ireland Programme is also delivering additional

resources to the sector, for example, through the Creative Youth Programme and the Culture and Creativity Strategies delivered by local authorities.

The Arts Council, which is independent in its funding decisions under the Arts Act 2003, operates within a published 10 year strategic framework entitled Making Great Art Work. This strategy prioritises support for artists throughout their careers, by the involvement of many agencies in cultural provision, by the impact of the arts on the creative economy, and by the depth and breadth of people's engagement with the arts.

For example the Arts Council now include as an assessment criterion, an organisation's policy on the remuneration of artists in an effort to ensure that organisations in receipt of Arts Council funding should offer fair and equitable remuneration to artists.

With regard to legal protections for workers across the arts sector, it is important to note that employees in every industry and sector are entitled to all existing legal protections.

As members will be aware legislation was introduced by my colleague, the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection. The Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2018 should improve the insecurity and unpredictability of working hours for employees on insecure contracts and those working variable hours. Employment law in general should also have a role to play in terms of existing legal protections. There are also institutions for reporting abuse of employment legislation. I am satisfied that the industry works in general to a high standard.

Special Areas of Conservation Designation

34. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the steps being taken in conjunction with Bord na Móna and the National Parks and Wildlife Service to ensure that as much of Bord na Móna's 80,000 hectares landholding becomes part of the peatlands restorative programme and renewed native ecosystems are funded by her Department, Bord na Móna and the EU; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8503/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Peatlands cover approximately 20% of the State's land area and their use has implications across a wide spectrum of public policy. Intact peatlands produce an array of nature generated benefits to society known as eco-system services. These services provided by peatlands include water retention, which can reduce flooding, water filtration and supply, climate regulation via carbon storage and cultural benefits. Bogs are, of course, an important habitat in their own right and an important breeding ground for many species including highly threatened species such as the curlew.

The National Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation Management Plan 2017-2022, approved by the Government and published in December 2017, sets out how the raised bog special areas of conservation are to be managed, conserved and restored and how the needs of turf cutters are to be addressed. The national restoration programme for Ireland's raised bog special areas of conservation and natural heritage areas is contained within this Plan. It is intended to restore all designated raised bogs within 3 cycles, with the first cycle operating for the duration of the Management Plan.

Work on the restoration programme has already begun with a €5.4m project 'The Living Bog' which is co-funded under the EU LIFE 2014-2020 programme. My Department is managing this project and is contributing €1.352m with the European Commission providing €4.056m. The Living Bog project aims to restore the favourable conservation condition and increase the area for active raised bog by 277 hectares on the 12 raised bog special area of conservation

project sites. This will contribute to the national objective of achieving favourable conservation status for active raised bog in Ireland.

Areas within the protected raised bog network are in the ownership of State agencies. The National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department is undertaking restoration works on State owned lands within the network. The Department has worked in partnership with Coillte to complete some of the restoration measures.

Bord na Móna has recognised the importance of peatlands conservation for many years. Now, with its focus on decarbonisation, I understand that Bord na Móna has earmarked for conservation 4,000 hectares of degraded raised bog capable of regeneration and for the necessary restoration works to reverse the impacts of drainage. My Department liaises with Bord na Móna in relation to the restoration and rehabilitation plans of the company and looks forward to continuing to do so.

Bord na Móna is also represented on the Peatlands Council, the Peatlands Strategy Implementation Group and the Project Steering Group for the EU LIFE Living Bog project.

World Heritage Sites

35. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the details of the new call for applications for Irish sites of built and natural heritage to be placed on the UNESCO World Heritage List; the way in which persons can make such and organisations can apply for a call for applications for new candidate sites to join the world heritage tentative list; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8700/19]

62. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the details of the new call for applications for sites of built and natural heritage here to be placed on the UNESCO World Heritage List; the way in which persons and organisations including those in counties Carlow and Kilkenny can apply for new candidate sites to join Ireland's World Heritage Tentative List; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8519/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 35 and 62 together.

On 25 January 2019, I opened the call for applications for new sites to join the World Heritage Tentative List. My Department, as State Party to the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, is committed to ensuring proper identification, protection, conservation and presentation of cultural and natural heritage sites that possess outstanding universal value, a fundamental requirement for World Heritage inscription. My Department acts as Focal Point for World Heritage issues in Ireland and liaises with UNESCO in relation to all related matters and in particular with regard to our two existing World Heritage Sites, Brú na Bóinne and Sceilg Mhichíl.

I am now seeking to identify further sites that may ultimately prove to be suitable for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage list as part of a periodic review of the Tentative List of potential candidate sites. This is the first step in the inscription process. I greatly welcome the opportunity it presents to bring forward and promote additional Irish sites that are of international significance and I look forward to my Department's engagement with local authorities and other interested parties, including those in Carlow and Kilkenny.

Candidate sites for Ireland's new World Heritage Tentative List will be subject to appraisal by my Department and a board of external assessors before the Tentative List is submitted to UNESCO in 2020. My Department will work with stakeholders to progress the readiness of

sites for World Heritage status by providing guidance and advice in relation to what is required by the nomination process, including the need for appropriate conservation measures and controls and management plans.

My Department's policy is that the process of identifying any new site should begin at local level by interested parties in close collaboration with the relevant local authority. My Department will be seeking details of each site, including summary information about why applicants consider it to be of Outstanding Universal Value, and any information currently available about management controls and legal protections already in place or proposed. My Department will also be assessing the level of likely community engagement and support for any eventual World Heritage nomination. Of course, of itself, this process also affords a great opportunity to communities to enrich their knowledge of the historical and archaeological treasures that exist in their local area.

This is indeed a very exciting time for World Heritage in Ireland. The opportunity to make an application to my Department to go on the new World Heritage Tentative List remains open until June 2020. Further information is available on the *worldheritageireland.ie* website and I would encourage all potential applicants to engage with their local authority, which will seek any necessary advice or guidance from my Department, at the earliest possible stage.

Apart from, World Heritage, a number of key built heritage sites in Counties Carlow and Kilkenny are benefiting from funding schemes provided by my Department through the local authorities. In 2018, heritage sites in both Counties Carlow and Kilkenny were successful grant recipients.

In Carlow, these included St. Johns Church, Cloydagh, Milford; Borris House itself and its Apple House Walled Garden; Ballydarton House, Fenagh; and Farrar's Tower House, Dunroe.

In Kilkenny, the successful applicants were The Stone Cottage, Callan; Yesterdays, Lower Patrick Street, Kilkenny City; Mountain View, Graiguenamagh; Dunkitt House, Dunkitt; Bridge View House, High Street, Inistioge; 6 Priors Orchard, Johns Quay, Kilkenny City; Old Methodist Hall, Inistioge; Forest Lodge, Gowran; Kilree House, Bennettsbridge; The Thatch, Burnafea, Castlewarren; Ballyduff Mill, Ballyduff, Thomastown; and the Former Stable Block & Barracks, Clomantagh, Barna.

Cultural Policy

36. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will report on the management and quarterly reports of the auditor pursuant to the performance delivery agreement signed and dated 6 November 2018 in relation to Galway 2020; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8683/19]

37. **Deputy Hildegard Naughton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of progress for Galway as EU Capital of Culture in 2020; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8537/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 36 and 37 together.

The Government has committed €15 million towards the funding of Galway 2020 as European Capital of Culture. The terms and conditions for the provision of the funding are set out in a performance delivery agreement between my Department and Galway 2020. The agreement addresses the roles and responsibilities of the Department and Galway 2020 in the provision

and expenditure of the grant, as well as the key deliverables and performance indicators attached to the drawdown of the grant, and the monitoring and reporting arrangements in place.

On 31 January last, my Department received the first management and auditors' report under the performance delivery agreement from Galway 2020, in advance of a monitoring meeting with the company the following week.

The management report sets out the progress made by Galway 2020 in recent months, including the appointment of a new Chief Executive, the appointment of new board members, board and audit committee meetings held, the periodic reviews of risks undertaken, progress on the development of the cultural programme including the European dimension, community engagement, staffing, and the development of the partnership and monitoring and evaluation programmes.

The auditors' report verified the payments reviewed and confirmed that Galway 2020 has followed best practice in transparency, accountability and securing value for money.

The reports were discussed further at the monitoring meeting between officials from my Department and Galway 2020, in addition to more recent developments, including the appointment of new Chair to the Board, Mr Arthur Lappin, as well as the appointment of cultural production company, Artichoke, to the role of cultural leadership for the project.

I am satisfied that Galway 2020 is progressing with the development of the delivery phase of the Capital of Culture programme and look forward to a successful and impactful year that will serve to further highlight the vibrant and diverse cultural offering in Galway and Ireland, more generally.

Culture Ireland

38. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the outcome of the Culture Ireland Global 2025 conference that took place in Dublin Castle in January 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8517/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Under the Global Ireland 2025 initiative, Culture Ireland convened a conference of cultural stakeholders to discuss how best to establish cultural programmes that advance our global visibility and strengthen our global relationships. The conference took place on 24th January 2019 in St Patrick's Hall at Dublin Castle. Culture Ireland is aiming to increase our cultural footprint internationally through the promotion of Irish arts, heritage and culture, reaching new generations and new audiences across the world.

The conference was attended by almost 300 cultural stakeholders and was live-streamed on the Culture Ireland website and also by RTE, which increased the reach significantly. The delegates came from all areas of the arts sector and the day provided a unique opportunity for all stakeholders to network and exchange views.

A questionnaire seeking formal feedback has issued to all delegates and Culture Ireland will be reporting on the finding of that survey in due course.

The conference provided an important opportunity for the arts sector to engage with international programmers and media and to discuss current issues facing the sector. Two of Ireland's newly appointed Cultural Ambassadors took part in the panel discussions and the conference provided an excellent opportunity for a discussion on the importance of their role.

The conference also provided an opportunity for some Irish artists to present their work to the audience and there has been a strong interest from international programmers in providing touring opportunities for the artists featured at the conference. Subject to feedback from the delegates, it is hoped to arrange a follow up conference in the future to provide updates on progress and to further discuss the progress on the overall aim of increasing our cultural footprint.

Departmental Funding

39. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she is in a position to offer funding under various headings to cultural and heritage projects, community based or otherwise nationally in 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8702/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): As previously advised to the Deputy in response to Parliamentary Question No. 55 of 28 February 2018, both my Department and the bodies under its aegis operate a wide range of funding schemes in the areas of arts, culture and heritage. Details of these schemes are made available on my Department's website and the individual website of the bodies concerned.

For the Deputy's convenience a summary of the various funding areas and the links to detailed information in respect of funding is set out in the following tables.

Arts, Culture and Heritage Funding Schemes available from the Department

Programme Area	Details available at:
Arts Film and Investment	http://www.chg.gov.ie/about/information-requests/freedom-of-information/foi-publications-scheme/services-provided-by-the-department/arts-unit/#grantfunding
Cultural Policy and Institutions	http://www.chg.gov.ie/about/information-requests/%20freedom-of-information/foi-publications-scheme/services-%20provided-by-the-department/cultural-policy-and-institutions-unit/#grantfunding
Culture Ireland	http://www.cultureireland.ie/funding
Built Heritage & Architectural Policy	http://www.chg.gov.ie/about/information-requests/%20freedom-of-information/foi-publications-scheme/%20services-provided-by-the-department/built-heritage-%20and-architectural-policy-unit/#grantfunding
National Monuments Service	http://www.chg.gov.ie/about/information-requests/freedom-of-information/foi-publications-scheme/services-provided-by-the-department/national-monuments-service/#grantfunding

Funding available from bodies under the aegis of the Department

Body	Details available at:
Arts Council	http://www.artscouncil.ie/funding/
Irish Film Board	http://www.irishfilmboard.ie/funding_programmes/
Heritage Council	http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/funding
Údarás na Gaeltachta	http://www.udaras.ie/en/forbairt-pobail/tionscnaimh-ealaion-chulturtha
Waterways Ireland	https://www.waterwaysireland.org/heritage-grant
Foras na Gaeilge	http://www.forasnagaeilge.ie/sceimeanna-maoinithe/

Commemorative Events

40. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the State commemorative events she plans to fund and direct as part of the Decade of Centenaries commemorations for the period 2019 to 2023; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8502/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My objective in approaching the development of the State Commemorative Programme for the years from 2019 – 2023 is to ensure that, in remembering this complex period in our history, which includes the Struggle for Independence, the Civil War, the Foundation of the State, and Partition, we promote a deeper understanding of the significance of these events, which accepts that the shared historical experience of those years gave rise to very different narratives and memories. It will also take account of sensitivities across communities in Northern Ireland and continue to recognise that very different perspectives persist on many of these events.

The commemorative programme will be respectful, measured, inclusive, and authentic, and will comprise four broad thematic strands:

- A State Ceremonial Strand which will comprise a limited number of State-led commemorations focusing on themes of remembrance and reconciliation and on the commemoration of all of those who suffered and who lost their lives during this period.

- An Historical Strand which will comprise a rich and diverse range of activities designed to encourage authentic historical enquiry about this period and promote the use of primary archival sources. Initiatives will be developed in collaboration with State partners, National Cultural Institutions, institutions of learning and other stakeholders.

- A Community Strand, which will involve a collaborative approach – similar to that adopted for the 1916 centenary commemorations – between the State, local authority network and community organisations, including in Northern Ireland where appropriate.

- The Creative Imagination Strand, which will continue to encourage artistic and creative expression in remembrance of the significant historical events of the period from 1919 to 1923 and all of those who lost their lives.

On 21st January the centenary of the convening of the First Dáil was commemorated, with a diverse programme, including a ceremonial event, led by the Houses of the Oireachtas. On 20th January, I represented the Government at a community-led commemoration to mark the centenary of the Soloheadbeg Ambush. I approved a grant allocation of €10,000 to assist Tipperary County Council in supporting the local commemorative committee and wider community in developing their plans for this event, in recognition of the significance of the Soloheadbeg Ambush as the generally accepted first action in the Struggle for Independence.

In bringing forward plans to mark the significant historical events that took place between 1919 - 1923, my approach will continue to be informed and supported by the Expert Advisory Group on Centenary Commemorations and developed in consultation with the All-Party Consultation Group on Commemorations. One of my key priorities this year will be to advance plans under each of the four strands and build collaborative relationships with key stakeholders, with a particular focus on local authority engagement.

It is, I believe, very fitting that local authorities have a leading role in supporting inclusive, respectful and meaningful community-led commemorations which remember all of the lives lost, augmented as appropriate with support from the State, which will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In recognition of the very important role that local authorities have played to date, and will continue to have, in encouraging measured and authentic citizen engagement

which is sensitive to the local context, I have requested my officials to organise a special Decade of Centenaries forum for the local authorities, which will take place on 13th March.

Film Industry Tax Reliefs

41. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if the film production underway at a studio (details supplied) is in receipt of section 481 tax relief and Irish Film Board grants; if so, the actions undertaken to ensure the provision of quality employment and training and the full application of employment legislation in terms of recruitment on the production; if the producer in receipt of the public funding and support has offered employees and trainee positions on the production to all employees and trainees that were previously employed by the producer; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8676/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I understand that at present, there are a number of productions which are using the studio to which the Deputy refers. I also understand that one of these productions is a project which has been awarded funding by Screen Ireland which was formerly known as the Irish Film Board.

Screen Ireland conditions include the production of budgets, finance plans, screenplay, biographies of the main creative personnel and their signed contracts, shooting schedule, a full list of cast and crew including trainees, insurance, details of postproduction and VFX arrangements and a full list of delivery requirements for the film for distribution and archiving purposes. Screen Ireland conditions include, inter alia, full compliance with all statutory and legal and contractual obligations of the producers in connection with the production of the film which includes all the obligations of employers to employees.

The conditions attaching to Section 481 also require the production of similar documentation on budgets, details of employment and the engagement of between 2 and 8 trainees on every production. Information relating to beneficiaries of Section 481 is published by the Revenue Commissioners when the project is finished and all compliance checks have been completed. The list of beneficiaries is published quarterly by Revenue.

In addition, I understand that Screen Ireland is considering further conditions of funding in areas such as gender equality, diversity and inclusion, dignity in the workplace, skills development and upskilling and environmental awareness.

Údarás na Gaeltachta

42. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Catherine Connolly** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cad iad na moltaí a chuir an Roinn agus Údarás na Gaeltachta faoi bhráid an Rialtais ó thaobh tuilleadh cumhachtaí agus solúbthachta a thabhairt don Údarás i gcomhthéacs Brexit, agus go háirithe ó thaobh an Bhille Forálacha Ilghnéitheacha (Tarraingt siar na Ríochta Aontaithe as an Aontas Eorpach an 29 Márta 2019), 2019 [8682/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): I dtús báire, is mian liom aird an Teachta a tharraingt ar an bhfreagra a thug mé ar an gCeist tosaíochta faoin ábhar seo níos luaithe inniu. Mar a thug mé le fios sa bhfreagra sin, tá Údarás na Gaeltachta ag comhoibriú i rith an ama le gníomhaireachtaí Stáit eile mar a bhaineann sé le cur chuige comhordaithe maidir leis an mBreatimeacht.

Lena chois sin tá an tÚdarás ag obair as lámha a chéile le Fiontraíocht Éireann chun a chinntiú go bhfuil na tacaíochtaí atá ar fáil do chomhlachtaí a thagann faoi scáth na heagraíochta sin ar fáil chomh maith do chliaint chomhlachtaí de chuid an Údaráis.

Sa chomhthéacs sin, is fiú a lua go bhfuil Meamram Comhthuisceana i bhfeidhm le tamall de bhlianta anuas idir Údarás na Gaeltachta agus Fiontraíocht Éireann, rud a chinntíonn go bhfuil fáil ag Comhlachtaí Gaeltachta ar scéimeanna éagsúla tacaíochta a chuireann Fiontraíocht Éireann ar fáil ar fud na tíre.

De thoradh seo agus, go deimhin, an comhoibriú leanúnach atá idir an dá eagraíocht, táim sásta go mbeidh fáil ag cliantchomhlachtaí Údarás na Gaeltachta ar na deiseanna agus na hacmhainní céanna atá agus a bheidh ar fáil do chomhlachtaí atá faoi scáth Fhiontraíocht Éireann mar thoradh ar Achtú an Bhille atá luaite ag an Teachta.

Ní call dom a rá go bhfuil teagmháil rialta idir feidhmeannaigh mo Roinnse agus feidhmeannaigh na Roinne Fiontraíochta, Gnó agus Nuálaíochta faoin ábhar seo agus go n-aithníonn an dá Roinn an gá go mbíonn Údarás na Gaeltachta agus Fiontraíocht Éireann in ann na tacaíochtaí céanna a thairiscint dá gcuid cliantchomhlachtaí faoi seach.

Creative Ireland Programme

43. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the levels of Creative Ireland funding that is designated for supporting DEIS schools in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form, by county; and the amount each DEIS school is receiving. [8692/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department does not fund DEIS schools directly. I can confirm however that a number of DEIS Schools have received funding under Creative Ireland's Creative Youth programme.

The Creative Schools pilot project is a flagship initiative of Creative Youth which is being led by the Arts Council and funded primarily by my Department and the Department of Education and Skills. Creative Schools aims to understand, develop and celebrate the arts and creativity, as a core aspect of school life, and to foster children and young people's creativity and participation in the arts as an integral part of their education in Ireland.

Creative Schools was launched in 2018 with funding of €1m provided for its successful roll-out. A total of 150 schools all across the country are now taking part. Of these, 41 are DEIS schools (33 primary and 8 post-primary), seven are special schools and four are Youthreach schools. 47 Creative Associates have been appointed to work with schools. All have been trained to enable the voice of the child throughout the Programme. Each school receives a grant of €2,000 to assist in the development of their creative plans and also receives the assistance of a Creative Associate. A list of all participating schools including the DEIS schools is available on the Arts Council website. However, I will arrange for a separate list of the 41 DEIS schools taking part in the initiative to be provided to the Deputy.

In partnership with the Minister of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Arts Council, I recently announced a joint funding package of over €6m for the implementation of a range of initiatives under Creative Youth which will have a positive impact on DEIS schools and indeed other schools right across the country. Almost €2.4m has been allocated to Creative Schools which will allow us to double the number of creative schools from 150 to 300 (which includes maintaining the current 150 for a further year). As in 2018, this process is open to all schools including DEIS schools to apply for and registration

for new applicants is now open with applications accepted online until 21st March 2019. All information in relation to this Scheme is available on the Arts Council website and I would urge all schools to consider applying.

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

Archaeological Sites

44. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to purchase a location (details supplied) in view of the unique archaeological and ecological importance of same. [8681/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): In the interests of the preservation, conservation, management and presentation of the built and archaeological heritage, my Department seeks to acquire certain heritage properties and monuments as resources and opportunities permit. From time to time these may come onto the open market, may be bequeathed to the State or may be offered to it free of cost. In addition, lands surrounding or in proximity to national monuments or heritage properties in State care (i.e. incorporating the setting of the monuments/properties) often reside in private ownership. In certain cases, improved protection of the monument/property, or access to the monument/property, would be possible if the State was to acquire such additional lands.

In all cases the Department examines the potential acquisition carefully, taking into account the conservation needs of the property and Value for Money principles.

The national monuments in State care already number some one thousand sites at over 760 locations around the country and these command considerable resource commitments in terms of both funding and personnel allocation. In addition, there are in excess of 120,000 monuments listed in the Record of Monuments and Places that are not maintained by the State. Recorded monuments are protected under Section 12 of the 1994 National Monuments (Amendment) Act and two months' notice is required to be given to my Department in advance of works at, or in their vicinity.

The property at the location referred to by the Deputy contains a national monument in my ownership as Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The day-to-day care of the monument is undertaken by the Office of Public Works on behalf of, and in consultation with, my Department. The national monument is fully protected under the provisions of the National Monuments Acts, 1930-2014, and any works at or in its vicinity require Ministerial Consent under Section 14 of the 1930 Act. There are also a number of recorded monuments on the property in private ownership, which are also protected under national monuments legislation.

My Department, in cooperation with the Office of Public Works, is only in a position to acquire, maintain, conserve and present to the public a limited number of properties and monuments.

It is not deemed prudent to publicly disclose interest or not in potential future acquisitions.

Film Industry

45. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the actions she has taken to date to address delays in setting up a film forum. [8697/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha 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. This position was communicated to the Oireachtas Committee on 21 December last by Screen Ireland who requested that the Committee meet with stakeholders to hear their concerns in relation to the proposed Industry Forum

My Department will continue to work through 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.

Commemorative Events

46. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the details of national and international events to commemorate the Irish famine in 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8534/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): An announcement in relation to the designation of the location for this year's National Famine Commemoration will be made shortly.

Proposals are currently being developed by officials of my Department and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in relation to the 2019 International Famine Commemoration and these will be submitted to the Committee for consideration shortly.

Údarás na Gaeltachta

47. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Catherine Connolly** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cad é stádas na hanailíse breise atá beartaithe ag Údarás na Gaeltachta ina Phlean Strai-

téiseach 2018-2020 chun teacht ar bhonn líne maidir le líon reatha na gcainteoirí Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht, ionas gur féidir gníomhú chun an líon sin a mhéadú 25% faoi 2030 [8686/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Mar is eol don Teachta, faoi Acht na Gaeltachta 2012, tá cúramaí faoi leith sannta d'Údarás na Gaeltachta mar a bhaineann sé le cur i bhfeidhm an phróisis pleanála teanga sa Ghaeltacht, rud atá ag croílár chur i bhfeidhm na Straitéise 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030. Mar chuspóir lárnach na straitéise agus an phróisis pleanála teanga tá treisiú na Gaeilge mar theanga pobail agus teaghlaigh sa Ghaeltacht.

Sa straitéis agus sa bPlean Gníomhaíochta 5 Bliana - a foilsíodh anuraidh mar thaca agus mar luasaire ar chur chun feidhme na straitéise, leagtar béim faoi leith ar phleanáil chomhtháite teanga ag leibhéal an phobail le cúnaimh leanúnach an stáit.

Ós rud é gurb é an Daonáireamh an príomhmhodh cainníochtúil atá ann chun líon na gcainteoirí laethúla Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht a thomhais agus a mheas tá obair faoi leith déanta chun a chinntiú go mbaintear leas cuí as mar a bhaineann sé leis an bpróiseas pleanála teanga ach go háirithe agus mar áis chun dul chun cinn a chinntiú.

Luafainn sa chomhthéacs sin an t-amharcóir mapa (GIS) atá forbartha ag mo Roinn i gcomhar leis an Údarás ag an Príomh-Oifig Stadreamh. Faoin gcóras seo - a bhfuil fáil air ar shuíomh na Roinne, cuirtear sonraí daonáirimh ar fáil ar bhonn Limistéir Pleanála Tenga Gaeltachta mar a bhaineann sé le Daonáireamh 2011 agus 2016 faoi seach.

Cabhróidh an áis seo - chomh maith leis an anailís cháilíochtúil atá agus a bheidh ar bun ag ceanneagraíochtaí pleanála teanga - le cúnaimh agus comhairle leanúnach mo Roinne agus an Údarás araon, chun dul i ngleic leis na dúshláin atá roimh an teanga sa Ghaeltacht, mar a léiríodh sna torthaí a d'fhoilsigh an CSO in 2017.

Cé go léirítear sna torthaí sin na dúshláin mhóra atá le sárú maidir leis an nGaeilge sa Ghaeltacht, táim muiníneach go rachaidh an obair atá ar bun agus beartaithe ag an Údarás, ag mo Roinn agus ag páirtithe leasmhaar eile chun sochair na Gaeilge mar theanga pobail agus teaghlaigh sa Ghaeltacht agus go mbeidh toradh na hoibre sin le sonrú i dtorthaí daonáirimh amach anseo.

Buiséad Údarás na Gaeltachta

48. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the capital funding in the Estimates for 2019; the amount and percentage overall of the capital budget that will be allocated to Waterways Ireland; the works and projects to be undertaken with such funding; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8680/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Estimates for 2019 have provided €75,800,000 in capital funding for my Department.

Of this €4,380,000 - 5.7% has been allocated to Waterways Ireland for capital works.

The projects to be undertaken by Waterways Ireland are:

	€	Projects
Meelick	2,500,000	Repair of Meelick Weir
Eastern Region (Canals)	1,000,000	Maintenance/Sealocks Dublin

	€	Projects
Shannon	200,000	Maintenance/Lock gate replacement
Shannon Erne	200,000	Dredging/Maintenance/3rd Party Project
Ulster Canal	250,000	Moorings/Retentions
Other	230,000	Development projects, City Block 19,
Total Departmental Allocation	4,380,000	

Special Areas of Conservation Designation

49. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the progress made on protecting the 11 peat habitats listed for special protection under EU directives since 2011; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8596/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Ireland's peatlands, occurring as raised bogs, blanket bogs or fens are unique on a national and global scale. Ireland recognised the importance of these peatlands and took steps to protect the best remaining bogs through designation as special areas of conservation and natural heritage areas. Between 1997 and 2002, Ireland nominated 53 raised bog sites for designation as special areas of conservation. 75 raised bog natural heritage areas have also been designated under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 to supplement the raised bog special area of conservation network. Ireland has also identified 50 areas as special areas of conservation for the protection of blanket bog. A further 73 sites containing blanket bog habitat have been designated as natural heritage areas under Irish law. 67 sites have been selected for conservation for one or more Habitats Directive Annex I fen habitat in Ireland.

Ireland has approximately 60% of the remaining raised bog habitat in Western Europe. Most of Ireland's raised bog peatlands are no longer of ecological interest as they have been cut over. For conservation purposes, there has been a need to restrict turf-cutting on a number of sites to protect the best of our remaining active raised bog habitat.

Significant efforts have been made by the State to resolve the issue of the protection of Ireland's raised bog special areas of conservation, within the framework of the EU Habitats Directive. This has included the establishment of the Peatlands Council, intensive and on-going engagement with turf cutting interests, the farming community, non-governmental organisations and with the European Commission, as well as the establishment of a long-term compensation scheme for affected turf cutters. The aim is to address the needs of turf cutters as part of an overall raised bog designated network solution, as set out in the National Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation Management Plan 2017-2022. This involves a balance of protecting traditional rights, providing compensation where these rights are curtailed and seeking to facilitate feasible alternatives where possible, while working to ensure that Ireland meets its legal obligations.

The national restoration programme for Ireland's raised bog special areas of conservation and natural heritage areas is contained within this Plan. It is intended to restore all designated raised bogs within 3 cycles, with the first cycle operating for the duration of the Management Plan.

Work on the restoration programme has already begun with a €5.4m project 'The Living Bog' which is co-funded under the EU LIFE 2014-2020 programme. My Department is managing this project and is contributing €1.352m with the European Commission providing €4.056m.

The Living Bog project, which commenced in 2016 and will conclude at the end of 2020, aims to restore the favourable conservation condition and increase the area for active raised bog by 277 hectares on the 12 raised bog special area of conservation project sites. This will contribute to the national objective of achieving favourable conservation status for active raised bog in Ireland.

In tandem with the LIFE project, the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department is undertaking restoration works on State owned lands within the protected raised bog network.

Film Industry

50. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if efforts to establish a film stakeholders forum have been abandoned due to the fact that some stakeholders have decided to boycott it; if so, the reason some stakeholders are allowed to effectively veto efforts to resolve ongoing disputes across the industry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8674/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha 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.

It is important to underline that the State has formal institutional arrangements for the resolution of disputes in all industries. The audiovisual industry is not exempt from these arrangements which consist of the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court. The Film Forum would have a developmental role in the industry.

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.

National Orchestras

51. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the contact she and her officials have had with members and representatives of the RTÉ Concert Orchestra; if members and representatives of musicians in these orchestras have been included in the working parties examining the potential transfer of the orchestras to the National Concert Hall; the progress made in this regard; and the stage plans are at to upgrade the National Concert Hall. [8693/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Following the publication of the report by RTÉ that it commissioned from independent consultants Helen Boaden and Mediatique on the RTÉ Orchestras entitled RTÉ Orchestras Ensuring a Sustainable Future, the Government agreed in principle that the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra (RTÉ NSO) should come within the remit of the National Concert Hall (NCH). The Government also authorised the initiation of discussions on the implementation of the recommendations of the report.

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

An Oversight Group and Working Group have been established with formal terms of reference, with a view to identifying and addressing the relevant issues to be addressed to enable the successful transfer of the NSO from the remit of RTÉ to the remit of the NCH.

The Oversight Group has already met on a number of occasions and has agreed on the importance of a proper communication process between the Oversight and Working Group and representatives, members and support staff of the NSO, to ensure that the orchestra is informed on a timely basis about all aspects of the proposed transfer of the NSO, and can input to the process. In this regard, a meeting has recently been held with representatives of the NSO to update them on developments to date.

The RTE Concert Orchestra is to remain within the remit of RTE.

Under its plan 'Investing in our Culture, Heritage and Language' the Government intends to invest €460m in a significant number of capital projects in our National Cultural Institutions over the period 2018 to 2027. This includes an amount of €78 million for the re-development of the National Concert Hall.

Investments under this plan will be subject to appraisal and evaluation in line with the Public Spending Code. This includes the consideration of a range of options prior to committing any funding to the project, an evaluation of the financial and economic implications of the project prior to procuring the project, and robust project management arrangements throughout the implementation phase.

The appraisal and planning for the re-development of the National Concert Hall is ongoing between my Department, the Office of Public Works and the National Concert Hall.

I look forward to the development of this project which will be a landmark for music in Ireland.

52. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the Creative Schools Programme 2019; and the schools in County Louth that are participating in same. [8520/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Creative Schools pilot is one of the flagship projects of Creative Youth, which seeks to enable the creative potential of every child and young person. This Plan is led by my Department, with the Departments of Education and Skills, and Children and Youth Affairs and the Arts Council, all working in partnership.

Creative Schools aims to understand, develop and celebrate the arts and creativity as a core aspect of school life. It strives to foster children and young people's creativity, potential and participation in the arts as an integral part of their education. The initiative recognises that the arts are a powerful means through which children and young people can explore communication and collaboration, stimulate their imaginations to be inventive, and harness their boundless curiosity.

The Creative Schools pilot is now up and running, reaching over 38,000 children and young people the length and breadth of the country. Of the 150 schools participating (chosen from 400 applicants or approximately 10% of all schools), 110 are primary, 30 post-primary, 7 special schools and 3 Youthreach centres. 38 DEIS schools were chosen for inclusion in the pilot (30 primary and 8 post-primary).

On 14 February last, myself, Ministers McHugh and Zappone announced a €6M investment in the Creative Youth initiative for 2019, which will allow us double the number of participating schools to 300. Online registration and applications are now open until 21st March, after which the additional 150 schools will be selected and added to the existing participants. All information in relation to the Scheme is available on the Arts Council website.

Each participating school has access to Creative Associates who are essential in embedding inspirational and sustainable creative practices in teaching and learning. Creative Associates are a mixture of practising artists and teachers with an understanding of creativity and its potential to transform the lives of children and young people.

Participating schools, working with their Creative Associate, are completing the development of plan for arts and creativity, and implementing these plans. The Creative Associates will explore new links for schools with artists and with arts and cultural organisations, both locally and nationally, to help develop their plan. To assist this, each participating school is awarded €2,000 for implementation of their plan.

The participating schools in the current cohort of Creative Schools from County Louth are:

- SN Muire Gan Smal
- SN Tulach Aluinn
- St. Brigid's Special School
- St. Oliver's NS

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

Question No. 53 answered with Question No. 31.

Arts Council Funding

54. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the level of funding for publishing and literature provided by the Arts Council in the past four years; and her views on whether literature and publishing are key cultural and artistic pursuits as Gaeilge and in English and are vital for the health of Ireland's cultural future and should therefore be funded adequately. [8504/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The strategic context for the Arts Council's support of literature is set out in its 10 year strategy entitled Making Great Art Work. This strategy describes how the Council will lead the development of the arts in Ireland over the next decade. Aligned to this strategy in terms of objectives and desired outcomes, the Arts Council's published its Literature Policy & Strategy 2018 which sets out its current policies for literature and available at the following link http://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/Lit_Policy_2018.pdf.

The Arts Council's role in literature is to support the development of the artform, and the Council is a key player in the provision of a national infrastructure for literary culture in Ireland. The Council's remit for literature includes poetry, fiction, short fiction, children's literature, critical writing and some forms of creative non-fiction.

The Arts Council recognises that the individual writer remains at the heart of the artform and works to develop the optimum environment for writers to create their best work. Through bursaries, travel awards and residency opportunities, the Arts Council provides direct support to writers to devote time to their craft and develop their careers. Through its support for resource organisations, the Arts Council ensures that key services and opportunities are available to writers. Publishers, journals, festivals and events all provide valuable platforms to writers, and the Arts Council works to support a variety of these to ensure that our literary ecosystem is diverse, healthy and open to a variety of voices and genres.

As the international, commercial publishing industry benefits a number of established Irish writers, Arts Council support is concentrated on indigenous, independent literary publishing houses and journals that platform new voices, experimental or risky work and distinctive Irish writers.

The total Arts Council funding to literature in 2019 is almost €3.5m. This includes funding to festivals, key literature resource and children's literature organisations, as well as writers residencies in universities the three laureate honorary initiatives. This figure, which represents an increase of 24% since 2016, is also inclusive of €1.27m funding to a range of publishers in English and Irish – these include poetry and children literature publishers, as well as a number of literary journals

The Arts Council also supports the development of Irish-language literature. This includes audience development, readership, translation, partnerships, promotion and critical writing. The Arts Council's literature policy contains a commitment to work with relevant partners to clarify roles and responsibilities, and develop unique supports to address the needs of Irish-language literature

Details of these funding schemes and initiatives in support of literature and these can be viewed on the Arts Council's website at the following link <http://www.artscouncil.ie/Arts-in-Ireland/Literature/Schemes-and-initiatives/>

In terms of Irish language initiatives, I should add that my Department provides significant funding to Foras na Gaeilge in order to carry out a statutory mandate to promote the Irish

language on an all-island basis. Foras provides ongoing support for publishing and literature through An Gúm, Clár na Leabhar Gaeilge, Áis and other initiatives. An Gúm provides publications and facilities to support the language in the education system, Clár na Leabhar Gaeilge supports publishing in Irish through various funding schemes and ÁIS distributes Irish language books throughout the country and further afield. Other initiatives include support for key online publications (the newspaper Tuairisc.ie, the lifestyle magazine NÓS.ie and the current affairs magazine Comhar.ie) and literary festivals such as Listowel Writers Week and IM-RAM. Further information is available at the following link <https://www.forasnagaeilge.ie/>

I agree strongly that literature and publishing are key cultural and artistic pursuits. Literature is an integral part of people's lives in Ireland: books, stories, language and reading are essential to our culture and society. Ireland's strong international reputation for literature is enhanced by contemporary writers who enjoy critical acclaim, win prestigious literary awards and attract significant readerships around the world.

Arts and Culture Capital Scheme

55. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she is satisfied with the availability of theatre and cultural facilities in County Cork; the steps she plans to take to maintain and develop those facilities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8673/19]

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

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

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

In the meantime, the Arts Council in conjunction with local government through the County and City Management Association commissioned an independent, strategic review of the network of venues and arts centres across the country.

The review will focus on the infrastructure of professionally-managed arts buildings that are open to the public throughout the year, and will be used to help develop a coordinated, spatially-informed strategy to support and develop the built infrastructure for the arts. A consultation phase was incorporated into the study and all stakeholders had an opportunity to participate.

Heritage Council Funding

56. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the position with regard to the community grants scheme for 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8698/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I understand that the Deputy is referring to the Heritage Council's Community Grants Scheme.

The Heritage Council, which is funded by my Department, is independent in the performance of its functions. It is primarily a matter for the Heritage Council to decide how its funding is allocated across the range of research, education and conservation programmes it supports, including its Community Grants Scheme. Further information about the specific schemes or grants it operates may be obtained from the Heritage Council.

In relation to the more general matter of funding to the Heritage Council, I was pleased to announce increased funding of €6.588m for the Heritage Council in 2019, compared to €6.377m in 2018.

The Voted funding from my Department to the Heritage Council each year is published in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's Revised Estimates Volume. For ease of reference, the amounts since 2015 are as follows:

Year	Total (€m)
2015	4,743
2016	5,243
2017	6,254
2018	6,377
2019	6,588

The Heritage Council is at an exciting and defining moment in 2019 with the launch of its new Strategic Plan "Heritage at the Heart" 2018-2022 and the appointment of its new Chief Executive, Virginia Teehan, from 1 February 2019. Final decisions on funding in 2019 for the Council's various activities, including its Community Grants will be made by the new CEO and the Council in the coming weeks.

National Monuments

57. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which her Department has identified historical sites such as burial mounds or other similar sensitive or historical sites which may benefit from protection nationally with a view to their sensitive or archaeological development for tourism and educational purposes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8703/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): As Minister, I am the owner or guardian under the National Monuments Acts of approximately 1,000 national monuments located at approximately 750 sites. The Acts allow me to make a preservation order where I consider a national monument to be at risk. Local authorities are responsible under the Acts for maintaining the national monuments of which they are owners or guardians. Any works to national monuments either managed by the OPW or those in the care of a local authority require my consent under Section 14 of the National Monuments Act 1930 as amended.

Under the provisions of the National Monuments Acts, my Department has established and maintains the Record of Monuments and Places, which affords legal protection to over 120,000 recorded archaeological sites and monuments in the State. Anyone proposing works in relation to a monument that is included in the Record of Monument and Places must give my Department two months' prior notice before works can start. The National Monuments Service of my Department also continually updates an inventory of archaeological monuments in the State, to ensure protection of newly-discovered archaeological sites. Furthermore, investigations are carried out where my Department receives a report of a threat or damage to a monument.

Archaeological excavations are regulated through the licensing system under section 26 of the National Monuments Act 1930, as amended. The majority of such excavations are carried out by private sector archaeological consultants for the purpose of assessing the impact of proposed development on possible archaeological features or mitigating the impact of development on archaeological heritage. A smaller number are carried out for conservation or research purposes. In deciding whether to grant an archaeological excavation licence, appropriate consideration is given to the need to maintain the integrity of affected archaeological sites. All archaeological excavation licences are granted subject to conditions requiring the excavations to be conducted to an appropriate standard and that reports on the results are furnished to my Department's National Monuments Service.

My Department fully supports the appropriate conservation of Ireland's heritage sites, both as important assets in their own right and to optimise their contribution to economic development and tourism promotion. The Department is in regular and ongoing contact with the Office of Public Works and Fáilte Ireland in the context of its Strategic Partnership to agree and devise shared priorities and policy approaches with respect to the management of national monuments and their development as tourist attractions. The results of this partnership include improved presentation of national monuments and an enhanced visitor experience. Visitor services at historical buildings and sites in State ownership are provided by the Office of Public Works.

Specifically in the educational field, the Department's National Monuments Service has collaborated with Limerick Education Centre to produce a series of lesson plans and resources that is available to primary and secondary school students to promote greater interest in and knowledge of our archaeological heritage.

The Heritage Council, which is funded by my Department, also plays an important role in education and community engagement with heritage through initiatives such as Heritage Week and the very popular Heritage in Schools Programme.

Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage is my Department's Sectoral Plan as part of Project Ireland 2040 and was launched on 1 March 2018. It includes an allocation of **€285 million for natural and built heritage**.

Heritage Ireland 2030 is a new national heritage plan for Ireland which is currently being developed by my Department. It will provide a coherent national heritage policy, recognising its importance to local communities and global visitors alike. Community engagement will lie at the heart of Heritage Ireland 2030 reflecting the values, visions and concerns of our citizens, communities, farmers, tourists and businesses. Public consultation is now open until 28 February 2019. It provides the opportunity for stakeholders to engage with our heritage, building on the priorities and key investment targets set out in Investing in our Culture, Heritage and Language.

Arts Council

58. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of work to address concerns raised by artists regarding the work practices at a theatre (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8696/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): As Minister for Culture, I have responsibility for setting overall vision and strategic direction for Ireland's cultural sector. In the first instance, issues raised by Theatre practitioners should be resolved by dialogue between the Theatre Chair and Board, directors and the theatre practitioners. I am pleased to report that this dialogue is now taking place between these parties.

I can inform the Deputy that a meeting took place between representatives of the Theatre Practitioners and the Theatre on the 1st February last. I am pleased to report that this meeting was described by both parties as "a positive and productive first step". Both parties have agreed to continue the process of bilateral meetings to deal with the issues raised by the Theatre Practitioners and have agreed to provide a progress update to the Arts Council and to my Department.

It should be noted that the Arts Council has been engaging with the Theatre in recent months about the employment opportunities and remuneration rates it provides for Irish based artists rates. The Theatre's has made it clear that it pays the actors it employs on terms and conditions agreed with Irish Equity, the actors' union. In presentation or in-association arrangements, the Theatre does not set the rate of pay which has been the prerogative of the producing companies. The Theatre has stated that this is to be reviewed as part of the dialogue with the theatre practitioners.

I have also previously stated that while I acknowledge the necessity for the National Theatre, as with all theatres, to have a level of artistic freedom in terms of its programming, I also recognise the necessity for a strong working relationship with theatre practitioners. This is vital for the continued success of theatre in this country.

I am very supportive of the collective endeavours of the practitioners and the theatre to resolve the matters raised and welcome the commitment to dialogue and engagement. I look forward to a mutually satisfactory outcome.

Wildlife Protection

59. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the scientific evidence which forms the basis for the extension of the upland burning season as presented in the draft wildlife (burning of vegetation) regulations 2018. [8597/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Section 40 of the Wildlife Acts 1976, as amended, prohibits the cutting, grubbing, burning or destruction of vegetation, with certain strict exemptions, from 1 March to 31 August.

Following a review of Section 40, which included consideration of submissions from interested parties, proposals were announced in December 2015 to introduce legislation to allow for managed hedge cutting and burning at certain times within the existing closed period on a pilot two year basis. The relevant legislation was included in the Heritage Bill 2016, which was enacted in July last year.

Section 7(1) of the Heritage Act 2018 provides that I may make Regulations to allow the burning of vegetation during such periods in the month of March and in such parts of the country as specified in the Regulations. My Department has published draft Regulations and best practice guidelines and interested parties were requested to submit their views to my Depart-

ment on the draft documents by 31 January. The intention of the draft guidelines would be to provide guidance to landowners on a number of issues including rotational burning, the need to keep consideration of species and habitats to the fore in the context of any planned burning and on the need to liaise with relevant authorities and local fire service personnel. Some 30 submissions were received and these submissions are being examined within my Department.

I would expect that I will be in a position to make a decision on whether to allow burning in certain areas of the country in March before the end of February which will take account of the contents of the submissions received and the weather conditions in the recent period on the basis of data provided by Met Eireann. In the meantime, the existing provisions in the Wildlife Acts on burning remain in force.

I would also point out to the Deputy that the burning provision will expire after a two-year pilot period although there is provision for continuation by resolution by each House of the Oireachtas for periods not to exceed 3 years.

Arts Council Funding

60. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding supplied to an organisation (details supplied) or via the Arts Council in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the number of men and women, respectively, that qualify for funding from the organisation in each of these years; and the county of residence of each. [8690/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The payments to which the Deputy refers are a matter for the Arts Council, who are independent in their funding decisions. I understand that membership of the organisation to which the Deputy refers is limited to 250 living artists and new members are chosen by peer nomination and election. Members must be (or have been) resident in the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland for five years and have produced a body of work that is original and creative.

Members of the organisation may qualify for a means-tested annual payment of €17,180 from the Arts Council called a cnuas, which is designed to enable them to devote their energies fully to their work. Members in receipt of a cnuas report annually on their work and confirm their on-going need of the support. After a period of five years they may re-apply for a cnuas to the Arts Council and their continued eligibility for receipt of the cnuas is assessed. The proportion of the organisation's membership that qualifies for the cnuas varies from year to year but is generally around 60 per cent of the total.

The following table shows the total cost to the Arts Council of the organisation in each of the years requested along with the number of men and women who received funding.

Year	Male recipients of Cnuas grant	Female recipients of Cnuas grant	Total Cost to the Arts Council
2015	106	52	€2,619,950
2016	105	53	€2,650,015
2017	98	55	€2,508,280
2018	97	55	€2,482,510
2019 to date	89	54	€622,775

The names of every member of the organisation who receives a cnuas payment from the Arts Council is published in the Arts Council's Annual Report and accounts every year along with the amount he or she received. These are available at the following link <http://www.arts.ie>

National Biodiversity Plan

61. **Deputy Frances Fitzgerald** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the details of existing and planned initiatives to protect biodiversity here including initiatives in Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8595/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department is responsible for implementing the Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2018, the primary legislation underpinning the protection of biodiversity and nature in Ireland. The Wildlife Acts afford protection to a range of habitats and species and provide for regulation and control of activities that impinge on biodiversity, such as hunting and trade.

The legislative framework in place to protect biodiversity is further strengthened by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 SI No 477/2011, which also fall under the remit of my Department. These Regulations transpose the EU Birds Directive and the EU Habitats Directive into national law, and provide for protection of certain habitats and species across the European Union and give a framework for specific measures to be taken to target areas of concern in each Member State. The main instruments provided for are the designation of Special Protection Areas (SPA) aimed at the protection of threatened species of birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) aimed at protecting other animal species and habitats.

My Department is also responsible for developing and publishing Ireland's National Biodiversity Action Plan. The most recent Plan (Ireland's 3rd) was published in October 2017 and includes a number of actions aimed at assisting local authorities throughout the country in their efforts to protect and conserve biodiversity in their areas. Local authorities undertake much valuable work in this sphere and several have produced local Biodiversity Action Plans which are an important element in the overall approach to halting biodiversity loss.

My Department's National Parks and Wildlife Service will continue to monitor and protect biodiversity in Dublin through the implementation of the existing legislative framework and in particular will continue to protect and enhance the habitat and species within the designated European Sites listed for County Dublin. At the moment, these comprise three Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and 12 Special Protection Areas (SPA).

As it does on a national level, my Department will also continue to advise on planning, forestry and EPA licence applications in each of the four Dublin area local authorities. It also engages in wildlife surveys and monitoring, carries out stakeholder liaison and maintains its educational role. My Department also has a remit to comment on a variety of licences under the Wildlife Acts with the aim of helping to protect biodiversity throughout the city and county of Dublin.

In support of the work carried out by local authorities, I announced yesterday at the National Biodiversity Conference in Dublin Castle, a commitment in the coming years to double the funding my Department makes available for local Heritage and Biodiversity Officers to implement biodiversity actions at local level and to tackle invasive species. A pilot grant scheme was introduced in 2018 to assist local authority led biodiversity projects and I am pleased that we are in a position to extend this scheme in 2019. In 2018 Dublin City Council, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown and Fingal County Councils all availed of funding under the pilot scheme.

I look forward to local authorities using the funding available for projects aimed at tackling

invasive alien species in their areas. Invasive alien species are a significant threat to our biodiversity and can also have significant adverse effects in terms of the cost involved in implementing eradication or management measures. I want therefore to enable locally led works and also to raise awareness around invasive alien species and biodiversity matters more generally.

My Department is also preparing legislation to implement certain provisions of the EU IAS Regulation and this new legislation will strengthen and update existing legislative provisions around the management and control of invasive alien species in Ireland.

The work of local authorities is invaluable in efforts to halt biodiversity loss. The Dublin Bay Biosphere is an important initiative that is managed by the Dublin Bay Biosphere Partnership, which includes Dublin City Council, Dublin Port Company, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Fingal County Council, Fáilte Ireland and the National Parks & Wildlife Service of my Department. The Biosphere was expanded in 2015 and now covers Dublin Bay, reflecting its significant environmental, economic, cultural and tourism importance, and extends to over 300 km². Over 300,000 people live within the newly enlarged Biosphere.

Finally, as well as funding commitments to support efforts to halt biodiversity loss, announced at the National Biodiversity Conference yesterday, I also announced a range of additional measures, 10 Seeds for Nature, that will raise awareness of biodiversity and strengthen the operational framework governing implementation of the legislative framework that is already in place.

These include bringing proposals to Government on Natural Capital; bringing draft legislation to Government to introduce a requirement on public bodies to consider what they can do to promote or restore biodiversity in the execution of their functions; and supporting climate change research to improve our knowledge and understanding of climate change impacts on biodiversity and assessing possible nature based solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Question No. 62 answered with Question No. 35.

National Monuments

63. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 684 and 685 of 5 February 2019, if her Department receives submissions from the public regarding whether a monument should be designated as a national monument; if so, the number of such submissions received in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the number of requests progressed to the designation of a national monument; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8550/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Under the 1930 National Monuments Act, a national monument

“means a monument or the remains of a monument the preservation of which is a matter of national importance by reason of the historical, architectural, traditional, artistic, or archaeological interest attaching thereto and also includes (but not so as to limit, extend or otherwise influence the construction of the foregoing general definition) every monument in Saorstát Eireann to which the Ancient Monuments Protection Act, 1882, applied immediately before the passing of this Act, and the said expression shall be construed as including, in addition to the monument itself, the site of the monument and the means of access thereto and also such portion of land adjoining such site as may be required to fence, cover in, or otherwise preserve from injury the monument or to preserve the amenities thereof”

Under Section 8 of the National Monuments Act (as amended), should a structure that meets this definition be in danger of destruction, injury or removal, then I may place a Temporary Preservation Order or Preservation Order on it, which will ensure its preservation. In the period in question, my Department has taken such action in one case. In general, my Department's policy and practice is to work with the owners of monuments that may be at risk with a view to arriving at agreed solutions that best secure the longterm conservation of the individual monument.

Currently there are in excess of 1,000 national monuments in my ownership or guardian as Minister that are managed on my behalf by the Office of Public Works. In other cases, it may be appropriate for my Department to acquire monuments that meet the definition of national monument in order to ensure their long-term conservation. There has been one such acquisition in the period referred to. Following acquisition, the Office of Public Works then becomes responsible for the day-to-day management and care of the monument.

In all cases where a monument is to become subject to a Preservation Order, or where it is to be acquired by the State, my decision is based on the advice of the Department's Chief Archaeologist and on legal advice as necessary.

From time to time, my Department is asked to consider the acquisition of particular monuments or sites for the purposes of the National Monuments Acts. While statistics relating to such requests are not readily available, every case is carefully considered in consultation with the Office of Public Works, including an assessment of the characteristics of the site and of the acquisition, and a determination made in each instance.

Buiséad Údarás na Gaeltachta

64. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Dara Calleary** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cé mhéad airgead a bheartaítear a chur ar fáil in 2019 d'Údarás na Gaeltachta, agus an méid sin briste síos idir soláthar caipitil agus reatha; cé mhéad airgead a bheartaítear a sholáthar don Údarás faoin bPlean Forbartha Náisiúnta (Tionscadal Éire 2040); agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [8593/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Léiríonn an tábla thíos an soláthar airgid atá curtha ar fáil d'Údarás na Gaeltachta in 2019:

Údarás na Gaeltachta	2019 Reatha €000	2019 Caipitil €000
C6 - Reatha Riaracháin	€9,442	
C7 - Reatha (Teangabhunaithe)	€3,850	
C8 – Caipiteal		€9,700*
Iomlán	€13,292	€9,700

*Maidir leis an soláthar caipitil do 2019, tá suim de €0.7m nár chaith mo Roinn in 2018 tugtha ar aghaidh go 2019 le cur isteach i mbuiséad caipitil an Údaráis. Ciallaíonn sé seo go mbeidh buiséad iomlán caipitil de €9.7m á chur ar fáil ag mo Roinn don Údarás in 2019 le caitheamh ar thograí fostaíochta agus tá sé san áireamh sa bhfigiúr a sholáthraítear.

Ár ndóigh, sa bhreis air sin, ní miste a mheabhrú don Teachta go bhfuil maoiniú de €3.86m san iomlán ceadaithe faoin gCiste um Athghiniúint agus Forbairt Tuaithe do sheacht thogra rathúil de chuid Údarás na Gaeltachta agus go bhfuil maoiniú caipitil de €2m á chur ar fáil faoin gCiste Forbartha Réigiúnach chun ionad nuálaíochta agus forbartha mara a fhorbairt ar Pháirc na Mara i gCill Chiaráin, Co. na Gaillimhe.

leis an bPlean Forbartha Náisiúnta 2018-2027, is mian liom a chur in iúl don Teachta go bhfuil gealltanas tugtha ann go méadófar, ar bhonn chéimiúil, buiséad caipitil Údarás na Gaeltachta go €12m in aghaidh na bliana. Tá céim shuntasach tógtha ag an Rialtas chuige sin i mbliana le bunbhuséad na heagraíochta méadaithe ó €7m i 2018 go €9m i 2019. Tiofadh tuilleadh sonraí chun cinn maidir le maoiniú do thograí agus cláir ar leith, chomh maith le hamscála an chaiteachais ina leith, de réir mar a rachfar tríd an bpróiseas meastóireachta agus pleanála atá leagtha síos faoin gCód um Chaiteachas Poiblí.

Middle East Issues

65. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if the Israeli Government will be requested to reinstate the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron following its expulsion from the region (details supplied). [8781/19]

66. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the fact that observers from the ecumenical accompaniment programme in Palestine and Israel, EAPPI, have been withdrawn recently following a rise in harassment by settlers following the withdrawal of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron, TIPH; and the steps he will take to request the Israeli Government for the reinstatement of both the TIPH and the EAPPI. [8782/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 65 and 66 together.

I was deeply disappointed by Israel's announcement that the mandate for the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) would not be renewed. The TIPH, a civilian observer mission which was established in 1997 as part of United Nations Security Council Resolution 904 and the Oslo II accords, has played an important role in mitigating tension and conflict in Hebron. This conflict prevention mechanism has continued to meet a vital need, and no adequate reason has been given for the decision to end its mandate, which would seem to be a unilateral breach by Israel of the Oslo Accords.

The withdrawal of the international presence is likely to accentuate tensions on the ground in an already fragile situation in Hebron. Ireland regrets this decision and I call on Israel to reverse it. Ireland stands with the EU in stressing that Israel must fulfil its obligations under international law, as an occupying power, to protect the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory. This decision will instead reduce those protections, leaving Palestinians more vulnerable to persistent attacks by settlers.

As the Deputy has noted, the observers from the ecumenical accompaniment programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) have also suffered from increasing settler attacks, and the withdrawal of the TIPH has now led the EAPPI to conclude that it too must withdraw its volunteers from Hebron. Many Irish volunteers have participated in the EAPPI programme over the years, and my Department has met with them from time to time, and values their work. Both the TIPH and the EAPPI in Hebron have been engaged in protecting children going to school from attacks by settlers, something which will have immediate resonance with Irish people. These children too are now under increased risk.

Ireland will continue to take a firm stance on matters relating to the Palestinian people and the Middle East Peace Process. At Israel's Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council last year, Ireland raised the continued expansion of settlements, and urged that Israel abide by its international legal obligations, including under the Fourth Geneva Convention, on

the treatment of a civilian population under military occupation. I reiterated our concerns about these policies in my speech to the UN General Assembly in September. The Israeli authorities are well aware of our views, and we will certainly convey our specific concerns about the case of Hebron.

Registration of Births

67. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when applications by persons (details supplied) will be processed. [8867/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Foreign Birth Registration, by its nature, can be a detailed and complex process often involving official documentation related to three generations and issued by several jurisdictions.

Applications generally take 6 months to process from the time all of the required documentation has been submitted to the Foreign Births Registration team. Applications requiring clarification or further documents take longer to process.

With regard to the specific applications the Deputy has enquired about, I can confirm that the Foreign Birth Registration team in my Department has been in direct contact with the applicants to request further documentation.

EU Meetings

68. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the issues discussed at the recent Foreign Affairs Council; the outcome of such discussions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8894/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I attended the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 18 February.

Foreign Ministers had an exchange of views on the situation in the Horn of Africa. Acknowledging the positive dynamics, Ministers called for increased EU engagement in the region.

On the occasion of the fifth anniversary of Maidan, Ministers stressed EU solidarity with Ukraine and support for the reform process there. We also discussed the situation in the Azov Sea. Looking ahead to the upcoming elections, Ministers emphasised the importance of these taking place in a free, fair and transparent manner, in compliance with international standards.

Ministers also had an exchange of views on developments in Syria, looking ahead to the Brussels III Conference in March, which will take stock of the humanitarian and political situation. High Representative Mogherini outlined the conference will provide a space in which to engage with Syrian civil society, with a special focus on women. Ireland continues to support UN Special Envoy Pedersen and his efforts to bring about a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political solution to the conflict, and welcomes the upcoming conference.

High Representative Mogherini welcomed the entry into force of the Prespa Agreement, marking the official name change from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the Republic of North Macedonia. She debriefed Ministers on her meeting with President Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of Congo. She informed Ministers of the consensus reached on restrictive measures on Belarus and referred to possible EU engagement with Belarus within the framework of Eastern Partnership.

There was also an informal lunch discussion on Venezuela. Ministers welcomed the establishment of the International Contact Group and the High Representative debriefed on its first meeting. There was also an exchange of views on the deteriorating humanitarian situation.

The Council adopted Conclusions on Yemen, EU Climate Diplomacy and EU Priorities on Human Rights in Multilateral Fora.

Military Aircraft Landings

69. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the action he has taken in relation to the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport approving the transit of munitions through Shannon Airport on a plane (details supplied) on 4 February 2019. [8940/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): As detailed in my response to this question on 14 February, under the Air Navigation (Carriage of War, Weapons and Dangerous Goods) Order 1973, as amended, civil aircraft are prohibited from carrying weapons or munitions in Irish sovereign airspace or into Irish airports unless they receive an exemption from the Minister for Transport.

In considering such applications, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport seeks the advice of relevant Government Departments, including the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The final decision with respect to the granting of such an exemption rests with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

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

Regarding the civil aircraft detailed in this instance, my Department was asked for and duly provided its observations in accordance with that policy.

Tracker Mortgage Examination

70. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of requests for oral hearings received by each independent appeals panel in relation to the tracker mortgage scandal; the number granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8788/19]

76. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if the Financial Services and Pension Ombudsman is now investigating all tracker complaints received by him; the number he has received; the number under investigation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8872/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 70 and 76 together.

The Central Bank of Ireland Tracker Mortgage Examination requires mortgage lenders to conduct an examination of all tracker mortgage related issues and to provide appropriate redress and compensation to customers which were impacted by contractual or consumer protection failings by their lender. A key objective of the Examination is to ensure the fair treatment of all tracker mortgage customers and as part of this, under the Examination Framework, lenders were required to provide for an appeals process and to set up appeals panels to adjudicate on

complaints made by impacted customers regarding all elements of the redress and compensation offers made to them by the lenders.

The Central Bank guidelines for the establishment and operation of the tracker examination appeals process in relation to oral hearings provides that:-

- oral hearings will be held where warranted in the circumstances of an appeal and that an oral hearing can be requested by any party to an appeal;-

appeals panels have the sole discretion to decide whether to hold an oral hearing and may decide to hold an oral hearing on their own motion where warranted;

- where a request for an oral hearing is refused, the Independent Secretariat to the appeals panel must communicate the reasons for the refusal to the customers making an appeal;

- oral hearings should be limited to hearing evidence from relevant witnesses and that requests to admit evidence from other witnesses will be considered on a case by case basis;

- oral hearings will be held in private and conducted in an informal manner and the appeals panels shall have regard to the legal principles which a Court would apply when conducting oral hearings.

The composition and other requirements for the appeals panels are also set out in the Central Bank examination framework requirements and the appeals panels operate independently of the Central Bank. The Central Bank advises that it does not have data regarding requests for oral hearings submitted to the appeals panels as part of the tracker examination appeals process. However, in its most recent update on the progress of the tracker examination which was published on 4 February, the Bank noted that the independent appeals panels are operational in all relevant lenders and that it is monitoring the progress and outcomes from the appeals. The Central Bank also indicated that it would provide further details on appeals progress and outcomes when it publishes the final report as the appeals process will then be further advanced in all lenders.

Regarding the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman (FSPO), the FSPO considered that the most effective and efficient way to provide redress and compensation to borrowers who have been wrongly denied tracker mortgages or the correct interest rate was for the lenders to co-operate fully with the Central Bank Tracker Examination. Therefore, whilst the Central Bank Examination was underway individual tracker mortgage-related complaints were placed “on hold” by the FSPO pending confirmation that the Examination had concluded in respect of those complainants.

In July 2018, a decision was taken by the FSPO to begin to take and advance complaints that could be progressed. Tracker complaints which have completed the financial provider’s internal dispute resolution process and where they have availed of the tracker framework independent appeals process if open to them are now being progressed, as are complaints which have been confirmed by the provider as not being impacted by the tracker examination. However, those tracker related complaints which have not yet reached these stages remain “on hold” by the FSPO.

As at 20 February 2019, the FSPO advised that there are 1,250 complaints on hand that are linked to the tracker mortgage issue, of which 645 are under active investigation.

Social Insurance Payments

71. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Finance the reason a person (details supplied) was charged €500 for PRSI for the year ending 31 December 2017 in view of the fact they have not been charged for PRSI in previous years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8811/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the person in question submitted their self-employed tax return for 2017 with a reported income in excess of €5,000.

Self-employed taxpayers (aged between 16 and 66) who have an annual income greater than €5,000 are liable to pay 'Class S' Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI) at a rate of 4%, subject to a minimum payment of €500. The person was not charged PRSI for the years 2014, 2015, and 2016 because their income for those years was less than €5,000.

Revenue Commissioners Resources

72. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding the problems in the new information technology system of the Revenue Commissioners (details supplied). [8835/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the new administrative arrangements for PAYE (PAYE Modernisation) started on 1 January this year. These new arrangements do not affect the way income tax and other statutory deductions are calculated under the PAYE system, but do change the way employers report payroll information to Revenue. In most cases, there has been a seamless integration of the new real-time reporting arrangements into employers' payroll systems without any impact on employees. Since its launch over 146,000 employers have successfully sent in real-time payroll submissions in respect of almost 2.6m employees.

Revenue is aware that when Department of Education and Skills (DES) reported their pay and statutory deductions details during January, it inadvertently included a 'cessation of employment' date in the payroll submissions in respect of some substitute teachers and other staff. This had the impact of stopping or reallocating those employees' tax credits and rate-band entitlements, which in turn resulted in some over-deductions of tax from their DES salaries.

Revenue understands that the issue has now been resolved by DES for all newly engaged substitute teachers and other staff and the Department is continuing to address the problem for those who were impacted on in the earlier pay run/s. Revenue has also confirmed to me that it has 'restarted' the employments of all those concerned and placed them on the most appropriate tax basis, based on the information available. This has facilitated DES in refunding some over-deductions and Revenue understands that others will issue over the next pay run/s. Revenue is also continuing to offer every assistance, including technical expertise, to DES so that the problem can be resolved as quickly as possible.

Revenue has further advised that any substitute teacher or other staff engaged by DES who have concerns that they are not receiving their full tax credit and rate-band entitlements can contact Revenue's National PAYE Helpline at 01-7383636 to confirm the position.

Banking Sector

73. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance the action he plans to take with a

bank (details supplied) that has stated its intention to ignore the Central Bank Code of Conduct in relation to mortgages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8837/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears (CCMA) forms part of the Central Bank's Consumer Protection Framework. It is a statutory Code first introduced by the Central Bank in February 2009, with the current CCMA becoming effective from 1 July 2013. The CCMA provides a strong consumer protection framework, requiring relevant firms to ensure borrowers in arrears or pre-arrears in respect of a mortgage loan secured on a primary residence are treated in a timely, transparent and fair manner and that due regard is had to the fact that each case of mortgage arrears is unique and needs to be considered on its own merits. The CCMA recognises that it is in the interests of borrowers and regulated firms to address financial difficulties as speedily, effectively and sympathetically as circumstances allow.

As the CCMA is a statutory code issued under Section 117 of the Central Bank Act 1989, it must be complied with by all regulated entities as a matter of law. The Central Bank can take action against a regulated entity which does not comply with the CCMA (for example by imposing a direction on such entity or taking enforcement action under the Central Bank's Administrative Sanctions Procedure).

The voluntary Code of Practice on the Transfer of Mortgages (the Code of Practice) was issued by the Central Bank of Ireland in 1991 to institutions involved in mortgage credit. It may be applied on a voluntary basis by any institution involved in mortgage credit. The Code of Practice applies to a loan secured by the mortgage of a residential property. For the purposes of this Code of Practice, a residential property is not limited to a principal private residence.

I have been advised by the Central Bank of Ireland that although this Code of Practice remains in place, it is a voluntary code which does not have a legislative basis and is therefore not subject to the Central Bank of Ireland's administrative sanctions process.

Pension Provisions

74. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Finance the reason a pension payment for a person (details supplied) has been reduced; if the matter will be reviewed; if the original payment will be reinstated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8866/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that it has reviewed the person's tax situation and is satisfied that there is no error and the position is correct.

The 'deduction' from the person's Occupational Pension is a consequence of a reduction in their tax credits to facilitate collection of the tax due on their State Contributory Pension. The person was not previously liable to tax because their combined Occupational and Invalidity Pensions were below the exemption limit (€18,000). However, the change from being an Invalidity Pension recipient to a State Contributory Pension recipient brought their combined earnings above the exemption limit.

Central Bank of Ireland Investigations

75. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide the terms of reference and details of the scope of the investigation being conducted by the Central Bank further to media reports (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8871/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware this matter is the subject of ongoing legal action. As such it would not be appropriate for the Minister or my department to comment.

My officials received the following response from the Central Bank of Ireland in regard to your query: “Any information received has been thoroughly considered in the context of our overall supervision of EBS DAC. Due to confidentiality requirements we are not in a position to make any further comment.”

Question No. 76 answered with Question No. 70.

Tax Rebates

77. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance the status of a tax refund in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8887/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that it cannot review the person’s tax situation for 2018 until they submit their Form P60, which should be provided to them by their employer.

Revenue has also confirmed that it has already made direct contact with the person to assist them in claiming their entitlements. The person is now registered for Revenue’s ‘myAccount’ service, which will allow them to electronically submit their P60 details once available to them. Revenue has assured me that the person’s 2018 tax situation will be reviewed and any refunds processed as soon as they submit the required documentation.

Departmental Properties

78. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he is listed as the owner of a property (details supplied) in County Tipperary; the way in which he became the owner; if he has given consideration to handing it over to a local community group that wish to refurbish it as a historic building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8891/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Under Section 28 of the State property Act 1954 (the Act) property held by a body corporate at the time of its dissolution becomes vested in the State in the name of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (the Minister). This excludes property held by the body corporate, in trust, for another. The Minister holds what is often termed a defeasible interest as the property will revert to the dissolved body corporate if the body corporate is restored.

The property referred to is registered to Holycross Development Society Limited. It has not been established if the property is one to which Section 28 of the Act applies. If the property has vested in the Minister then the Minister does have the power, under Section 31 of the Act, to waive his interest to a person if he thinks this would be proper in all the circumstances of the case.

No application for such a waiver has been received from any local group. If it is established that the property has vested in the Minister then he will consider an application for a waiver.

Flood Relief Schemes Funding

79. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will direct the OPW to expedite an application by Tipperary County Council for funding for flood relief works at Drish, Thurles, County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8904/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised that local flooding issues are a matter, in the first instance, for each Local Authority to investigate and address, and local authorities may carry out flood mitigation works using their own resources. The OPW operates the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme to provide funding to local Authorities to undertake minor flood mitigation works or studies to address localised flooding and coastal protection problems within their administrative areas. The scheme generally applies to relatively straightforward cases where a solution can be readily identified and achieved in a short time frame and which meets the criteria of the scheme.

On Tuesday, 19th February, Tipperary County Council submitted an application to the OPW under the Minor Works scheme for flood mitigation measures at the location mentioned in the deputy's question. The OPW will assess this application to determine whether it meets the scheme criteria. The Local Authority will be advised as soon as a decision is reached in this regard.

National Monuments

80. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of protected burial mounds which are listed and accessible for tourism and educational purposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8960/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware, there are a large number of recorded monuments in the country and a significant number may fall within the description of the term "burial mounds". For the purpose of responding to the question therefore, the word "protected" is firstly taken to mean those monuments in the care of the Office of Public Works and protected under National Monuments legislation. The reference to "burial mounds" is interpreted as referring to those National Monuments which are categorised as either Passage Tombs, Wedge Tombs, Portal Tombs, Court Tombs or Megalithic Tombs. Graveyards are not included in the definition.

A total of **63** individual Monuments, some co-located on the same site, are included in the Monuments in State Care list under these various descriptors and this list is in the table.

Visitor facilities are provided at **4** sites in Co. Meath (Newgrange, Dowth, Knowth & Loughcrew) through the Brú na Boinne Visitor Centre and **1** in Co. Sligo (Carrowmore).

The Office of Public Works endeavours, in as far as possible, to facilitate public access to all the National Monuments in its care. However, this may not be possible in all instances at all times for a variety of reasons outside its control including works, Health & Safety concerns, the fact that Monuments or the entry points to them may be located on private lands or because access is either temporarily or permanently curtailed for farming reasons such as animal movements or harvesting.

If the Deputy has a specific site in mind, I would invite him to make contact with my office directly and we will assist him.

The full list of National Monument tomb sites in the care of the OPW is as follows:

Questions - Written Answers

NAME	DESCRIPTION	TOWNLAND	COUNTY
Browneshill	Portal Tomb	Kernanstown	Carlow
Gartnanoul	Court Tomb	Gartnanoul	Cavan
Cohaw	Court Tomb	Cohaw	Cavan
Poulnabrone	Portal Tomb	Poulnabrone	Clare
Slievenaglasha	Wedge Tomb	Slievenaglasha	Clare
Tullycommon	Wedge Tomb	Tullycommon	Clare
Caheraphuca	Wedge Tomb	Caheraphuca	Clare
Ballyhickey	Wedge Tomb	Ballyhickey	Clare
Labbacallee	Wedge Tomb	Labbacallee	Cork
Island	Wedge Tomb	Island	Cork
Altar	Wedge Tomb	Altar	Cork
Malin More (Glencolumbkille)	Megalithic Tombs	Malin More	Donegal
Kiltiernan	Portal Tomb	Kiltiernan Domain	Dublin
Ballyedmonduff	Wedge Tomb	Ballyedmonduff	Dublin
Laughanstown	Crosses and wedge tomb (Two Celtic crosses, two cairns, the bases of two crosses)	Laughanstown	Dublin
Kilmashogue	Wedge Tomb	Kilmashogue	Dublin
Brenanstown	Portal Tomb	Brenanstown	Dublin
Killeany	Wedge Tomb A dolmen near Cowragh	Oghill	Galway
Carrownlisheen	Wedge Tomb	Carrownlisheen	Galway
Doorus	Wedge Tomb	Doorus Demesne	Galway
Knockroe	Passage Tomb	Knockroe	Kilkenny
Kilmogue (Leac an Scáil)	Portal Tomb	Kilmogue, Harris-town	Kilkenny
Corraclona	Megalithic Tomb	Corraclona	Leitrim
Aghaderrard West	Court Tomb	Aghaderrard West	Leitrim
Lough Gur	Wedge Tomb	Lough Gur	Limerick
Lough Gur	Megalithic Tomb unclassified	Ballynagallagh	Limerick
Duntryleague (Deerpark)	Passage Tomb	Deerpark	Limerick
Proleek	Portal Tomb & wedge Tomb	Proleek	Louth
Rockmarshall	Court Tomb	Rockmarshall	Louth
Townleyhall	Passage Tomb	Townleyhall	Louth
Carrowcrom	Wedge Tomb	Carrowcrom	Mayo
Carrowcrom	Megalithic Tomb	Carrowcrom	Mayo
Carrowcastle	Wedge Tomb	Carrowcastle	Mayo
Ballina	Portal Tomb	Ballina	Mayo
Rathfranpark	Wedge Tomb	Rathfranpark	Mayo
Armdulchan	Passage Tomb	Armdulchan	Meath
Dowth	Passage Tomb	Dowth	Meath
Knowth	Passage Tomb Cemetery	Knowth	Meath
Loughcrew	Passage Tomb Cemetery	Newtown	Meath
Loughbracken	Mound	Loughbrackan	Meath
Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth	Passage Tomb	Newgrange	Meath
Fourknocks	Passage Tomb	Fourknocks	Meath
Loughcrew	Passage Tomb Cemetery & Other Monuments, Cairn & Standing Stone	Corstown, Newtown, Patrickstown	Meath

NAME	DESCRIPTION	TOWNLAND	COUNTY
Cairnbane	Court Tomb	Tiredigan	Monaghan
Altore	Wedge Tomb	Altore	Roscommon
Knocknarea	Passage tombs & Cairns	Knocknarea South	Sligo
Magheraghanrush or Deerpark	Court Tomb	Magheraghanrush or Deerpark	Sligo
Carrowreagh	Court Tomb	Carrowreagh	Sligo
Carrowmore Passage Tomb Cemetery	Stone circle, Ring barrow, Passage tomb, Ringfort, Megalithic structure, Cashel	Carrowmore, Graigue, Tobernaveen	Sligo
Carrowkeel Passage Tomb Cemetery	Passage Tomb Cemetery	Carricknahorna East, Carrowkeel, Doonaveeragh, Treanscrabagh, Tully	Sligo
Carricknagat	Megalithic Tombs	Carricknagat	Sligo
Moytirra East	Court Tomb	Moytirra East	Sligo
Cabragh	Wedge Tomb	Cabragh	Sligo
Creevykeel	Court Tomb	Creevykeel	Sligo
Gortnaleck	Court Tomb	Gortnaleck	Sligo
Shrough	Passage Tomb	Shrough	Tipperary South
Matthewstown	Passage Tomb	Matthewstown	Waterford
Ballynageeragh	Portal Tomb	Ballynageeragh	Waterford
Gaulstown	Portal Tomb	Gaulstown	Waterford
Knockeen	Portal Tomb	Knockeen	Waterford
Seefin	Passage Tomb	Scurlocksleap	Wicklow
Baltinglass Hill	Passage Tomb & Hillfort	Pinnacle, Coolinarrig Upper & Tuckmill Hill	Wicklow
Moylisha	Wedge Tomb	Moylisha	Wicklow

Deer Culls

81. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the alternatives to deer culling at the Phoenix Park, Dublin, that have been considered by her Department to control the population of deer and to avoid the slaughter of same. [8630/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In general terms, I wish firstly to advise the Deputy of the general context of the management of the Fal-low deer herd in the Phoenix Park. The Office of Public Works has long experience managing the herd gained over many years. This is supported by scientific advice from the School of Biology & Environmental Science at University College Dublin and the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (Deer Management in Ireland a Framework for Action – 2015). OPW also liaises with the Royal Parks London, whose deer management practices are endorsed by The British Deer Society and the Deer Initiative of England. OPW is also a member of the Irish Deer Society and it might interest the Deputy to know that it received the John Nicholson Perpetual Trophy in 2016. This trophy is the Society's highest honour, awarded for meritorious service in the welfare, conservation, management and protection of deer in Ireland.

Deer culling is of course an activity that OPW would prefer not to have to carry out. However, the cull, as undertaken, is considered to be the most appropriate and humane way to sustainably manage the population of deer in the Park. While there are a number of potential

strategies for population control, as outlined below, there are specific reasons why each such strategy is unfeasible.

1. *1. Live Capture*

A live capture was carried out in 1991 with over 100 persons involved from Ireland and the UK. However, with current health & safety requirements, skills shortage and the size of the current herd, it is not practicable or safe to undertake this exercise today. Professional advice from the School of Biology & Environmental Science at University College Dublin suggests that this practice has the following consequences:

(i) live capture takes hours to be completed. Stress levels (i.e. corticosteroids) can reach abnormal levels in the animals leading to immune-depression and abortion in females

(ii) live capture requires the gathering of many deer in limited spaces (e.g. temporary corals) and this can lead to severe or sometimes lethal injuries (especially among fawns and younger deer injured by bucks)

(iii) these risks are accentuated during the transport of deer to a different location. Deer are wild animals and, unlike livestock, they become particularly stressed when transported on trucks.

1. *2. Tranquillising deer for administration of contraceptives and/or removal*

Use of drugs to tranquillise deer is usually limited to a small number of individual deer selected for research purposes (e.g., body condition check, parasite screening, and deployment of radio tracking devices for individual monitoring). Darting of deer for capture to administer contraceptives would be an extremely dangerous procedure to undertake in a public park. Darts are often lost during such operations resulting in a dangerous hazard to the public and other wildlife. The quantities of tranquiliser required to sedate a deer could be fatal for humans which is obviously of particular concern in a park frequented by large volumes of visitors. In order to carry out a safe procedure, darting should be carried out from short distances (less than 25 meters), which means that only a small number of animals could be darted over several days of work in the field. The exercise would be costly, time-consuming and ineffective. Ultimately, this would be an extremely dangerous procedure for the deer (if carried out from long-distances with the intention of capturing more animals) and for the public.

1. *3. Transportation to other locations*

The Phoenix Park deer are part of a wild herd and transportation would be very stressful for such wild animals. They would be also prone to injury during transport, as already highlighted above. Furthermore, it is illegal to release deer into the wild. Most importantly, the deer would suffer significant stress through live capture and transport before being released into a completely new environment, which could soon be over-populated with deer after just a few release events leading ultimately to the same over-population problem and requiring a deer management plan and population control plan for the new location.

1. *4. Contraception*

There are no contraceptives licensed for use on wild deer in Ireland.

Although not licensed yet, there are different contraception strategies available for deer, but in most cases, they refer to heavily managed herds (not wild herds), ie. animals kept within enclosures like livestock. The most common strategy would be steroids, which are given to each female on a yearly basis (from Sept to Jan). These steroids can regulate the ovarian cycle so

as to produce anoestrus female deer. The main challenge in administering these steroids is that each female must get the correct dose. The only way to do this is to get close enough to each female deer to make sure that it receives the correct dose. This is entirely impractical in a large, wild herd as this form of artificial feeding would disrupt normal herd behaviour and, based on a study by UCD, a success rate of only 10-15% is achievable. Most importantly, females who are not individually identifiable in a wild herd (e.g. without colour-coded ear-tags) could not be administered with steroids as, potentially, individual deer could receive multiple doses over time resulting in an overdose of the medication.

The alternative is to administer steroids via supplementary feeding (e.g. pills mixed with attractive food). This is considered to be high risk due to potential overdosing among females and the ingestion of the food by male deer which would have a detrimental effect on them. As far as injecting contraception, this would require the capture and immobilisation of each female for injection which is clearly not feasible. Most contraceptive strategies would require multiple captures per year of each female with clear negative consequences for the animals. It would also be virtually impossible to capture all the females of the deer population. Wild deer simply cannot be rounded up in any realistic way without causing severe stress and injury to both animals and operatives involved.

Perhaps most importantly, steroidal contraceptives are a significant risk in respect of pollution to both the environment and the food chain (e.g. crows and foxes eat deer that have perished from natural causes). Oral contraceptives, similar to those used by humans, cannot be given to wild animals because other animals would potentially pick on leftovers of deer feed and would be adversely affected. Droppings and urine from the deer would also contaminate the habitat. Hormonal contraceptives would interfere with antler growth and shedding. It would be impossible to feed such contraceptives to females only and to prevent male deer consuming them.

Sterilization of males has been deemed inefficient, as just one fertile male remaining in the herd is sufficient to sire a very large number of deer. When considering the use of contraceptives among the female deer population, there are other negative aspects to consider in respect of the welfare of the male deer. The adoption of female contraception strategies, assuming that these were possible, would have the effect that most of the females would not be in oestrus during the rutting season. This would have a significant effect on male stress and behaviour. The males would inevitably fight for the limited number of oestrus females available (as indicated above it would be impossible to give the proper contraception dose to all females, so some of them will be in oestrus during the rut). Male stress levels would be higher due to increased male competition for access to the fewer oestrus females. Many males would likely roam the Park in the continuous search of oestrus females, increasing the likelihood of being involved in traffic accidents and, as recorded in other study sites, they may attempt to leave the Park to look for females in the wider urban setting.

The wild deer herd is an integral part of the biodiversity of the Phoenix Park and has been such for over 350 years. Adopting measures that would significantly reduce numbers instead of maintaining them at sustainable levels would have a major impact on the biodiversity of the Park and result in significant change to other wildlife habitats.

I can assure the Deputy that OPW will continue to monitor options available to it in managing the wild herd and will continue to engage with the School of Biology & Environmental Science in University College Dublin, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Irish Deer Society in this regard.

82. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 185 of 10 July 2018, the date on which works will commence on the changeover; the details of the recommendations of the report; the progress made on implementing same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8870/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Given the comprehensive nature of this report and the significant engineering options presented, the Office of Public Works is considering the recommendations regarding the cycle and pedestrian paths along Chesterfield Avenue in the context of the Phoenix Park's historic structure and natural amenities. It is important that regard is had to the wishes and requirements of all users of the Phoenix Park and that decisions taken are consistent with the Phoenix Park Conservation Management Plan. It is hoped that this analysis will not take too long.

The report recommended six concept options, a brief outline of which are as follows:

Option 1:

The existing carriageway would be narrowed to two 3m wide lanes, to slow vehicles down. A 2m wide raised cycle lane would be introduced on either side of the carriageway. 1.8m (minimum) - 4m wide (max) footpaths would be constructed for maximum pedestrian comfort. Existing gas lamps locations would be retained and incorporated into the proposed footpath. Existing parking would be removed (approximately 1245 spaces). Estimated cost, €5.4M.

Option 2:

The existing carriageway would be narrowed to two 3m wide lanes, to slow vehicles down. A 2m cycle track would be introduced either side of the carriageway protected by a 0.25m concrete buffer. 1.8m (minimum) - 4m wide (max) footpaths would be constructed for maximum pedestrian comfort; the footpath could be shared to accommodate leisure and inexperienced cyclists. Existing gas lamps locations would be retained and incorporated into the proposed footpath. Existing parking would be removed. Estimated cost, €5.4M.

Option 3:

The existing carriageway would be narrowed to two 3m wide lanes, to slow vehicles down. 4m wide raised verge would be introduced either side of the carriageway. A 2m wide footpath and a 2m cycle track would be constructed side by side on top of the sloped verge on both sides of the carriageway. Existing gas lamps locations would be retained and incorporated into the existing verge. Existing parking would be retained. Estimated cost, €3M.

Option 4:

The existing carriageway would be narrowed to two 3m wide lanes, to slow vehicles down. Parking areas would remain in place either side of the carriageway. A 1.8m (minimum) - 3m (maximum) footpath would be constructed on one side of the carriageway; the footpath could be shared to accommodate leisure and inexperienced cyclists. A 3m wide two-way cycle track would be constructed on the other side. Both the pedestrian and cycle facilities would be protected by a sloped verge. Existing gas lamps locations would be retained and incorporated into the existing verge. Existing parking would be retained. Estimated cost, €1.45M.

Option 5:

The existing carriageway would be narrowed to two 3m wide lanes. A 1.8m (minimum) - 4m (maximum) footpath would be constructed on both sides of the carriageway. A 2m wide raised cycle lane would be introduced on either side of the carriageway. Pedestrian facilities

would be protected by a sloped verge. The pedestrian facilities would be protected by a sloped verge. Existing parking would be removed. Existing gas lamps locations would be retained and incorporated into the proposed verge. Estimated cost, €5.4M.

Option 6:

The existing carriageway would be narrowed to two 3m wide lanes. A 2.4m wide parking strip would be included on one side of the carriageway. A 3m wide two-way cycle track would be introduced on the opposite side of the carriageway to the parking. Two 1.8m (minimum) - 4m (maximum) wide footpaths would be constructed on either side of the carriageway; the footpath could be shared to accommodate leisure and inexperienced cyclists. The pedestrian facilities would be protected by a sloped verge, which could comprise a permeable pavement on the parking side. Existing gas lamps locations would be retained and incorporated into the proposed verge. Estimated cost, €6M.

Given the recommendations, significant impact on the parks infrastructure, users of the park and the substantial costs involved, OPW is considering viable options to ensure the safety of all park users. In the interim, road marking will be improved along the cycle lane and the route is regularly patrolled by the Park rangers.

Information and Communications Technology

83. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there is school funding for information communication technology (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8777/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020 reflects the Department's current policy on the embedding of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment. It sets out a clear vision that is focussed on realising the potential of digital technologies to transform the learning experiences of students by helping them become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens who participate fully in society and the economy.

The Strategy sets out a programme of work for the 2015-2020 period and is organised around four themes:

- Teaching, Learning and Assessment Using ICT
- Teacher Professional Learning
- Leadership, Research and Policy
- ICT Infrastructure

An investment of €210m, for multi-annual ICT Infrastructure Grants to schools is being made available over the period the Digital Strategy for Schools. To date some €60 million have been issued to schools in the past two years with the third tranche of this funding due to issue shortly in respect of the 2018/2019 school year. The provision of funding will support the schools in updating and renewing their ICT infrastructure and assist schools to embed innovative and cutting edge technologies to enhance teaching, learning and assessment in their schools.

In considering appropriate expenditure for this funding schools should align this with the Digital Learning Plan, with advice and support on developing this plan available from the

PDST-TiE at <https://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/en/Planning/>. In that context, the funding can be used for a broad range of requirements outlined in the relevant circular issued to schools regarding the Digital Strategy grant funding.

Schools Building Projects Status

84. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he is satisfied with progress in relation to the completion of a school (details supplied); when the new school build will be ready to hand over to the school authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8834/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I am very aware of the school building project to which the Deputy refers. The ongoing delay of this project is extremely disappointing and frustrating for all parties involved.

The Deputy will be aware that the project had been scheduled for completion for September 2018. However, the contractor experienced a number of issues such as unforeseen ground conditions and the severe weather events of early 2018. The expected completion date for the project is now July 2019.

The project is being delivered by Westmeath County Council (WCC) which is continuing to pursue the contractor for as speedy a delivery of the project as possible. The Council has the full support of my Department in its efforts to achieve this without compromising the integrity of the building being delivered.

To ensure that the school is kept fully up to date with progress on the project, WCC is issuing monthly progress reports to the school's Board of Management. This approach will provide accurate and precise information to help the school to plan and manage its needs until its permanent accommodation is available. The Deputy may also wish to note that officials from Department recently joined WCC at a meeting with the school authority so as to discuss and address their concerns.

Teachers' Remuneration

85. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason staff employed for substitution duties have been awarded zero tax credits resulting in an overpayment of taxation for a number of months; the steps that have been taken to rectify the matter; and when the issue is likely to be resolved. [8836/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The new PAYE system developed by Revenue was deployed for the first time from the 1st January 2019. My Department pays 120,000 staff on a fortnightly basis. Between 5,000 and 9,000 substitute staff who cover absences for teaching and non-teaching staff could be paid each fortnight for the full period or a number of days per fortnight.

A cessation date was included in the return sent to Revenue on the 3rd and 17th January for post primary substitute teachers and on 10th January for primary and non-teaching staff. The new Revenue 'system updated the employees' records immediately and assigned zero credits to them.

The issue that caused the main problem has been resolved and any substitute staff being paid for the first time in 2019 on payrolls since the 17th January in the case of post primary and from

10th January for primary and non-teaching staff, are not affected.

I am pleased to advise the Deputy that a solution was applied for some staff in the post primary teacher payroll that issued last Thursday (14th February). In that regard, a total of 2,450 new Revenue Payroll Notifications were loaded to the post primary teachers' payroll of 14th February. The payroll generated refunds for 69 substitute teachers. Further RPNs for post primary teachers will be processed in the payroll of 28th February and refunds of tax will issue where due. The exact number will not be known until the payroll is fully processed.

Revenue has forwarded 4,728 RPNs to be applied to the primary teacher and non-teaching staff payrolls for payment on the 21st February. It is expected that 533 refunds will be issued to primary substitute staff and 177 refunds to substitute non teaching staff on the 21st February.

My Department will continue to assign RPNs notified by Revenue to teaching and non-teaching staff on an ongoing basis. and is endeavouring to ensure that every payee has the correct RPNs) applied to them.

Where a substitute teacher / non-teaching staff member has more than one employer, the Revenue Commissioners will issue RPNs based on the information available to them. Employees may have more than one source of taxable income and may assign credits to more than one employment. Tax credits and taxable basis are decided by Revenue and notified to the employer to apply to payrolls. Any refunds of tax to staff are based on the information supplied by Revenue.

Residential Institutions Statutory Fund

86. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the discussions he has had with the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in relation to opening the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund to the survivors of a home (details supplied). [8839/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Under section 3 of the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Act 2012, eligibility for assistance from the Fund is confined to those former residents who received awards from the Residential Institutions Redress Board or similar awards or settlements in court proceedings and who would otherwise have received an award from the Redress Board.

A review of eligibility was carried out in 2018 and was intended to quantify any likely underspend and, in the event of an underspend, to look at the implications of extending the eligibility criteria to include survivors of other institutions.

The analysis concluded that it was clear that the fund is not going to be undersubscribed and that it should continue to be used for the benefit of those survivors who meet the criteria originally devised.

Because the Fund will continue to be used as originally devised, I haven't had any discussions with my colleague, Minister Zappone on extending it to survivors of the institution mentioned by the Deputy.

Residential Institutions Statutory Fund

87. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund; the amount of funds it holds; and the operating costs of

same. [8840/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): In accordance with the provisions of the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Act 2012, cash contributions offered voluntarily by religious congregations in the aftermath of the publication of the report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (the “Ryan Report”) are available to meet costs, incurred by Caranua in supporting former residents and in meeting the operational costs of Caranua and any costs associated with the independent appeals process.

To end 2018 a total of €103 million, comprising contributions of €101.63 million plus added interest of €1.382 million, has been received by my Department and made available to Caranua.

A contribution of €8.8 million remains outstanding from the Congregation of Christian Brothers and is expected to be received later this year. On receipt of that contribution the €110 million statutory cap will have been reached and any amount of the contribution in excess of that cap will go towards the National Children’s Hospital.

Caranua publishes regular updates on its website regarding expenditure. The most recent update shows that to end December 2018, Caranua had expended some €80.6 million on supports and services for former residents. I understand that it has expended a further €9.9m on administration costs in the same period while costs associated with the independent appeals process have, to date, amounted to €95,600. At the end of 2018, some €13 million was available to Caranua, excluding cash contributions offered but not yet received.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

88. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps he is taking regarding the lack of school places in the north west area of Dublin city and county for children on the autism spectrum; the steps he will take to address the lack of services and resources in many primary and secondary schools for children on the autism spectrum; if such children attending a junior school will be guaranteed a pathway and a place in the same senior school of the school in order that they will not be left at a disadvantage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8844/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The NCSE is responsible, through its network of Special Needs Organisers, for the development and delivery and co-ordination of education services to children with Special Educational Needs, including the establishment of special class and special school placements.

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

There are 37 special schools and 237 special classes attached to mainstream schools in Co. Dublin. Of these, 17 are ASD early intervention classes, 139 are primary ASD classes and 41 are post primary ASD classes. The number of ASD special classes in Co. Dublin have increased from 66 in 2011/2012 to 197 in 2018/2019. Details of all special classes for children with special educational needs are available on www.ncse.ie.

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

Accordingly, the NCSE advises parents, to seek to enrol their child, by applying in writing, to the school/s of their choice as early as possible. Where parents have been unsuccessful in

enrolling their child in a school, they should update their local SENO to inform the planning process.

The selection and enrolment of pupils is the responsibility of the management authorities in each individual school.

The NCSE's main responsibility is to ensure that schools in the area referred by the Deputy can, between them, cater for all children who have been identified as needing special class placements.

However, this may result in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice. As schools may not have a place for every applicant, 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.

Under section 15 (2) (d) of the Education Act 1998, each school is legally obliged to disclose its enrolment policy and to ensure that as regards that policy that principles of equality and the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parent's choice are respected.

My Department is aware that the establishment of special class provision in some schools and communities can be challenging.

Section 8 of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018, which commenced Monday 3rd December 2018, will provide me 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.

As the Deputy's question relates to a particular area I have arranged for the question to be forwarded to the NCSE for their attention and direct reply.

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

Teaching Council of Ireland

89. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for the delay for teachers returning from abroad to register with the Teaching Council; if the issue is being rectified; the expected waiting time for returning teachers to register with the council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8863/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Under the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2015 the Teaching Council is the body with statutory authority and responsibility for the registration of teachers in this State.

It is a function of the Council under the Teaching Council Acts (s7(2)) to act as the competent authority for the recognition of qualifications obtained by a person who has applied under this Act for registration as a teacher. A person who has completed teacher education qualifications outside the State and is seeking to register with the Teaching Council must have their qualifications assessed to determine that they are comparable and equivalent to accredited qualifications in Ireland. Where shortfalls are identified, a teacher may seek the advice of the Teaching Council as to how the shortfalls should be made up.

Section 30 of the Teaching Council Acts requires that a teacher in a recognised school be registered with the Teaching Council in order to be paid from public funds.

Teachers are registered by the Teaching Council under the terms of Statutory Instrument 444/2016 which provides for a number of routes to registration, including primary, post primary and further education. In certain circumstances, as determined by the Teaching Council, registration may be granted with conditions.

The Teaching Council advise that, for teachers qualified outside of Ireland, the assessment and registration process typically takes up to 12 weeks from receipt of all application documentation. The Teaching Council recommend that applicants apply in advance of their planned return to or commencement of teaching in Ireland to take account of the time that the registration process may take.

Teachers' Remuneration

90. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures or plans in place for the reimbursement of pay owed to teachers who have recently registered with the Teaching Council and that had been working to date as full-time teachers without being fully registered due to the backlog with the Teaching Council in relation to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8864/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Save for limited exceptions (provided for in Ministerial Regulations (S.I. No. 32/2014), Section 30, of the Teaching Council Act 2001, prohibits payment from Oireachtas funds to people employed as teachers in recognised schools unless they are registered with the Teaching Council, the statutory body for the registration of teachers. There will be no retrospective payment for a period during which a person is unregistered.

The Teaching Council has confirmed that the registration process for teachers adheres to the timelines notified on its website.

Site Acquisitions

91. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the acquisition of land for a school (details supplied) be completed. [8878/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy may be aware, 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. It is not anticipated that the completion of conveyancing will impact on the timelines for delivery of the building project.

Schools Building Projects Expenditure

92. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the overrun in cost for the national children's hospital will impact on the new building for a school (details supplied). [8879/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): No Education projects will be delayed as a result of the Department's contribution to the National Children's Hospital.

The Department of Education and Skills has agreed to pay, in 2019, €10m of an existing €17m commitment to higher education facilities in the National Children's Hospital. This funding will come from within the existing overall amount allocated to the higher education capital subhead. Due to this arrangement there is no impact on capital investment in the school sector or on the new school building referred to by the Deputy.

Schools Building Projects Status

93. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the timeframe for the tendering and construction of the new building for a school (details supplied). [8880/19]

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.

A tender stage normally takes between 7 and 8 months to complete.

School Closures

94. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a proposed school closure (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8882/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that the decision making authority for a school closure belongs to the Patron of a school, and this is subject to the agreement of my Department. Any proposal to close a school must involve consultation with all of the relevant stakeholders, parents, teachers, students and local communities and follow decisions taken at local level.

My Department is engaging with the Patron in relation to the matter.

School Curriculum

95. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 258 of 5 February 2019, the details of the findings that allow him to assert that the RSE provided in schools coupled with education provided at home by parents is associated with the best outcomes for students; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8899/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Research in Ireland and abroad indicates that a great majority of parents welcome the support of schools in helping them to fulfil their obligation regarding RSE and other aspects of SPHE.

The 1995 Report of the Expert Advisory group on RSE which was set by the then Minister for Education, found that various studies have been conducted on the implementation of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) which includes RSE in Ireland. These studies uncovered overwhelming support for school-based RSE among both teachers and parents.

In 2007 a research report produced by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills entitled: Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE): An Assessment to the Challenges of full implementation of the programme in Post Primary Schools, found that RSE is an important part of the education of young people, and that schools provide a safe context within which young people can learn about themselves and the wider world. This study showed that young people find it difficult to talk to their parents about sex and relationships. This makes access to RSE in schools all the more important.

The report also found that parents viewed the home as the most appropriate place to teach students about relationships and sexuality but they also recognised that not all children received home-based sexuality education. Many also felt that there were many advantages to children learning about relationships and sexuality in the company of their peers under the guidance of trained teachers and facilitators. Overall, there was overwhelming support among parents for school-based sex education and it is in this context that RSE provided in schools coupled with education provided at home by parents is associated with the best outcomes for students.

School Funding

96. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied) for funding relating to the proposed general purpose hall; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that students of the school that participate in physical education classes require a teacher to vacate a classroom; his views on whether this arrangement is unacceptable; and if the processing of the application will be facilitated. [8907/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Deputy will be aware that under the Project Ireland 2040 National Development Plan (NDP), increased funding has been provided for the school sector capital investment programme. This funding allows for a continued focus on the provision of a new permanent school places to keep pace with demographic demand and also provides for an additional focus on the refurbishment of existing school buildings to include the building and modernisation of PE facilities in schools.

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

Schools Building Projects Status

97. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason the new planned premises for a school (details supplied) have not started construction; when it is anticipated that work will commence; the reason for the delay in construction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8912/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The school referred to by the Deputy will be part of a shared campus. The building project will deliver a new Post Primary school and the new special school building will provide an area of 3,746sqm with 11 classrooms

and associated ancillary accommodation to cater for pupils with a range of learning disabilities.

In December 2018, the project completed Stage 2a (Developed Design Stage) and has been authorised to proceed to Stage 2b - Detailed Design, which typically would include the applications for Planning Permission, Fire Cert and Disability Access Cert and the preparation of tender documents.

Planning permission for this particular project was sought earlier than usual in the architectural planning process, during Stage 2(a) as a means to identify any potential issues which might arise.

Upon receipt and review of the stage 2(b) submission the project will then be authorised to complete pre-qualification of Contractors. Pre-qualification normally takes between 8 and 12 weeks to complete.

When pre-qualification is complete, the project will then be progressed to tender stage. A tender stage normally takes between 7 and 8 months to complete.

School Transport Provision

98. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to ensure a community funded bus service (details supplied) will not cease operation in September 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8913/19]

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 Post Primary 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 4.8 kilometres from and are attending their nearest post-primary school.

Bus Éireann has advised that the bus service referred to by the Deputy is not contracted to operate a school transport service under the terms of the School Transport Scheme.

All children who are eligible for school transport and who complete the application process on time will be accommodated under the terms of my Department's School Transport Scheme in the 2019/2020 school year.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

99. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when confirmation will issue in respect of a higher education grant in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8951/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As part of a comprehensive customer service and communications strategy provided by 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.

Child Detention Centres

100. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of boys that have been charged with criminal damage at Oberstown Children Detention Campus since May 2016; and the dates on which the incidents occurred. [8843/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): I have requested this information from the Garda authorities will contact the Deputy as soon as this information is received.

Naturalisation Applications

101. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to review the policy of not granting citizenship or naturalisation to spouses of Irish citizens living abroad. [8809/19]

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. A determination on whether an applicant satisfies the statutory criteria attendant to naturalisation can only be made after an application is received. Policy in this area does not prevent the granting of certificates of naturalisation to the spouses of Irish nationals living outside this jurisdiction.

Section 15 of the Act provides that the Minister may, in his absolute discretion, grant an application for a certificate of naturalisation if satisfied that certain statutory conditions are fulfilled. The conditions are that the applicant must :

- be of full age, or a minor born in the State,
- be of good character,
- have had a period of one year's continuous residency in the State immediately before the date of application and, during the eight years immediately preceding that period, have had a further total residence in the State amounting to four years,
- intend in good faith to continue to reside in the State after naturalisation,
- have, before a judge of the District Court in open court, in a citizenship ceremony or in such manner as the Minister, for special reasons, allows— (i) made a declaration, in the pre-

scribed manner, of fidelity to the nation and loyalty to the State, and (ii) undertaken to faithfully observe the laws of the State and to respect its democratic values.

Section 15A provides that, notwithstanding the above, 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). Section 15A(2) provides that the Minister may, in his absolute discretion, waive some of the conditions in relation to an application from a spouse or civil partner of an Irish citizen if he is satisfied that the applicant would suffer serious consequences in respect of his or her bodily integrity or liberty if not granted Irish citizenship.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for citizenship if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory conditions as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended.

Detailed information on Irish citizenship and naturalisation, along with the relevant application forms and guidance notes, is available on the INIS website at ww.inis.gov.ie.

Garda Data

102. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 112 of 14 February 2019, the reason the Irish Prison Service does not have records in relation to the number of times gardaí are requested to attend a prison in cases in which assault or other offences would be considered a criminal matter. [8832/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy's previous question (PQ No 112 of 14 February 2019) sought information on the number of times An Garda Síochána was called to respond to an incident in each of the prisons.

In my response I provided the figures currently available from the Irish Prison Service in relation to incidents where An Garda Síochána is requested to attend a prison in relation to a) a death in custody and b) a visitor suspected of smuggling contraband.

I am advised by my officials in the Irish Prison Service that there is no central register recording the number of times Gardaí are requested to attend a prison in cases in which assault or other offences are reported.

In light of the Deputy's question, I have asked my officials in the Irish Prison Service to examine the relevant information collated at Governor level with a view to making further information available to the Deputy.

Direct Provision Data

103. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons being accommodated at each reception centre in counties Limerick and Clare; the official capacity of each reception centre; the number of persons being accommodated in excess of the capacity of each centre; the annual running cost of each centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8833/19]

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

The statistical data the Deputy requires is detailed in the following table. The figures are representative of a particular point in time. This data is from 10th February 2019.

Number of persons accommodated in counties Limerick and Clare

County	Location	Current contracted capacity	Current Occupancy
Clare	Knockalisheen	250	237
	King Thomond	115	113
Limerick	Hanratty's	118	114
	Mount Trenchard	85	83

Annual Costs

Extensive and detailed information on the amount paid by my Department to each company contracted to provide direct provision accommodation every year up to and including 2015 can be found on the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) website www.ria.gov.ie under the 'Contract Values' section of the website - <http://www.ria.gov.ie/en/RIA/Pages/ContractValues>. The annual value of payments for accommodation and ancillary services for centres in Clare and Limerick in 2015 were €1,927,010 for Knockalisheen in County Clare and €1,278,076 for Hanratty's Hotel and €854,564 for Mount Trenchard in County Limerick.

This is in accordance with the RIA's policy on disclosure of financial information which was agreed with the Office of the Information Commissioner. Under this policy, a table of contract values is published on the RIA website, excluding the most recent previous two years. Therefore, in 2018, contract values up to 2015 were published on the website. Contract values for 2016 will be published by the end of Q1 of 2019 and contract values for 2017 will be published in 2020. The Deputy will appreciate that it is not appropriate to provide values for current contracts entered into by my Department. Negotiations take place with a number of commercial entities on an on-going basis with a clear focus on achieving the best value for money in respect of each contract. It is not in the interests of yielding best value for the taxpayer that details of current individual contracts are made available to other commercial bodies who are, or may be in the future, engaged in these negotiations.

The annual value of payments for accommodation and ancillary services for centres in Clare and Limerick in 2015 were €1,927,010 for Knockalisheen in County Clare and €1,278,076 for Hanratty's Hotel and €854,564 for Mount Trenchard in County Limerick. The overall cost to the State of providing the accommodation and related services for residents in Direct Provision centres on a nationwide basis is on average €34 per resident per day.

Legal Aid Service Data

104. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated cost of providing legal aid to all borrowers facing repossession hearings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8848/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Borrowers may apply for legal aid from the Legal Aid Board to defend repossession proceedings, where such persons meet the financial eligibility and merits criteria prescribed under the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 and the Civil Legal Aid Regulations 1996 to 2017.

The merits criteria include if the applicant is reasonably likely to be successful in the proceedings and if having regard to all the circumstances of the case including the cost to the Board

as against the benefit to the applicant, it is reasonable to grant legal aid.

The Deputy should note that in many repossession cases the applicant is unlikely to have any prospect of success as the lender will usually be entitled to orders for possession and sale in circumstances where the mortgage is valid and in arrears. In such circumstances the applicant is unlikely to meet the criteria for the granting of civil legal aid.

According to the Legal Aid Board, in relation to the estimating cost of providing legal aid to all Defendants irrespective of their means and the merits of the case, it would be usual to establish the potential demand for the service. However, the Courts Service does not publish figures for the number of possession cases currently before the courts. I am not, therefore, in a position to speculate on the likely number of such cases or the costs arising from them.

I want to reiterate the Government's commitment to providing assistance to persons who may be in danger of losing their home. The Deputy will be aware that insolvent persons seeking **legal advice and assistance** in relation to repossession proceedings against their home may be able to avail of such advice through the Abhaile scheme, the Government's free mortgage arrears support service, launched by the Government in October 2016.

Under Abhaile, the borrower can obtain free independent financial advice and negotiation assistance from a Personal Insolvency Practitioner, a MABS Dedicated Mortgage Arrears adviser, and/or an accountant. This service includes detailed analysis of the borrower's individual financial situation and home mortgage arrears, identifying their best option to resolve their arrears with priority to remaining in their home wherever possible, and negotiation assistance to get a solution into place.

Abhaile is not focused on bringing challenges to repossession proceedings because in most cases this will not help the borrower, for the reasons explained above. Instead, Abhaile focuses on solving the borrower's substantive problem, by getting in place a solution to the arrears themselves – at the same time, keeping the borrower in their home and helping them back to solvency. This is a far more sustainable and effective focus for public intervention – both more effective for borrowers, and better for taxpayers.

Spent Convictions Legislation

105. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an assessment of the effect of spent convictions legislation on those with drug convictions has been undertaken in order to gain insights into the barriers to work and education and so on experienced by drug offenders the convictions of which cannot be spent under the legislation. [8861/19]

106. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has carried out research to determine whether public order alcohol offences become spent at a rate far exceeding drug offences and to determine if spent convictions legislation needs to be revised in order to provide for more equitable treatment of drug and alcohol offences. [8862/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 105 and 106 together.

The Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016 came into force just under three years ago. The Act underwent extensive consultation and scrutiny both within the Houses of the Oireachtas and with other stakeholders in the period before enactment. The Bill, as it was then, was amended several times as it progressed through the Houses of the Oireachtas, and these amendments considerably expanded the scope of the Bill such that, it was

estimated at the time, approximately 80 to 85% of all criminal convictions would become spent after 7 years.

That said, I am conscious of the case for keeping under review the application and scope of the provisions set out in the Act. My Department will continue to carefully consider the effectiveness and balance of these provisions so that the fairest possible outcome can be achieved for all our citizens. In this connection, the Deputy may be aware that the Government did not oppose the Private Members' Criminal Justice (Rehabilitative Periods) Bill 2018 at second stage in the Seanad this month. That Bill proposes to amend the 2016 Act and provide for a considerable extension of the 2016 legislation in terms of affording a more liberal approach on spent convictions. The implications of any such changes will require careful analysis and consideration including, to the extent possible, the type of analysis referred to by the Deputy. A balance does need to be struck between protecting the public and rehabilitating the offender, and I look forward to discussing and debating the proposals contained in the Private Members' Bill.

Anti-Social Behaviour

107. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a list of all reported anti-social behaviour will be provided for the past five years in the James's Street, Dublin 8 area, in tabular form. [8876/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, the Central Statistics Office (CSO), as the national statistical agency, is responsible for the compilation and publication of recorded crime statistics, and the CSO has established a dedicated unit for this purpose.

However, to be of assistance, I have asked the CSO to forward the available statistics directly to the Deputy.

The Deputy will be familiar with local Joint Policing Committees, which provide important opportunities for local representatives to discuss concerns about criminality with local Gardaí. The Deputy may also wish to raise any concerns he may have at this forum.

Fines Data

108. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of fines and the amount in fines paid by drivers in locations (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8919/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that my Department is not responsible for road traffic enforcement, which is an operational matter for An Garda Síochána. However, to be of assistance, I have asked An Garda Síochána whether it is possible to extract the specific Fixed Charge Notice statistics sought in response to your query.

I will contact the Deputy directly on receipt of a Garda response.

Naturalisation Eligibility

109. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current

or expected position in regard to a determination of eligibility for citizenship in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8941/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that, in response to a notification pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned has not submitted written representations.

The position in the State of the person concerned will now be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation. If any representations are submitted, they will be considered before a final decision is made.

The Deputy may wish to note that as the person concerned has no current right of residency in the State, he would not be in a position to meet the lawful residency criteria applicable to persons applying to my Department for a Certificate of Naturalisation.

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

Naturalisation Applications

110. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position in regard to the determination of eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8942/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the processing of the application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy is ongoing. On completion of the necessary processing the application will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible. Should further documentation be required it will be requested from the applicant in due course.

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

It is recognised that all applicants for citizenship would wish to have a decision on their application without delay. The nature of the naturalisation process is such that, for a broad range of reasons, some cases will take longer than others to process. In some instances, completing the necessary checks can take a considerable period of time.

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

Residency Permits

111. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if permission to remain, extended residency or stamp 4 will be considered in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8943/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that on 11 February 2019 the person concerned made an application for a right to residency accompanied by a right to work based on their parentage of an Irish citizen child.

I am also advised that on 11 February 2019 INIS wrote to the person concerned seeking further information. I understand that INIS will consider the application further upon receipt of a response from the individual concerned.

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

Naturalisation Applications

112. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a person (details supplied) can visit a family member in their home country on compassionate grounds without prejudicing their residency status or entitlement to naturalisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8947/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the processing of the application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy is ongoing. On completion of the necessary processing the application will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible. Should further documentation be required it will be requested from the applicant in due course.

The residency criterion for an application for a certificate of naturalisation is laid out in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 as amended. It is the case that short absences for holidays, family emergencies etc. are permitted but the applicant should inform INIS if they are going to be absent from the State for a prolonged period. It is incumbent on all applicants to keep their permission to remain up to date at all times.

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

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

INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Naturalisation Eligibility

113. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8953/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the processing of the application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy is ongoing. On completion of the necessary processing the application will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible. Should further documentation be required it will be requested from the applicant in due course.

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

It is recognised that all applicants for citizenship would wish to have a decision on their application without delay. The nature of the naturalisation process is such that, for a broad range of reasons, some cases will take longer than others to process. In some instances, completing the necessary checks can take a considerable period of time.

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

Naturalisation Eligibility

114. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the children of a person (details supplied) are likely to be approved for naturalisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8956/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that there is no record of a current application for a certificate of naturalisation on behalf of the persons referred to by the Deputy. An application for naturalisation was received on behalf of the first named child, however it was returned in its entirety on 9 January 2019 as it was not completed on the correct application form. As the Deputy will appreciate, determination on whether an applicant satisfies the statutory criteria attendant to naturalisation can only be made after a valid application is received.

Where sections 6A and 6B of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, are applicable, a child born in the island of Ireland on or after 1 January 2005 has an entitlement to Irish citizenship if, at the time of the birth of the child, one of his or her parents had, during the period of 4 years immediately preceding the person's birth, been resident in the island of

Ireland for a period of not less than 3 years or periods the aggregate of which is not less than 3 years. Periods of unlawful residence, periods of residence which were for the sole purpose of having an application for refugee status determined or periods of residence where permission was granted for the purposes of study are excluded from the determination of periods of reckonable residence. Entitlement of a child to Irish citizenship is determined by the Passport Office following receipt of an application for a passport on the child's behalf.

Where a child born in the State did not at birth have an entitlement to Irish citizenship, the parent or guardian or person who is in loco parentis to the child may lodge an application for naturalisation on behalf of the child if and when the conditions for naturalisation are satisfied, including a requirement to have 5 years residence in the State.

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

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

Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement Data

115. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of staff in the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement, ODCE, in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by account, administrative staff, legal personnel and other staff, in tabular form; the amount of funding allocated to the ODCE in each of the years 2010 to 2018; the allocation for 2019; the amount expended in each of the years 2010 to 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8936/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The number of staff in the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE) in respect of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019 are set out in the following table.

The funding allocation and expenditure for the ODCE in respect of the years 2010 to 2018 are set out in the following table.

Year	2010 €m	2011 €m	2012 €m	2013 €m	2014 €m	2015 €m	2016 €m	2017 €m	2018 €m
Funding allocation	6.086	5.967	5.697	5.330	4.672	5.091	5.015	4.895	5.057
Expenditure at year end	3.699	3.397	3.436	3.123	3.013	3.073	2.727	3.014	3.701

The distribution of the funding allocations across my Department's Vote, including that of the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement, is determined through the annual Revised Estimates Volume (REV) process.

A significant element of the non-pay allocation provided to the Office provides for possible legal costs. These costs, as well as their timing, are difficult to forecast as the Office has little or no control over the timing of when the cases will be determined. It is also the case that the Of-

Office cannot be sure of the outcome of cases in terms of costs orders and it cannot anticipate the scale of costs that other parties may seek. Whilst it is entirely prudent that provision continue to be made to meet legal costs in the Office's subhead, the corollary of the uncertainty in relation to the amount, timing etc. of such costs can lead to underspends. This has been the case for the last number of years where the Office's legal costs have been significantly less than anticipated thus giving rise to underspends.

There have also been underspends in the pay allocation. Over recent years, a number of senior-level vacancies have arisen within the Office through a combination of retirement, promotion and transfer to other parts of the public service. Whilst the Office, along with a number of other State organisations, faces challenges in the recruitment of highly qualified professional staff, particularly in the current buoyant labour market, I am satisfied that it has sufficient pay monies. At present, there are no requests for additional staffing from the Office.

An additional €1m was provided for the ODCE in 2019 to reflect the likely costs associated with the transition of the ODCE into a stand-alone Agency. A funding allocation of €6.057m has been provided for the ODCE for 2019.

Staffing Resources 2010 – 2011 *

Grade	2010	2011
Director	1	1
Corporate Compliance Manager	1	1
Principal Officer	2	2
Legal Adviser (PO Equivalent)	3	3
Principal Solicitor (PO Equivalent)	1	1
Assistant Principal	4	4
Solicitor (AP Equivalent)	2	2
Accountant Grade I (AP Equivalent)	2	2
Accountant Grade III (HEO Equivalent)	0	0
Higher Executive Officer/Systems Analyst	9.7	8.7
Executive Officer	6.7	6.7
Clerical Officer	7.3	7.3
Temporary Legal Secretary (CO Equiv.)	1	1
Detective Inspector	1	1
Detective Sergeant	2	2
Detective Garda	7	7
TOTALS	50.7	49.7

* Staffing figures are given as at 31 December each year to 2018

The Office was re-configured in 2012

Staffing Resources 2012 - 2018*

Grade	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	February 2019
Director	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Heads of Function	4	4	4	4	3	2	1	1
Legal Adviser (PO Equivalent)	2	2	2	2	1	1	-	-
Accountant Grade I	2	1	1	0	-	-	-	-
Accountant Grade III	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Solicitor (AP Equivalent)	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1

Questions - Written Answers

Grade	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	February 2019
Assistant Principal	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	4
Higher Executive Officer	7.6	8	7	7	7	5.8	6.8	6.8
Executive Officer	6.8	6.8	6	5.8	4.8	5.5	5.5	5.5
Clerical Officer	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.8	7.7	5.7	7.8	7.8
Temp. Legal Secretary (CO Equiv.)	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Forensic Accountant	-	-	-	-	5	5	7	7
Enforcement Portfolio Manager	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	2
Digital Forensics Specialist	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
Enforcement Lawyer	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Det. Inspector (Head of Function)	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Detective Sergeant	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Detective Garda	4.5	2.5	2.5	2	3	4	4	4
Garda	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Superintendent	0.1	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	45.5	42.9	40	37.6	38.5	39	46.1	46.1

Brexit Preparations

116. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the supports and advice contact points available to businesses from her Department and agencies under her remit with regard to contacting suppliers to ensure continuity of supply of goods and services post-Brexit. [8937/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As it stands, the UK is scheduled to leave the European Union as of 11pm on Friday, 29 March 2019. While many Irish businesses already have plans in place to mitigate the impacts of Brexit, I am conscious that a proportion of businesses have delayed their Brexit planning due to the degree of uncertainty in the UK surrounding the Brexit negotiations and the withdrawal process. As we approach the withdrawal date, I am urging all businesses to prepare, make all necessary decisions, and complete all required administrative actions.

Extensive work has been ongoing in my Department and across Government to help businesses prepare for all Brexit eventualities. This includes research and development of supports to help ensure that businesses are prepared for potential difficulties arising as a result of the UK's decision to leave the EU. It is important that businesses understand that there are supports and advice available to help them prepare for Brexit.

My Department and its agencies are fully engaged in preparing Irish businesses for Brexit and have participated in the Government of Ireland's series of Getting Ireland Brexit Ready events in Cork, Galway, Monaghan, Dublin, Limerick and Donegal. As part of awareness-raising activities, EI continues to roll out regional Brexit Advisory clinics. To date, these clinics have been held in Letterkenny, Tralee, Portlaoise, Claremorris, Cootehill, Charleville, Dublin, Galway, Dundalk, Waterford and Limerick. Further events are planned in Galway, Cork, Letterkenny and Dublin ahead of the withdrawal date.

EI has also been running a PrepareforBrexit communications campaign, featuring the Brexit SME Scorecard and the PrepareforBrexit.ie website, which offers information on the likely impacts of Brexit on Irish businesses and how these impacts might be mitigated. The Brexit SME Scorecard is an interactive online platform that can be used by all Irish businesses to self-assess their exposure to Brexit. EI has also made available a Be Prepared Grant which offers up to

€5,000 for exporting client companies to conduct further research and use external expertise to develop a Brexit Action Plan.

Funding to the Local Enterprise Offices has been increased by 22% and they, along with InterTradeIreland, are offering a range of Brexit focused supports to companies, including those engaged in cross-border trade with Northern Ireland. InterTradeIreland continues to offer its Brexit: Start to Plan voucher scheme, which makes available financial support of up to €2,250 towards professional advisory services to address Brexit-related challenges.

The LEOs offer Brexit supports to micro and small businesses through the 31 LEOs nationwide. These include a “Technical Assistance for Micro-enterprises” grant, designed to support qualifying businesses to diversify into new markets, enabling companies to explore and develop new market opportunities. This is accompanied by tailored mentoring to address Brexit-related business challenges, and targeted training on specific Brexit challenges.

After the withdrawal date, businesses that continue to buy goods from the UK will be classed as importers. This has the potential to cause further disruption to supply chains. Businesses are encouraged to contact Revenue to understand the changes that may affect them once the UK leaves the EU. Businesses are also urged to contact their suppliers and service providers to seek assurances about the continuity of the supply of their goods and services post Brexit.

Where standards and conformity assessment are areas of potential concern, businesses are encouraged to contact the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI), which provides support and guidance to Irish businesses and industry to mitigate Brexit effects on standards and certification. For businesses importing chemicals from the UK, the Health and Safety Authority’s (HSA) Chemicals Helpdesk is available to help prepare for Brexit.

For further information, as well as a full list of the information and advisory supports available, businesses should consult my Department’s Getting Business Brexit Ready page at dbei.gov.ie/BrexitReady.

Brexit Preparations

117. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the timeline for implementation of all the recommendations to date in relation to the report by the expert group on future skills needs on addressing the skills needs arising from the potential trade implications of Brexit; the details of recommendations implemented and not implemented to date, in tabular form; the details of all customs awareness and higher level customs clearance training and advice for third country trading that are in place; the number of participants in customs training and mentoring supports that was announced in budget 2019; and the amount of such funding expended that was announced in Budget 2019 to date regarding customs training. [8938/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) is an independent body tasked with advising the Government on the current and future skills needs of the Irish economy, as well as any other issues that impact on the national potential for enterprise and employment growth.

In June of last year the Group published its report “Addressing the Skills Needs Arising from the Potential Trade Implications of Brexit”, which was an important contribution to the evidence base on Brexit and the Government’s wider contingency planning.

Following the report’s publication my Department formally engaged with the responsible

bodies identified in the report, including a number of Government Departments, agencies, and industry bodies, to action and formally progress its recommendations- the timelines for which, as per the advice offered by the EGFSN, were both short term and longer term in nature.

The recommendations of the EGFSN have been reflected in the work the Government has undertaken to ensure the enterprise base can respond to Brexit through enhancing its capacity to compete, innovate and trade. As far as my Department is concerned, this has been reflected in:

- The participation of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and its enterprise agencies in the Government's national Brexit preparedness public information and awareness campaign, 'Getting Ireland Brexit Ready'.

- My Department's establishment of a dedicated "Getting Business Brexit Ready" web portal, which includes sections on advice and guidance, financial supports, and upskilling, and is linked to by my Department's Brexit social media campaign. This can be accessed at <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/EU-Internal-Market/Brexit/Getting-Brexit-Ready/>

- The launch of Enterprise Ireland's national and regional communications campaign urging companies to prepare for Brexit through planning, innovating, competing and diversifying their trade, which complements its promotion of the Brexit Scorecard, Be Prepared Grant, Brexit Advisory Clinics, and Act On support programme.

- The awareness raising and outreach, as well as Brexit supports, offered by InterTradeIreland and the Local Enterprise Office network, including the Brexit Planning Online Guide, Start to Plan voucher, the Brexit mentor programme, as well as Brexit related conferences, workshops and targeted radio and social media advertising campaigns.

- The publication by my Department of the Currency Risk Management for Irish SMEs guide, and support for financial and currency management advice and training under Enterprise Ireland's Act On programme, InterTradeIreland's Start to Plan voucher, and Enterprise Ireland's Management Development training provision.

- Enterprise Ireland's continued promotion of the Graduate Stayback permission scheme to international students, its GradStart language support, and International Graduate programme.

- The engagement by my Department's enterprise agencies with the National Skills architecture more generally, to ensure that those trade related skills needs identified in the report, and amongst client companies, are serviced by the education and training system.

The EGFSN report also recommended the introduction or expansion of customs awareness and higher level customs clearance training and advice for third country trading.

My Department's enterprise agencies have liaised closely with the Revenue Commissioners in the roll out of its Trader Engagement programme.

Customs training and advice offered by the mainly private providers active in this field is also eligible for support under InterTradeIreland's Brexit Start to Plan voucher. A list of these providers can be found on the Brexit section of the InterTradeIreland website: <https://intertradeireland.com/brexit/brexit-service-providers/>

In December Enterprise Ireland launched its Customs Insights online course, which is aimed at helping businesses understand key customs concepts, documentation and processes. The course, which is available to both Enterprise Ireland and non-Enterprise Ireland client companies, can be accessed through Enterprise Ireland's Prepare for Brexit portal: www.prepareforbrexit.com/customs-insights-course/.

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As announced in Budget 2019, the Local Enterprise Offices are also organising the rolling out a series of ‘Prepare Your Business for Customs’ workshops.

These customs workshops are fully funded by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation through Enterprise Ireland and are open to businesses from all sectors and from all parts of the country.

‘Prepare Your Business for Customs’ initial workshops are being organised by Local Enterprise Offices over the next month- in Cavan on February 25th, Cork on March 8th, Dublin on March 13th and Laois on March 21st. Further dates and locations for workshops in every region will be announced shortly. It is envisaged that there will be a maximum participation level of 25 at each workshop.

Organ Donation

118. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) in relation to organ donation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8784/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The General Scheme of a Human Tissue (Transplantation, Post-Mortem, Anatomical Examination and Public Display) Bill is being finalised at present and will be submitted to Government shortly.

The General Scheme will include provisions for a soft opt-out system of consent for deceased organ donation.

National Maternity Strategy Implementation

119. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health if implementation of the new national maternity strategy will be delayed or modified due to the rescheduling of funding for certain projects to offset the cost overrun at the new national children’s hospital; the degree of implementation of the national maternity strategy in County Donegal to date; the way in which implementation in County Donegal will be affected in the event of funding rescheduling taking place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8785/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The new children’s hospital is a vital and much needed project. The Government has examined the funding pressures associated with delivering this important project and has made adjustments to capital allocations to ensure that the new children’s hospital will be delivered. My Department and the HSE are currently engaged in a process to finalise the HSE Capital Plan for 2019. The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019, and beyond, having regard to the total available capital funding and the relevant priority of each project. All Health capital projects, currently at various stages of development, including maternity projects, are included as part of this process.

I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly in relation to your specific queries on progress made to implement the National Maternity Strategy in Donegal.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Staff

120. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Health the reason an art

therapist post in child and adolescent mental health services, CAMHS, in counties Laois and Offaly has been discontinued; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8786/19]

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

Services for People with Disabilities

121. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health if he will address matters in relation to early intervention team services for a person (details supplied). [8790/19]

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.

Primary Care Centres Provision

122. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Health when a new primary care centre will be delivered for an area (details supplied) in Dublin 11 for which land has already been identified; when funding will be available to build the centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8810/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris) (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.

Departmental Funding

123. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if requested and necessary funding has been allocated for the work and projects of a society (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8820/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath) (Deputy Finian McGrath): 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 & 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.

Medicinal Products Availability

124. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health when the HSE will publish the results of its consultation (details supplied) and policy on improving the use of biosimilar medicines in the health system here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8821/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department and the HSE are engaging in a number of initiatives which will endeavour to lead to better access to medicines for patients, value for the taxpayer and the cost-effective provision of medicines in Ireland.

A public consultation on a National Biosimilar Medicines Policy was undertaken by my Department in 2017. The responses to that consultation and other possible policy levers are being considered by my Department with a view to developing a National Biosimilar Medicines Policy which will require the involvement of stakeholders from across the health service. I expect that my Department will make progress in this regard in 2019.

At an operational level, the HSE's Acute Hospitals Drugs Management Programme has a biosimilar strategy in place since 2017 which is making considerable progress using a collaborative approach with hospital pharmacists and clinical teams to bring about changes in prescribing practice. In that respect, hospitals are working towards a targeted minimum prescribing rate for biosimilars of 50%.

Medicinal Products

125. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health when Kuvan will be approved by his Department and the HSE for persons with PKU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8822/19]

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.

Mental Health Services Provision

126. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if funds will be allocated to refurbish an acute mental health unit in University Hospital Kerry as committed to in the 2019 national service plan of the HSE; if the overspend on the national children's hospital will not impact on this commitment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8828/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The new children's hospital is a vital and much needed project. The Government has examined the funding pressures associated with delivering this important project and has made adjustments to capital al-

locations to ensure that the new children's hospital will be delivered.

My Department and the Health Service Executive are currently engaged in a process to finalise the HSE Capital Plan for 2019. The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 and beyond having regard to the total available capital funding and the relevant priority of each project.

All Health capital projects, currently at various stages of development, such as the project in Kerry, are included 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 reply to you directly and outline the current status of Kerry University Hospital.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

127. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if Lomotil will be reimbursed under the medical card scheme at its cost price to pharmacies (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8829/19]

136. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if Lomotil will be reinstated on the medical card scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8903/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 127 and 136 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.

Pharmaceutical Sector

128. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health if the concerns of a person (details supplied) in relation to rules covering the temporary absence of pharmacists will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8830/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Pharmacy Act 2007 established the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI) and the functions of the Society are set out in the Act. The functions of the PSI are carried out on its behalf by the Council of the Society.

Section 30 of the Pharmacy Act 2007 provides for an exception to the general provision in the Act which requires the sale and supply of medicines at a pharmacy to be conducted under the personal supervision of a registered pharmacist, and specifies that no offence is committed where a registered pharmaceutical assistant "acts on behalf of a registered pharmacist during the temporary absence of the registered pharmacist".

Section 30 also permits the Council to make rules as to:

1. What may or may not be done by a registered pharmaceutical assistant when acting on behalf of a registered pharmacist; and

2. What constitutes the temporary absence of a registered pharmacist.

Following a period of public consultation, the Council of the PSI considered the proposed draft Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (Temporary Absence of Pharmacist from Pharmacy) Rules 2018 at its meeting of 20 September 2018, where the Council approved the draft rules without amendment. Following this, the PSI undertook to redraft the Rules in relation to what may or not be done by a registered pharmaceutical assistant when acting on behalf of a registered pharmacist.

On 6 December, the Council of the PSI approved a revised draft of the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (Temporary Absence of Pharmacist from Pharmacy) Rules 2018 for issuance for public consultation. This public consultation commenced on 13 December 2018 and ran until 11 January 2019, affording any interested party the opportunity to make representations on the matter directly to the PSI.

Following completion of the public consultation phase, the Council of the PSI considered the proposed draft Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (Temporary Absence of Pharmacist from Pharmacy) Rules 2018 at its meeting on 14 February 2019.

My role in relation to this process is limited to the consideration of any such Rules once submitted for my consent. I must consider any Rules presented to me from a fair and impartial perspective, without prejudice or prejudgment.

I await the receipt of the Rules for my consideration from the PSI and, until that time, I am unfortunately not in a position to comment any further on the matter raised.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

129. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health when a group of families with spinal muscular atrophy will be informed of the HSE decision regarding Spinraza; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8856/19]

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

The Act specifies the criteria to be applied in the making of reimbursement decisions which include the clinical and cost effectiveness of the product, the opportunity cost and the impact on resources that are available to the HSE.

I am advised by the HSE that the application for the reimbursement of Nusinersen (Spinraza) was considered by HSE Leadership at a meeting on 12 February 2019 and that the HSE is in the process of communicating its decision to the relevant company.

Hospital Appointments Status

130. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for surgery will be expedited for a person (details supplied). [8859/19]

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.

Physiotherapy Provision

131. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of children under 18 years of age on the physiotherapy waiting list by local health area in tabular form; and the numbers waiting 0 to 12, 12 to 26, 26 to 52 and more than 52 weeks, respectively. [8869/19]

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.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Coverage

132. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Health the reason ulcerative colitis is not a recognised disability here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8875/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): There are no plans at present to add ulcerative colitis to the list of conditions currently listed under the Long Term illness scheme. However, any patient with a condition, not listed under Long Term illness scheme, is eligible to apply to the Drugs Payment Scheme or to apply for a Medical Card.

Under the Drug Payment Scheme, no individual or family pays more than €134 a month towards the cost of approved prescribed medicines. The scheme significantly reduces the cost burden for families and individuals with ongoing expenditure on medicines.

People who cannot, without undue hardship, arrange for the provision of medical services for themselves and their dependants may be entitled to a medical card. In the assessment process, the HSE can take into account medical costs incurred by an individual or a family.

People who are not eligible for a medical card may still be able to avail of a GP visit card, which covers the cost of GP consultations.

General medical services are provided by GPs. If the patients clinical condition warrants a referral to a Consultant then their GP will organise that for them.

Departmental Funding

133. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if funding will be provided for a project (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8885/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service

matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Pharmaceutical Sector

134. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if he has received draft rules on temporary absence from an organisation (details supplied); if consideration will be given to the way in which these rules as drafted will affect qualified pharmaceutical assistants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8888/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Pharmacy Act 2007 established the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI) and the functions of the Society are set out in the Act. The functions of the PSI are carried out on its behalf by the Council of the Society.

Section 30 of the Pharmacy Act 2007 provides for an exception to the general provision in the Act which requires the sale and supply of medicines at a pharmacy to be conducted under the personal supervision of a registered pharmacist, and specifies that no offence is committed where a registered pharmaceutical assistant “acts on behalf of a registered pharmacist during the temporary absence of the registered pharmacist”.

Section 30 also permits the Council to make rules as to:

1. What may or may not be done by a registered pharmaceutical assistant when acting on behalf of a registered pharmacist; and
2. What constitutes the temporary absence of a registered pharmacist.

Following a period of public consultation, the Council of the PSI considered the proposed draft Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (Temporary Absence of Pharmacist from Pharmacy) Rules 2018 at its meeting of 20 September 2018, where the Council approved the draft rules without amendment. Following this, the PSI undertook to redraft the Rules in relation to what may or not be done by a registered pharmaceutical assistant when acting on behalf of a registered pharmacist.

On 6 December, the Council of the PSI approved a revised draft of the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (Temporary Absence of Pharmacist from Pharmacy) Rules 2018 for issuance for public consultation. This public consultation commenced on 13 December 2018 and ran until 11 January 2019, affording any interested party the opportunity to make representations on the matter directly to the PSI.

Following completion of the public consultation phase, the Council of the PSI considered the proposed draft Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (Temporary Absence of Pharmacist from Pharmacy) Rules 2018 at its meeting on 14 February 2019.

My role in relation to this process is limited to the consideration of any such Rules once submitted for my consent. I must consider any Rules presented to me from a fair and impartial perspective, without prejudice or prejudgment.

I await the receipt of the Rules for my consideration from the PSI and, until that time, I am unfortunately not in a position to comment any further on the matter raised.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

135. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health if Spinraza will be made available for children with spinal muscular atrophy [8889/19]

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

The Act specifies the criteria to be applied in the making of reimbursement decisions which include the clinical and cost effectiveness of the product, the opportunity cost and the impact on resources that are available to the HSE.

I am advised by the HSE that the application for the reimbursement of Nusinersen (Spinraza) was considered by HSE Leadership at a meeting on 12 February 2019 and that the HSE is in the process of communicating its decision to the relevant company.

Question No. 136 answered with Question No. 127.

Health Services Provision

137. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter regarding services for a person (details supplied). [8920/19]

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.

Hospitals Capital Programme

138. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the status of the refurbishment of Kanturk Community Hospital; if the increased expenditure on the new children's hospital will have an effect on the timeframe for the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8925/19]

139. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the status of the refurbishment of St. Joseph's Community Hospital, Millstreet, County Cork; if the increased expenditure on the new children's hospital will have an effect on the timeframe for the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8926/19]

140. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the status of the refurbishment of Macroom Community Hospital, County Cork; if the increased expenditure on the new children's hospital will have an effect on the timeframe for the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8927/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 138 to 140, inclusive, together.

The new children's hospital is a vital and much needed project. The Government has examined the funding pressures associated with delivering this important project and has made adjustments to capital allocations to ensure that the new children's hospital will be delivered. My Department and the Health Service Executive are currently engaged in a process to finalise the HSE Capital Plan for 2019.

The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 and beyond having regard to the total available capital funding and the relevant priority of each project.

All Health capital projects, currently at various stages of development, such as the projects in Cork are included 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 reply to you directly and outline the current status of the community hospitals in Cork.

Medical Card Applications

141. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a medical card will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8952/19]

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

Home Care Packages Provision

142. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a home care package will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8954/19]

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.

Harbours and Piers Development

143. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to invest in Greencastle Harbour, County Donegal in line with the commitments referenced in Project Ireland 2040. [8780/19]

144. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the breakwater works at Greencastle Harbour, County Donegal will be completed (details supplied). [8779/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 143 and 144 together.

Greencastle Harbour is owned by Donegal County Council and responsibility for its main-

tenance and development rests with that Local Authority in the first instance and its parent Department, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government thereafter.

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.

As indicated, my legislative remit does not extend to Greencastle Harbour, and given that the ownership of, and overall responsibility for Greencastle Harbour rests with the County Council, it is the Council who will decide if it wishes to carry out any further development, repair or maintenance of Greencastle Harbour.

When Donegal County Council decide on the exact programme of works they wish to carry out, and the costing and timescale for those works, and notify their full intentions in this respect, the matter can be considered further in the context of Government priorities.

My Department does provide limited funding to assist coastal Local Authorities in carrying out small scale projects for the development and repair of Local Authority owned piers, harbours and slipways under the annual Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme, subject to available Exchequer funding and overall national priorities.

Donegal County Council successfully secured funding of €9,000 under the 2018 Programme for development works at Greencastle Harbour. On the 28th of January 2019 Local Authorities were invited to submit prioritised lists of projects for consideration under this years programme. The closing date for receipt of these applications was the 8th February 2019. These are now being assessed and detailed applications will shortly be requested from Local Authorities for short-listing and the finalized suite of projects will be prepared.

Dairy Sector

145. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the heat recovery technology element of grant aid under the TAMS scheme will be removed to enable it to be included in the SEAI dairy farm energy grants (details supplied). [8789/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Heat recovery technology which is grant aided under the Dairy Equipment Scheme and the Young Farmer Capital Investment Scheme of TAMS II is among the basket of investments which aim to ensure the sustainable development of dairy farming. To date 94 farmers have availed of a grant for these new heat recovery systems. There are no proposals to remove this investment from TAMS II.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland offer grant assistance to farmers in the Dairy Sector for the retrofitting of variable speed drive technology to vacuum pumps and milk pumps.

This is an example of the collaborative approach to driving the national sustainability agenda.

Meat Processing Plants

146. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the legislation allowing feedlots to be owned or contracted by meat processing companies here will be investigated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8823/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine has a role in relation to herds being assigned feedlot status for specific reasons, for example related to animal health status. The Department, however, does not have a role in relation to the ownership or contracting of feedlots, both of which are commercial activities.

Bovine Disease Controls

147. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the percentage of cattle from bovine feedlots that are exported; the percentage being slaughtered in food processing factories here, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8824/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): TB programme defined feedlots are not permitted to export animals.

All animals from TB programme defined feedlots are slaughtered in EU approved slaughter plants.

Meat Processing Plant Inspections

148. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 535 to 537 of 12 February 2019, the number of inspections; if the calibration of the grading machines have been interfered with in each of the past three years; the number of discrepancies found; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8846/19]

149. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 535 to 537 of 12 February 2019, his plans to replace the grading machines and software; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8847/19]

150. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 535 to 537 of 12 February 2019, if daily control reports of each automated grading machines are maintained by meat plants; if so, if they specifically record faults or inaccuracies; if reviews of such reports are conducted during unannounced inspections; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8860/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 148 to 150, 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 2017 there were 628 inspections carried out and 616 inspections in 2016. I am advised that there is no evidence that there has been any interference with the calibration of these machines over the past three years.

Weekly control reports are generated by the company that services and maintains the me-

chanical classification machines on behalf of the factories and a copy is sent to each individual factory and a copy emailed to my Department on a weekly basis. These reports are reviewed on a weekly basis by my Department.

The mechanical grading machines are the property of each individual meat plant. My Department has no responsibility for their replacement. It is a decision for the Industry, meat plants individually or collectively.

Young Farmers Scheme

151. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 504 of 5 February 2019, when the administrative and on-farm checks in relation to a small number of young farmers scheme applications (details supplied) will be finalised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8865/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The on-farm check in respect of the Young Farmers Scheme application from the person named took place on 18th February 2019. The remaining checks are now being finalised and if the applicant is deemed eligible, the Young Farmers Scheme payment will issue. If it is found that the applicant is ineligible he will receive a report setting out the reasons for that decision and his options for review and appeal.

Afforestation Programme

152. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8868/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An application for the Afforestation Grant and Premium Scheme, on behalf of the person named, was commenced in July 2018. Certain mandatory documents, such as evidence of the site notice in situ, maps and declarations are required before an application is deemed complete. These documents were finalised on 24th January 2019 and the application acknowledged.

At the time the completed application is acknowledged, it is advertised on my Department's website, which commences the 30-day period for public consultation. The application has also been referred to the local authority for their views. Finally, it has been referred to a forestry inspector of my Department. The inspector will review the entire application, including any submissions received from the public and make recommendations on its suitability, taking into account the effect of the proposal on a number of considerations, including the environment, landscape and water.

A decision will issue to the applicant and their registered forester once the assessment of the application is complete. Please note that no decision may issue before the 30 day consultation period has elapsed.

Bord Bia

153. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the person or body Bord Bia has commissioned to carry out quality assurance audits; and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [8890/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Bord Bia currently operates seven Quality Assurance Schemes.

The Bord Bia Sustainable Beef and Lamb Assurance Scheme (SBLAS) and the Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme (SDAS) are the two biggest schemes. Agridata and Capita Customer Solutions were selected as independent auditor bodies for farm audits, following a public procurement process in 2017.

For the other Quality Assurance Schemes, i.e Pigs, Poultry, Eggs, Horticulture and Meat Processors, a panel of individual auditors by sector was selected following a public procurement process, with contracts awarded in early 2018. The panel consists of 5 pig auditors, 4 poultry auditors, 4 egg farm auditors, 8 horticulture auditors and 10 meat processor auditors.

All of the Bord Bia schemes are accredited by INAB (the Irish National Accreditation Board). Bord Bia receives an annual audit from INAB. The accreditation process also involves initial and ongoing assessment of the auditors' competence.

TAMS Funding

154. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the grants available to agricultural contractors that are SMEs and not farmers do not have a herd number that wish to purchase slurry spreading machinery which has low emissions and is environmentally friendly in line with climate action policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8917/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The EU regulations that govern the TAMS II Schemes under the Rural Development Programme, 2014-2020 dictate that the recipients must be farmers, or groups of farmers.

Therefore the Department is precluded from funding the purchase of LESS (Low Emission Slurry Spreading) equipment by contractors under TAMS II. The Department is, however, committed to the use of this equipment with over 660 applications funded to date under the LESS measure under TAMS II.

EU Meetings

155. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the issues discussed at his recent meeting with the European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Mr. Karmenu Vella; the outcome of such discussions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8924/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As the Deputy is aware, I met with Fisheries Commissioner Karmenu Vella in Brussels on Monday of this week to discuss the potential negative impact of a disorderly Brexit on the Irish fishing industry.

We discussed a number of issues including potential loss of access for Irish and other EU vessels to the UK fishing zone, the need to ensure ongoing protection of fish stocks in the waters around Ireland from a subsequent increase in fishing activity, and potential mitigation measures at EU level.

We also discussed the recent EU Commission proposals concerning the possible use of temporary cessation measures, quota swapping with the UK and potential reciprocal access in a 'no deal' situation.

I emphasised the necessity for the Commission to continue its leading role in ensuring that there will be a coordination mechanism on the actual application of any temporary cessation, identifying fleets and stocks most vulnerable to a disorderly Brexit and exploring additional possible mitigation measures to safeguard these stocks.

There has been a number of meetings at official level between the EU Commission and the relevant Member States in recent weeks on these issues and my Department, with the support of our Marine Agencies, have been fully engaged in these. Further meetings are planned in the coming days and weeks.

I am also continuing to work closely with key stakeholders in the Irish fishing industry and am pleased at the level of unity on these key issues.

Rural Development Programme Funding

156. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the financial allocations on an annual basis under the 2014 to 2020 RDP for schemes (details supplied); the annual amount expended on the schemes in each year since established and to date in 2019; the number of active participants in the scheme; and the number of approved applicants that subsequently withdrew from each scheme in tabular form. [8929/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I wish to advise the Deputy that the information requested is set out in the following table. The financial allocation for each scheme for the year 2020 will be considered as part of the Estimates process later this year.

Knowledge Transfer Group Scheme

Year	Annual Financial allocation €	Annual Amount Spent €	No. of active participants in scheme	No. of approved applicants that withdrew
Year 1 2017	25m	20.33m	19,395	305
Year 2 2018	23m	15.4m1	18,992	403
Year 3 2019	22m	Payments due to commence Autumn 2019 in respect of Year 3	18,889	103

GLAS

Year	Annual Financial allocation €	Annual Amount Spent €	No. of active participants in scheme ³	No. of approved applicants that withdrew
2015	See note 2	N/A	N/A	N/A
2016	138.5m	103m	35,382	218
2017	228.5m	196m	49,872	1778
2018	226m	232m	49,119	380
2019 to date	202.9m	15m	48,897	17

TAMS II

Year	Annual Financial allocation €	Annual Amount Spent €	No. of active participants in scheme	No. of approved applicants that withdrew
2015	0	0	2,599	N/A
2016	28m	3.971m	7,684	N/A
2017	49.831m	31.256m	12,172	N/A
2018	69.943m	66.716m	17,101	N/A
2019 to date	69.482m	10.505m	18,836	N/A

Sheep Welfare Scheme

Year	Annual Financial allocation €	Annual Amount Spent €	No. of active participants in scheme	No. of approved applicants that withdrew
Year 1 2017/ 2018	20m	18.42m	21,020	346
Year 2 2018 / 2019	18m	15.14m. Year 2 balancing payments due to issue in Quarter 2 of 2019.	18,738	892

Hen Harrier Programme

Year	Annual Financial allocation €	Annual Amount Spent €	No. of active participants in scheme	No. of approved applicants that withdrew
2017	2m	0.717m	0	0
2018	3.5m	2.005m	629	
2019 to date	4.134m	0.619m	6294	

Beef Data and Genomics Programme

Year	Annual Financial allocation €	Annual Amount Spent €	No. of active participants in scheme	No. of approved applicants that withdrew
2015	52m	30.1m	29,903	
2016	51m	61m		
2017	52m	47.5m		
2018	49.5m	46.2m		
2019 to date	46.5m	1.3m	24,544	7,2555

Notes:

1. Further payments currently issuing in respect of Year 2.
2. 2016 was the first full year of GLAS. As some GLAS contracts commenced on 01/10/2015 partial payments totalling €11.452m were paid in the 2015 calendar year.
3. Number of participants fluctuates due to participants withdrawing, rejections due to non-compliance and successful appeals. GLAS 3 contracts commenced on 01/01/2017. Active participant figures above as at year end.
4. Expressions of interest are being invited at the moment and this number will increase during the first half of 2019 to between 1,100 and 1,200 participants.
5. The number of active participants in BDGP I and II fluctuates on an ongoing basis as a result of participants withdrawing, or being disqualified for non – compliances, from the Programmes and also due to participants being re-admitted following successful appeals.

In 2015, 29,903 participants applied to participate in BDGP I, however 6, 858 of these have either withdrawn or have been disqualified with 23,045 eligible participants remaining in BDGP I .

In 2017 for BDGP II 1,896 participants applied to participate in BDGP II however 397 subsequently withdrew or were disqualified with 1,499 eligible participants remaining in BDGP II. The total number of active eligible participants in the two programmes currently stands at 24,544.

GLAS Data

157. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons in receipt of GLAS 1, 2 and 3 that have received the 85% advance payment of the 2018 payment by county, in tabular form; the number of persons that have passed all payment approval checks and are awaiting the 85% portion of the 2018 payment; the number of GLAS recipients that have yet to receive this portion of payment by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8930/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): There are currently 48,897 active participants in the GLAS scheme. To date, 46,435 farmers have received their 2018 advance payment and are fully up to date with their payments. In addition, GLAS Plus payments have also been paid to 3,194 GLAS farmers. Including GLAS Plus this amounts to over €167m paid in 2018 advances since November 14th.

The majority of outstanding 2018 payments are being delayed due to issues, such as the non-submission of Commonage Management Plans, where the mandatory GLAS training has not been completed, Low Emission Slurry Spreading and Rare Breeds forms not returned or cases where the GLAS participant has omitted to update the Department on issues crucial to the payment process.

My Department is working closely with GLAS farmers and their advisors to ensure that payments issue to compliant farmers as quickly as possible.

GLAS payments will continue to issue on a weekly basis. The breakdown of advance 2018 payments to date by county is listed in the following table for GLAS1, 2 and 3:

County	Cases	Advance	Advance Amt	Cases
Carlow	269	264	€982,591.65	123
Cavan	898	884	€3,207,401.08	424
Clare	1,594	1,555	€5,573,668.41	683
Cork	2,105	1,974	€6,755,091.47	982
Donegal	1,912	1,777	€5,859,328.61	983
Dublin	56	51	€185,184.87	17
Galway	3,022	2,854	€10,197,467.81	1,268
Kerry	1,750	1,605	€5,652,913.85	862
Kildare	238	215	€802,239.03	75
Kilkenny	421	395	€1,432,153.38	204
Laois	365	344	€1,230,676.72	189
Leitrim	1,011	974	€3,503,319.39	416
Limerick	1,035	989	€3,535,649.14	293
Longford	508	486	€1,751,990.41	336

County	Cases	Advance	Advance Amt	Cases
Louth	144	138	€495,431.61	77
Mayo	2,522	2,380	€8,354,056.16	1,307
Meath	416	398	€1,431,339.51	195
Monaghan	570	554	€1,808,747.81	142
Offaly	470	455	€1,611,042.90	272
Roscommon	1,506	1,460	€5,302,000.84	541
Sligo	926	888	€3,111,332.26	356
Tipperary	1,106	1,064	€3,893,293.20	489
Waterford	349	317	€1,130,881.44	123
Westmeath	635	614	€2,230,936.06	257
Wexford	741	711	€2,647,062.48	255
Wicklow	322	301	€1,141,184.20	150
TOTAL	24,891	23,647	€83,826,984.29	11,019

County	Advance	Advance Amt	Cases	Advance	Advance Amt
Carlow	116	€411,607.49	124	116	€425,044.77
Cavan	413	€1,478,054.45	526	512	€1,808,359.81
Clare	662	€2,413,141.77	785	754	€2,654,567.19
Cork	936	€3,295,306.80	918	856	€2,890,698.53
Donegal	896	€2,895,694.89	1,391	1,303	€4,005,050.03
Dublin	16	€59,614.84	17	16	€53,986.19
Galway	1,183	€4,059,064.20	1,567	1,464	€5,052,621.19
Kerry	799	€2,872,164.73	752	689	€2,387,397.68
Kildare	68	€237,437.44	111	102	€379,855.75
Kilkenny	189	€701,375.44	184	169	€631,823.62
Laois	178	€626,098.39	227	216	€783,300.62
Leitrim	411	€1,487,845.95	520	508	€1,771,430.69
Limerick	283	€1,008,364.44	395	380	€1,345,046.59
Longford	321	€1,174,795.47	326	309	€1,120,951.90
Louth	74	€259,364.03	91	82	€288,950.81
Mayo	1,238	€4,181,613.81	1,639	1,566	€5,231,056.30
Meath	183	€660,673.98	243	230	€820,149.53
Monaghan	141	€480,310.15	330	317	€1,071,962.04
Offaly	269	€1,015,590.34	283	272	€1,014,873.34
Roscommon	528	€1,885,197.41	704	683	€2,420,760.97
Sligo	346	€1,179,460.35	483	470	€1,654,141.48
Tipperary	470	€1,715,050.52	484	467	€1,728,907.59
Waterford	114	€409,833.89	116	110	€394,890.47
Westmeath	252	€926,939.34	272	263	€968,764.12
Wexford	239	€889,781.80	304	285	€1,083,728.13
Wicklow	138	€538,162.38	195	186	€703,017.87
TOTAL	10,463	€36,862,544.30	12,987	12,325	€42,691,337.21

Departmental Schemes

158. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of participants in a former scheme (details supplied); and the moneys expended on the scheme. [8931/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In December 2008, my Department announced details of a capital investment scheme for the marketing and processing of agricultural products, with the aim of improving competitiveness, value-added and the quality of agricultural products through grant aiding processing facilities, storage, handling and marketing facilities in ‘near farm’ enterprises.

€16.7m was allocated by my Department to the scheme. 66 applications were approved, comprising 31 meat projects, 22 mart projects and 13 horticulture projects.

39 projects across the three sectors were successfully completed and €6.5m was paid in grant aid. In the small meat sector, 18 completed projects were paid a total of €3.5m, with 14 completed mart projects grant aided to a total of €1.6m. The remainder related to the horticulture sector.

The economic downturn in Ireland, at that time, played a role in the reduction in the uptake of the capital investment scheme, with 27 applicants unable to proceed with the investments. With their agreement, their approvals were ultimately revoked.

Grant aid in the livestock marts sector was aimed at supporting a positive impact on the environment by providing marts with adequate slurry storage and treatment facilities while the projects in the small meat sector included grant aid to small slaughterhouses and low throughput enterprises to aid improvement in efficiency and to enable the production of new and innovative quality products to assist food business operators to develop new markets.

Food Exports

159. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the volume and value of butter exports to each applicable country in 2017 and 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8932/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In 2018, Ireland exported dairy products, including butter to 131 countries totalling over €4.5 billion worth of produce. Total butter exports for 2018 total in excess of €1 billion, an increase of over 16% compared to 2017, representing high-quality value-added produce.

The following table, based on CSO data, outlines details in respect of values and tonnage by country for butter exports.

Where anomalies are identified in the statistical data, the Department will liaise with the Central Statistics Office to highlight and amend the information as required.

Exports of butter from Ireland

Country destination	€000 (2017)	Tonnes (2017)	€000 (2018)	Tonnes (2018)
GRAND TOTAL	934,529	218,711	1,088,721	218,711
Algeria	1,898	421	881	180
Angola	495	105	213	36
Australia	2,318	371	1,830	309
Austria	3,158	727	76	21
Bahamas	1,439	265	1,834	259
Bahrain	139	30	2,436	500
Barbados	194	36	233	35

Country destination	€000 (2017)	Tonnes (2017)	€000 (2018)	Tonnes (2018)
Belgium	110,804	18,451	107,720	18,274
Bermuda	134	23	223	32
Canada	1,715	400		
Cayman Islands	207	36	250	36
Chile	1,177	260	774	138
China (incl Hong Kong)	925	215	1,468	293
Congo			223	41
Congo (Dem Rep)	378	65	500	93
Cyprus	929	136	1,506	192
Czech Republic	427	89	91	22
Denmark	2,491	572	3,658	705
Egypt	2,285	501	430	95
France	72,431	16,058	71,726	14,403
Georgia	92	22	191	44
Germany	124,934	34,154	146,980	33,632
Gibraltar	98	17	111	16
Greece	115	18	106	14
Guatemala	157	43	77	18
Honduras			771	196
Indonesia	240	61		
Iran	10,181	2,207	487	100
Israel	438	95	262	60
Italy	720	170		
Ivory Coast	58	10		
Jamaica	76	15	179	26
Japan	2	0	12	2
Jordan	165	38	62	9
Kuwait	188	41	178	42
Lithuania	41	8	22	4
Malaysia	157	27	257	36
Malta	1,368	219	892	114
Mauritius	227	36	330	47
Morocco	1,726	386	7,905	1,811
Netherlands	184,762	45,832	283,283	64,330
New Caledonia	207	40		
Nigeria	37	9		
Oman	214	50		
Pakistan	36	8	34	5
Philippines			96	13
Poland	1,907	428	4,437	966
Portugal	111	19	165	22
Qatar	52	11	198	37
Romania	46	10	26	5
Saudi Arabia	5,587	1,325	671	140
Senegal	427	81	467	82
Seychelles	382	59	334	46
Singapore	207	33	325	47
Slovakia	187	44		

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Country destination	€000 (2017)	Tonnes (2017)	€000 (2018)	Tonnes (2018)
South Africa	9,735	1,888	6,739	1,363
South Korea	213	20		
Spain	5,479	1,036	5,107	905
Sri Lanka			70	9
Taiwan	274	50	369	75
Tanzania United Rep	396	60		
Trinidad & Tabago	753	149	1,435	212
Tunisia	299	45	221	44
Turkey	12,540	2,925	4,793	1,176
United Arab Emirates	1,040	230	1,209	233
United Kingdom	236,491	49,031	231,818	45,741
United States	84,849	18,777	156,796	23,228
Yemen	209	50		

Broadband Service Provision

160. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of high speed broadband in an area (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8849/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Premises in the housing estate referenced by the Deputy fall into both the AMBER and LIGHT BLUE areas of my Department's High Speed Broadband Map, available at www.broadband.gov.ie.

- The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP. This intervention is the subject of an ongoing procurement process.

- The LIGHT BLUE areas are where eir is in the process of deploying high speed broadband to 300,000 premises on a commercial basis.

For those premises in the AMBER areas, the procurement process to appoint a bidder for the State intervention network is now at the final stage. I will bring a recommendation to Government in relation to the NBP 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 the latest data submitted by eir to my Department the company has passed approximately 225,000 premises nationwide as part of its ongoing deployment. This information will be available on my Department's website shortly. Information on eir's rural deployment is available on that company's website, <http://fibrerollout.ie/Eircode-lookup/>.

With regard to premises in the housing estate which are in the LIGHT BLUE area, I note that certain premises in the surrounding area have been recorded by eir as passed, meaning high speed broadband is available. However, a number of premises in the estate itself are not yet indicated as having been passed.

Officials in my Department will raise a query with eir in order to seek further information and will revert to the Deputy.

Broadband Service Provision

161. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of high speed broadband in an area (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8850/19]

162. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of high speed broadband in an area (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8851/19]

164. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of high speed broadband for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8853/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 161, 162 and 164 together.

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 NBP. 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 following table details the percentage of premises to be covered by the State Intervention and through commercial investment in the areas identified by the Deputy.

Townland	Premises within the NBP Intervention Area (AMBER)	Premises within Commercial Operator's Area (BLUE)	Premises within eir planned rural deployment (LIGHT BLUE)
Abbeyland (Alexandra Bridge)	0	100% (332)	0
Loughlinstown (Loughlinstown Road)	34 (62%)	21 (38%)	0
Rathmore	21 (43%)	28 (57%)	0

The procurement process to appoint a bidder for the State intervention network is now at the final stage. I will bring a recommendation to Government in relation to the NBP in the coming weeks.

For those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing. These Broadband Officers are acting

as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is already reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements.

Broadband Service Provision

163. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of high speed broadband for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8852/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The premises referred to by the Deputy is in the BLUE area on the National Broadband Plan (NBP) High Speed Broadband Map, which is available on my Department's website at www.broadband.gov.ie. The BLUE areas are where commercial providers are either currently delivering or have plans to deliver high speed broadband services.

Where a citizen living in a Blue area is unable to obtain a high speed broadband service, I would encourage them to email my Department at broadband@dcae.gov.ie with their Eircode and details of the service providers they have contacted and the issues encountered in respect of accessing high speed broadband.

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.

Question No. 164 answered with Question No. 161.

Broadband Service Provision

165. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on a matter (details supplied) in relation to broadband; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8892/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I understand that the cable in question was laid by the ESB for the purpose of transmitting data on wind farm electricity generation and not for the purpose of providing broadband services to members of the public. According to my Department's High Speed Broadband Map, available at www.broadband.gov.ie, all premises in the townland of Knocknaboul are in the AMBER area and will receive access to a high speed broadband service through the NBP State intervention. This intervention is the subject of an ongoing procurement process.

The procurement process to appoint a bidder for the State intervention network is now at the final stage. I will bring a recommendation to Government in relation to the NBP in the coming weeks.

For those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives

will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing. These Broadband Officers are acting as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is already reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements.

Services for People with Disabilities

166. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 254 of 14 November 2018, when a meeting (details supplied) will take place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8895/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Canney): I understand that Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) will contact the project promoters shortly to assess the technical aspects of the proposal from a fisheries perspective and to ensure they engage with all appropriate State Bodies, particularly Kerry County Council, as regards progressing their proposals. As previously advised, IFI submitted observations in relation to Kerry County Council's road straightening plans in the area adjacent to Lough Fada and had suggested that access and parking could be improved during these works. IFI would be happy to consult with and assist the Council in the development of such facilities.

Hazardous Substances Disposal

167. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a hazardous waste dump at Clonshaugh, Dublin 17 on the boundary of the operational areas of Fingal County Council and Dublin City Council which was discovered has still not been removed or remediated after almost two decades; the contacts his Department has had on this matter with the two local authorities concerned in recent years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8897/19]

168. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on whether the illegal hazardous waste dump on the banks of the Mayne River is not a danger to public health and safety (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8898/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 167 and 168 together.

The primary responsibility for the management of any waste, including costs for removal or disposal, lies with the holder of the waste, i.e. the natural or legal person in possession of the waste, or the producer of the waste. The Waste Management Act imposes a general duty of care on holders of waste, under which a person may not hold, transport, recover or dispose of waste in a manner that causes, or is likely to cause, environmental pollution.

Each local authority is responsible for the supervision and the enforcement of the relevant provisions of the Waste Management Act in relation to the holding, recovery and disposal of

waste within its functional area. Local authorities have specific powers under the Act to require measures to be taken, or to take measures directly, to prevent or limit environmental pollution caused or likely to be caused by the holding, recovery or disposal of waste, and to mitigate or remedy the effects on the environment of such activity.

Under section 60(3) of the Waste Management Act 1996, as Minister, I am precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to the performance by a local authority, in particular circumstances, of a statutory function vested in it.

Furthermore, while enforcement action in this area is a matter in the first instance for local authorities, my Department encourages a multi-faceted approach to tackling the problem, incorporating enforcement, public awareness and education and, as such, provides funding to support the activities of the Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authorities of approximately €1 million per annum and of the network of local authority waste enforcement officers of approximately €7.4 million per annum.

My Department has developed the Anti-Dumping Initiative to work in partnership with local authorities and community organisations in identifying high risk or problem areas, developing appropriate enforcement responses and carrying out clean-up operations. Since 2017 funding of €3.3 million has been made available from the Environment Fund in this regard which has supported over 400 projects across all 31 local authority areas, remediating black spots and equipping local authority enforcement officers with the latest technologies available to support SMART enforcement of our waste laws.

A review of this initiative is underway which will inform a 2019 anti-dumping work programme that will place an increased emphasis on all actors who facilitate the unauthorised movement and disposal of waste.

Departmental Funding

169. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the grants available to agricultural contractors who are SMEs and not farmers and do not have a herd number who wish to purchase slurry spreading machinery which has low emissions and is environmentally friendly in line with climate action policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8918/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): On 18 February, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine and I jointly announced 2019 funding for Energy Efficient Dairy Farm Equipment. Up to €500,000 is available for high efficiency milk pumps, saving the average farmer €1,440 in energy bills and 1.6 tonnes in reduced carbon emissions annually. The Energy Efficient Dairy Farm Equipment Scheme is administered through Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). Up to 40% of total technology and installation costs may be covered by the grant. The technologies covered under the scheme include Variable Speed Drive (VSD) Vacuum Pumps and VSD Milk Pumps. The scheme is open to all dairy farmers supplying all major cooperatives. All herd sizes are covered, and both single and three phase electricity supply is eligible.

The SEAI assists farmers in other ways, such as through the Accelerated Capital Allowance (ACA) Scheme. The ACA scheme is a tax incentive on a range of energy efficiency equipment.

It is important to note however that the Dairy Farm Scheme requires a 'herd number' and that at present slurry spreading machinery is not covered by the Accelerated Capital Allowance (ACA) scheme.

I am informed separately that the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine provides grant aid for farmers or groups of farmers to purchase Low Emission Slurry Spreading (LESS) equipment under the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS II). TAMS II is co-funded under Ireland's Rural Development Programme. The EU regulations specify that beneficiaries under TAMS II must be farmers, or groups of farmers. Therefore, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is precluded from funding the purchase of LESS equipment by contractors under TAMS II. That Department is, however, committed to the use of this equipment with more than 660 applications paid over €7.6m to date under the LESS measure of TAMS II.

Road Safety

170. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to introduce legislation in the interest of health and road safety to regulate the use of electric and powered skateboards on streets and roads here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8819/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Any mechanically propelled vehicle (regardless of the form of propulsion) which is used in a public place (as defined in road traffic legislation) must be registered, taxed, insured and roadworthy, and the driver or rider must be licensed.

As it is not possible for an electric or powered skateboard to conform with this legislation, it is not considered suitable for use in a public place.

I will be formally requesting the Road Safety Authority shortly to examine the feasibility of providing for such electric vehicles in our legislation, and when they have submitted the outcome of their research to me I will consider all the available facts and make a decision on how to proceed.

Bus Éireann Staff

171. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the ban on bus drivers over 70 years of age will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8877/19]

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.

Public Transport Fares

172. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason a refund will not be provided to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8881/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter 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 response within ten working days.

Railway Stations

173. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when a commitment given in September 2016 in Dáil Éireann to visit a railway station (details supplied) in County Westmeath to discuss possible ways and avenues of reopening same will be honoured; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8893/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This matter is under consideration and my office will revert back in due to course.

Bus Services

174. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to ensure a community funded bus service (details supplied) will not cease operation in September 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8914/19]

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.

Road Projects Status

175. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will direct TII to provide an update on progress to carry out work at Turtulla Cross, Thurles, County Tipperary; the timeline for the work to be completed (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8922/19]

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 Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

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

State Airports

176. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the type and amounts of munitions he approved for transit through Shannon Airport on a plane (details supplied) on 4 February 2019; and the reason he approved this aircraft and these munitions to

transit through Shannon Airport and Irish air space. [8939/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This particular civil aircraft was granted an exemption for the carriage of munitions of war in respect of the personal weapons of the troops on board with no ammunition present pursuant to Article 5 of the Air Navigation (Carriage of Munitions of War, Weapons and Dangerous Goods) Orders, 1973 and 1989.

This exemption was granted as it met with the requirements for the grant of exemptions administered by my Department. No objections were raised by the Departments consulted as a part of the application process.

Matters relating to Ireland's policy of neutrality are the responsibility of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Public Transport Provision

177. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which bus and rail accommodation can be augmented throughout the north County Kildare routes serving Sallins, Celbridge, Leixlip, Maynooth and Kilcock with a view to ensuring adequate space for commuters on both buses and trains and compliance with health and safety standards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8955/19]

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 (GDA) including, in consultation with the relevant Operators, the augmentation of bus and rail services throughout north County Kildare. The relevant Operators are obliged at all times to ensure the services provided are managed and operated safely in accordance with relevant legislation.

Noting their responsibility in the development and implementation of public transport in the GDA, I have forwarded the Deputy's 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.

Child and Family Agency Funding

178. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of child and adolescent counselling and psychotherapy sessions offered by organisations that received counselling and psychotherapy funding from Tusla in County Wexford in each of the years 2014 to 2018, in tabular form. [8778/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has statutory responsibility to support and promote the development, welfare and protection of children.

Tusla provides funding to numerous organisations that provide child and adolescent counselling and psychotherapy services.

The Deputy's question refers to an operational matter for Tusla. I have requested Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Child Abuse

179. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the fact that an organisation (details supplied) is operating its own helpline regarding retrospective abuse allegations against the organisation; and her views on whether this is appropriate. [8791/19]

180. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the steps she has taken to ensure that the staff operating a helpline (details supplied) are appropriately trained; if she has set out minimum operating guidelines for the helpline; and if she is satisfied that it is providing an adequate service to potential abuse victims. [8792/19]

181. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if there is a co-operation mechanism between a helpline (details supplied) and the Tusla helpline with regard to historic cases of abuse; if the helpline is mandated to share information with Tusla or another unit within her Department; and if arrangements have been put in place to that effect. [8793/19]

182. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if an organisation (details supplied) is using State funding in order to provide counselling supports to victims of alleged abuse within the organisation; and if the organisation is independently funding this service. [8795/19]

183. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if an organisation (details supplied) is using State funding in order to provide hardship to victims of alleged abuse within the organisation; and if the organisation is independently funding the service. [8796/19]

184. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if counselling services are being offered to victims of historic abuse at an organisation (details supplied); and if other supports are being offered to these persons. [8797/19]

185. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her Department is ensuring a minimum standard in terms of the quality and appropriateness of the counselling services being offered by an organisation (details supplied) to victims of historic abuse at the organisation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8798/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 179 to 185, inclusive, together.

In early February, a detailed update was provided to my officials for my attention about the current status of the review of historic files and updated figures in terms of the number of victims of abuse, the alleged perpetrators and the reporting of same. I have been assured by Scouting Ireland that they are providing the necessary counselling supports to the victims of alleged abuse. Scouting Ireland established a helpline to respond to the needs of persons affected by the allegations of historic abuse within the organisation, the funding for which comes from within Scouting Ireland's internal resources. The helpline is manned by trained members of the safeguarding team and when a person contacts the helpline they are offered a referral to an appropriate counselling service. Scouting Ireland has confirmed that it has been liaising with Tusla, the Garda Síochána and any other relevant police authority in respect of the calls received on all helplines.

186. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of money paid to a company (details supplied) for construction at Oberstown Children Detention Campus; and the amount spent on subsequently rectifying and replacement works in each year since September 2016 by amounts related to the original construction problems and those as a result of wilful damage. [8838/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Office of Public Works (OPW) had oversight of the delivery of the capital project at Oberstown Children Detention Campus on behalf of my Department. As the OPW is the appropriate body to supply the information requested by the Deputy, I have requested same from that office. I will revert to the Deputy in due course.

Residential Institutions Redress Scheme

187. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason she has refused to address the recommendation by the commission on mother and baby homes that a facility (details supplied) should have been included in the residential institutions redress scheme. [8841/19]

188. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the way in which she plans to deal with the redress needs of the ageing mother and baby home survivors that told their stories to the commission in 2015 in view of the decision to extend the timescale of the commission by a further year. [8842/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 187 and 188 together.

When the Ryan Report was published in 2009 there were a number of calls for the Residential Institutions Redress Act to be extended to include additional institutions, including the Bethany Home.

As the Deputy will be aware, my colleague the Minister for Education and Skills is responsible for the Redress Act legislation and related arrangements and that the scheme has been closed to new applications since 2011. Eligibility for the scheme has been reviewed on a number of occasions and it has not been extended to any additional institution since 2005.

In its 2nd Interim Report the Commission suggested that eligibility for the Redress Scheme be re-examined. I raised this over a period of weeks with government colleagues and the Attorney General. Subsequent to those discussions, the Government decided not to extend the scheme.

The Commission had made no findings to date regarding abuse or neglect, within Mother and Baby Homes, including the Bethany Home, and colleagues believed it would not be appropriate to deal with the question of redress in advance of any conclusions by the Commission.

At that time, the Government made a further decision that in light of the Commission's commentary, consideration would be given to provide supports to former residents.

It was on this basis that I established the Collaborative Forum of former residents, and Bethany Home survivors are represented in the membership. The Forum has produced a report that includes a series of recommendations on matters of priority to them and their families.

I will be bringing the report to Cabinet shortly to facilitate its detailed consideration by

Government.

Child and Family Agency Services

189. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if funding will be provided to an organisation (details supplied) for additional child and adolescent psychotherapy under the gender and domestic violence programme of the organisation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8857/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, provides funding through its Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) Programme to 16 organisations throughout the country that deliver counselling and support services to victims of sexual violence.

The organisation to which the Deputy refers is one of the 16 funded services for victims of sexual violence, and has received the following funding from Tusla since 2016.

2016	2017	2018
€210,800	€216,900	€221,300

This organisation provides counselling and other support services to young people aged 14 years and older, and to adult victims of sexual violence.

Tusla is commissioning a review of the current provision of therapeutic services by Tusla-funded organisations to young people, who have experienced sexual violence. The review is due to be completed this year and will inform Tusla's future commissioning of services for victims of sexual violence.

Tusla has advised that the organisation to which the Deputy refers has applied for additional funding to support its counselling work with older children. Tusla will consider this application with reference to the findings of its finalised review of therapeutic services provided to young people who have experienced sexual violence and within the limits of available resources.

Tusla will continue to work closely with service providers to support children and young people at risk and the effective functioning of families.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

190. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a matter (details supplied) regarding women's pensions will be addressed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8921/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Deputy should note that the "Yearly Average" method of calculating entitlement to the contributory state pension has been in place since the introduction of that pension, then called the Old Age Contributory Pension, in 1961. As a single, comprehensive social insurance scheme was only introduced approximately 8 years previously, a system where people needed a set number of years contributions for a full pension, could not have been introduced, without it either (a) requiring very few contributions for the maximum rate contributory pension, or (b) no-one qualifying at the maximum rate for several decades.

Under the Yearly Average approach, people are paid a rate according to their rateband. For example, someone with 20 years contributions over a 48 year period would qualify at the 85% rate (if they do not qualify for a non-contributory pension at a higher rate of up to 95% instead). These ratebands have been adjusted a number of times over the decades, most recently in 2012 as an alternative to a reduction in the core rate of the pension, which I believe would be the change referred to by the Deputy.

Since 2010, it has been Government policy to replace the Yearly Average system with a Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to establishing the level of entitlement for all new state pension contributory claims from 2020 onwards (TCA2020).

In January 2018, I announced the Government Decision to introduce a new interim Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to the calculation of State Pension (Contributory) for pensioners born on or after 1 September 1946, who were awarded state pension (contributory) under the post 2012 rate bands. This approach, which includes generous provision for homecaring periods, will benefit many such pensioners, especially those who took time out of the workplace for caring purposes. The required primary legislative provisions are contained in the Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Act 2018, enacted on 24 December 2018. All the necessary regulatory and system changes have now been made to allow the increased payments to begin.

My Department is now reviewing the pension payments of approximately 91,000 pensioners who were awarded less than the maximum rate of pension since September 2012. Given the number of pensioners involved, this work will take a number of months to complete. The increased payments will also include arrears to the 30th March 2018, or the pensioner's 66th birthday if later. The Department is using information it already has to complete these reviews. However, in quite a number of cases, additional information is required from the pensioners concerned about gap periods in their social insurance records and my Department will be in touch with each of those pensioners individually to get that information.

As regards the TCA model that will apply for all new pensioners post-2020, I launched a public consultation on the design of the full scheme on the 28th of May to which a wide variety of stakeholder groups were invited. A number of workshops were also held on the day to elicit views and feedback. All Oireachtas members were invited to a detailed briefing in Leinster House by my officials shortly afterwards. The consultation was open for over 3 months and the Department received almost 300 responses from individuals and organisations. Those submissions outlined the views of respondents on a number of issues, including the number of years required for a full pension, as intended as part of the consultation process.

I have recently been provided with an analysis of the views submitted in the consultation. Having considered this analysis, I intend bringing a proposal to Government shortly, setting out the proposed details of the scheme. When the Government has agreed the approach to be taken, I will initiate the work required to introduce this reform. I can confirm that the model will include provision for homecaring periods.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Pension Provisions

191. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the potential for small self-administered pensions to partner with the State to assist with the long-term lease scheme for social housing; if she has

considered the impact that a the lack of derogation will have in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8787/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Housing policy is a matter for the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government. Any questions or suggestions in relation to the long-term lease scheme for social housing should be directed to his Department.

Transposition of the IORP II Directive will support positive reform of the Irish funded occupational pension sector. Transposition will raise governance standards, improve trustee qualification and suitability, and increase supervision through enhanced powers for the Pensions Authority.

While the Directive provides for the possibility of derogation from specific Articles for smaller schemes, I believe that members of smaller schemes should get the same protections and oversight as members of large schemes. Money saved for pension purposes should be properly protected to ensure that people have adequate income for their retirement years. It should be noted that Member States must apply certain provisions concerning investment rules and the system of governance to schemes which have more than 15 members.

Article 19 of the Directive sets out the investment rules for occupational pension schemes. Assets must be predominantly invested on regulated markets, i.e., at least 50%. This allows adequate scope for investment in instruments with a long-term economic profile and non-listed undertakings such as property and infrastructure.

Small self-administered pensions may continue to invest in the Irish economy, including property, but their investments must be properly diversified to avoid excessive reliance on any particular asset and so minimise risk in the portfolio as a whole. Such diversification has been proven to reduce investment risk.

The value of investments held in many schemes fell substantially during the financial crisis. This emphasised the need for stricter regulation and greater protections, especially for small schemes investing in riskier unregulated markets. Concerns in relation to this sector are particularly around the protection of the consumer and the money they have invested, the riskiness of investments, the charges that apply, and the standard of governance. Accordingly, the Government has decided that the provisions of the Directive should apply to all funded occupational pension schemes.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory)

192. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when payments will issue in respect of State pension (contributory) rate reviews; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8816/19]

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.

Where possible, my Department will use information already held to assist in these reviews.

Additional information will be requested in writing from pensioners in relation to unexplained gaps in their social insurance record where required to complete their review.

As the required legislative and system changes are now in place, I am pleased to let the Deputies know that the first reviews have been processed this week. Where an increase is awarded, the rate of payment will be adjusted without delay and backdated to 30 March 2018 or the person's 66th birthday if later. Where a pension rate does not increase as a result of this review, the person will continue to receive their existing rate of payment. No one will be worse off as a result of this review

Given the numbers involved, it will take my Department a number of months to complete the reviews and approximately 120 additional temporary staff have been recruited to help with this work.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Payments

193. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 618 of 18 December 2018, when a decision will issue in relation to a review of a carer's allowance application submitted in April 2018 by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8855/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned has been in receipt of a half-rate carer's allowance (CA) since 13 August 2009 as her husband had been claiming an increase in his jobseeker allowance (JA) in respect of her.

Her husband's JA ceased on 5 April 2011 and has been in receipt of a state pension contributory (SPC) since 7 August 2015 without claiming an increase in respect of his wife.

Following a request from the person concerned, their entitlement to CA for the period 2011 to date was reviewed.

The outcome of the review is that they have been awarded full rate CA with effect from 8 October 2015.

For the period 7 April 2011 to 7 October 2015 their means meant that they were actually entitled to a lower rate of CA than they actually received, however, no overpayment is being assessed for this period.

Payment at the increased rate of CA will issue to their nominated post office on 21 February 2019, covering the week from 14 February 2019.

Arrears of allowance from 8 October 2015 to 13 February 2019 will issue shortly.

The person concerned was notified on 19 February 2019 of this outcome, the reason for it and of their right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Applications

194. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for an invalidity pension by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8858/19]

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 December 2018. This claim was disallowed on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on 18 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.

Personal Public Service Numbers

195. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a matter regarding obtaining a PPS number will be addressed in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8884/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The legal requirements for the allocation of a Personal Public Service (PPS) Number are that a person satisfies the Minister as to his or her identity and also provides a reason as to why a PPS Number is required (i.e. to carry out a transaction with a specified body, a body specified in legislation as authorised to use PPS Numbers).

Information regarding PPS Numbers are available on the Department's website here: <http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/PPSN.aspx>

The person concerned should attend his PPS Number allocation office and provide whatever evidence he has as to his identity. If there is insufficient evidence presented for that office to allocate a PPS Number, then the case can then be forwarded to the Department's Client Identity Services Unit for further consideration. A UK driver's licence is acceptable evidence of identity should he hold one.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

JobPath Programme

196. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if unemployed persons are required to engage with Turas Nua or Seetec in order to avoid a cut in welfare payments in view of the recent motion on JobPath passing in Dáil Éireann; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8902/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Government's position on the recent motion debated in the House on the JobPath service was clearly set out in my contribution at the time. I note the views of the House on the matter, however, the position of the Government remains unchanged. My Department has entered into legally binding agreements with the JobPath providers and the Government will honour these contractual commitments. I will reiterate again that JobPath service performance recorded

and published by the Department exceeds contracted target levels, that creditable large scale customer research - also published by the Department - shows very high levels of customer satisfaction and that complaint levels are very low.

The Department also operates a robust inspection and compliance system and a detailed report from the Comptroller and Auditor General found made no recommendations in regard to how the service is governed.

The Department will shortly publish the results of an econometric evaluation of the service which will further indicate that the outcomes for participating jobseekers both in terms of employment and earnings are better than those of non-participants. Compared to this body of evidence I note the criticisms of the service are based on anecdote or very small scale research which would not be considered as reliable evidence in any serious evaluation of the service. I previously asked Deputies to forward me examples of cases that they believed substantiated the criticisms of the service. Since the debate on the private members motion I was provided with just one example of a person who expressed dissatisfaction with the service. This case is being reviewed but the nature of the complaint does not differ greatly from representations which are occasionally received in respect of other activation services including the Department's own Intreo service. It is certainly not suggestive of any widespread or systemic issues with the service, over and above that that would be expected in a service that has now served over 200,000 people. I am therefore satisfied that the proper course of action is to continue with the service in order to support long term unemployed jobseekers.

Personal Public Service Numbers

197. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a PPS number will be issued to a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8909/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The legal requirements for a Personal Public Service (PPS) Number to be allocated are that the person satisfies the Minister as to his or her identity and provides evidence as to why a PPS Number is required (i.e. to carry out a transaction with a specified body, a body specified in legislation as authorised to use PPS Numbers).

The person concerned has attended her local PPS Number allocation centre but did not, at that time, provide a valid reason to have a PPS Number allocated. She has been contacted and asked to bring in the evidence now available so that a PPS Number can be allocated to her.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Bus Services

198. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to ensure a community funded bus service (details supplied) will not cease operation in September 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8915/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I note that the bus operator concerned continues to receive funding from the National Transport Authority for the provision of this service and also receives support from my Department under the Community Employment scheme.

The local Intreo service has also offered its support in recruiting bus drivers and to liaise with the local Education and Training Board in relation to any potential training needs.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

199. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a disability allowance appeal by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will be processed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8933/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am informed by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an appeal was registered on 29th January 2019 and, in accordance with the statutory requirements, the Appeals Office has contacted the person concerned and asked them to set out the complete grounds of the appeal. On receipt of this response the relevant departmental papers will be requested from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the appeal will then be referred in due course to an Appeals Officer for consideration.

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.

Jobseeker's Allowance Eligibility

200. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the position in regard to payment of jobseeker's allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8944/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned has not had an active claim with my department since May 2017. The person concerned made a new claim for Jobseekers Allowance (JA) in March 2018. The Social Welfare Inspector requested additional information from the person concerned to support their application.

As this information was not supplied, the application was disallowed as the person concerned had failed to show that their means was less than the weekly rate of JA payable appropriate to their circumstances. The person concerned was informed of this decision in June 2018 and there has been no further communication from them to my department since.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

201. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a review of entitlement to a State pension will be undertaken in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8945/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): One

of the qualifying conditions for state pension (contributory) is that the applicant must have at least 520 paid full-rate social insurance contributions before their 66th birthday.

An application for state pension (contributory) from the person concerned was disallowed on 20 November 2017, based on a total of 170 full rate contributions, covering their working life from May 1967 to end-December 2016.

The person was notified in writing of their pension decision on 20 November 2017. Attached to that letter was a copy of their contribution record, as held by my Department and upon which their pension decision was calculated.

If the person considers that they have additional contributions or credits that have not been recorded, they should forward documentary evidence to my Department, Client Eligibility Services, Buncrana Intreo Centre, McCarter's Road, Ardarvan, Buncrana, Co. Donegal, and their pension entitlement will be reviewed.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Back to Work Allowance Applications

202. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a back to work enterprise allowance will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8946/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned registered a company on 3rd November 2011 and subsequently deregistered same on 30th October 2014.

The person concerned applied for Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) on 13th July 2018 and a decision on the application issued on 23rd September 2018. I understand from my Department that the application was not successful as the business was not a new enterprise.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Eligibility

203. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a disability allowance will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8948/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Disability allowance (DA) is a weekly allowance paid to people with a specified disability who are aged over 16 and under 66. The disability must be expected to last for at least one year and the allowance is subject to a medical assessment, a means test and a habitual residency test.

Entitlement to DA can only be established on receipt of a completed application form. To date no application for DA has been received from the person concerned.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Overpayments

204. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the way in which it is expected to recover an alleged overpayment in the case of a person (details supplied) without causing undue hardship to the family; if this parliamentary question will be accepted as an appeal against the decision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8949/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Working Family Payment (WFP) formerly Family Income Supplement is a weekly in-work support, which provides an income top-up for employees on low earnings with children.

Based on the information provided by the person concerned, their WFP was renewed from 20 September 2018.

Their file was referred to a Social Welfare Inspector to review the declared self-employment income and following an investigation it was established that the correct rate of WFP was €43 a week. My Department wrote to the person concerned on 4 February 2019 to advise her of this but received no reply.

This lady will be contacted by officials from my Department who will outline a proposed method for recovery of the overpayment which has arisen. If the overpayment recovery proposed is not manageable for the customer she can liaise with my officials to negotiate an affordable payment recovery plan.

Should she wish to appeal the decision which has been made, she must do so in writing to The Social Welfare Appeals Office, D'Olier House, D'Olier Street, Dublin 2.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Pyrite Issues

205. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when a MICA redress scheme will be introduced for affected homeowners in County Donegal. [8776/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The Expert Panel on Concrete Blocks was established by my Department in 2016, to investigate problems that have emerged in the concrete blockwork of certain dwellings in Counties Donegal and Mayo.

In 2017, the report of the Expert Panel was published and included eight recommendations, which my Department is actively progressing with the relevant stakeholders, prioritising the implementation of Recommendations 1 and 2.

With regard to Recommendation 1, the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) established a Technical Committee to scope and fast track the development of a standardised protocol. The standardised protocol will inform the course of action in relation to remedial works for all affected householders. The standardised protocol was published by the NSAI on 13 November 2018 and *'I.S. 465:2018 - Assessment, testing and categorisation of damaged buildings incorporating concrete blocks containing certain deleterious materials'*, is available at www.nsai.ie.

The standard can be used to assess and categorise the damage in properties where the concrete blocks are suspected to contain the minerals mica or pyrite. Previously, there was no

common way for engineers or homeowners to assess the damage caused by defective concrete blocks, in order to decide what, if any, remedial work could be carried out. The standard:

1. establishes a protocol for assessing and determining whether a building has been damaged by concrete blocks containing certain excessive amounts of deleterious materials (free or unbound muscovite mica, or aggregate with potentially deleterious quantities of pyrite);
2. describes methods for establishing the extent of the problem;
3. describes the scope of any testing required; and
4. categorises buildings, in accordance with the standard, providing competent persons with guidance on the appropriate measures to be taken.

With regard to Recommendation 2, my Department has been in contact with Engineers Ireland in relation to the establishment of a register of competent engineers for homeowners/affected parties' reference. Engineers Ireland has provided assurance that they are in the process of finalising measures to establish such a register now that the standardised protocol is in place. Engineers Ireland have recently issued a call for suitably qualified engineers to participate on the register.

In 2017, I visited Donegal and Mayo and met with key stakeholders, including affected homeowners, elected members and officials of the local authorities and other interested parties. I made similar visits to both counties last year and I will continue to monitor the situation and to update affected parties on progress.

Under Budget 2019, the Government approved in principle the development of a grant scheme of financial assistance to support affected homeowners in the two counties to carry out the necessary remediation works to dwellings that have been damaged due to defective concrete blocks. Work on the development of such a scheme is well underway, including discussions with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to the operation and funding of the scheme. It is intended to revert to Government with proposals for the scheme as soon as possible, with a view to publishing details of the scheme thereafter.

Commercial Rates Calculations

206. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the position regarding commercial rates calculations (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8818/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): 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 relation to decisions in this regard.

The Deputy may be aware that, under Irish law, there is a distinct separation of function between the valuation of rateable property and the setting and collection of commercial rates. The amount of rates payable in any calendar year is a product of the valuation set by the Commissioner of Valuation, multiplied by the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV) decided annually by the elected members of each local authority.

A valuation for commercial rates purposes is arrived at by estimating the Net Annual Value (NAV) of the property in question, 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.

Commercial rates are a charge levied on the occupation of a property based on the valuation of that property determined under the Valuation Acts 2001 to 2015. In the case of a property licensed under the Licensing Acts 1833 to 2011 to sell beer, wine and spirits, the annual value of that license is, under the Valuation Acts, a relevant factor in calculating the valuation of such a property.

Where a property or part of a property becomes licensed to sell beer, wine and spirits or ceases to be so licensed under the Licensing Acts 1833 to 2011, then a “material change of circumstances” (MCC) within the meaning of the Valuation Acts is deemed to have taken place. Where an MCC has come about, a revision application should be made to the Valuation Office to arrange for a revision of the valuation on the property to take account of the new circumstances.

The Deputy may be aware that 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.

Home Loan Scheme

207. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the capital allocations for the Rebuilding Ireland home loan will be distributed to county councils in 2019; the reason for the delay in distributing the funding to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8827/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan launched on 1 February 2018. Prior to its launch, an initial tranche of €200 million of long-term fixed-rate finance was borrowed by the Housing Finance Agency to provide funds for the scheme to local authorities.

When the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan was initially being developed it was estimated that the drawdown of loans under the scheme would be approximately €200 million over three years. From the data collated on the scheme to date, the RIHL has proven to be more successful than initially anticipated, as a result of which, the scheme would require a further tranche of funds to be borrowed by the HFA in order to enable its continuation.

My Department is currently in discussions with the Departments of Public Expenditure and Reform and Finance with regard to an extension of the scheme in this regard. When these dis-

cussions are concluded I will be in a position to make an announcement on the matter.

Water Services Infrastructure

208. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the proposed upgrade of the water infrastructure network in Donabate and Portrane, County Dublin; the timeline for delivery, duration of works and commencement date for the project; if a traffic and construction management plan has been carried out to ensure compliance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development of the peninsula; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8874/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Since 1 January 2014, Irish Water has statutory responsibility for all aspects of water services planning, delivery and operation at national, regional and local levels.

Irish Water has established a dedicated team to deal with representations and queries from public representatives. If Deputies have any queries on specific issues in relation to water services, the team can be contacted via email to oireachtasmembers@water.ie or by telephone on a dedicated number, 1890 578 578.

Water Services

209. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if there are sewage pipe works planned in an area (details supplied) in County Meath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8886/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Since 1 January 2014, Irish Water has statutory responsibility for all aspects of water services planning, delivery and operation at national, regional and local levels.

Irish Water has established a dedicated team to deal with representations and queries from public representatives. If Deputies have any queries on specific issues in relation to water services, the team can be contacted via email to oireachtasmembers@water.ie or by telephone on a dedicated number, 1890 578 578.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Data

210. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of tenant purchase scheme agreements entered into by Tipperary County Council in each of the years 2011 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8905/19]

211. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the criteria for the local authority tenant purchase scheme will be reviewed in order that local authorities can commence to offer the scheme in a meaningful and effective way; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8906/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 210 and 211 together.

My Department publishes information on the sale of local authority houses each year; this can be accessed on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/social-and-affordable/other-local-authority-housing-scheme-statistics>.

Sales of houses between the period 2011 to 2015 would have been made under the terms of the 1995 Tenant Purchase Scheme or the 2011 Fixed term Tenant Purchase Scheme for long-standing tenants. The Housing (Sale of Local Authority Houses) Regulations 2015 set the commencement date as 1 January 2016 for the introduction of the current incremental tenant purchase model. All sales from January 1st 2016 have been made under the terms of this Scheme.

In line with the commitment given in Rebuilding Ireland, a review of the operation of the first 12 months of the current Scheme 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 consideration of a number of implementation issues arising.

Home Loan Scheme

212. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the review into the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8908/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan scheme was launched in February to replace the existing House Purchase and the Home Choice Loan schemes. It has been established under the Housing (Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan) Regulations 2018, which also provide for the issuance of a statutory Credit Policy. The purpose of the Credit Policy is to set out in more detail the eligibility criteria for obtaining a loan and procedures to be followed by local authorities in considering loan applications.

In order to assist the on-going administration of the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan, I asked my Department to undertake a review of the operation of the scheme, including any requirements to update the Credit Policy. In carrying out the review, the Department has consulted with a number of local authorities, the Housing Agency and the Housing Finance Agency. The review will also have regard to the views raised by public representatives since the scheme's commencement. However, in making any recommendations in relation to the operation of the scheme, it will also take account of the need to ensure that lending issued under it is provided on a prudential basis, so as to protect the financial interests of the borrowers and the local authorities.

The review is at an advanced stage and is due to be finalised shortly.

Home Loan Scheme

213. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a person who wishes to avail of a loan under the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme and wishes to self-build can use the site as a deposit or part of in view of the fact that all other financial institutions on self-builds allows same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8928/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): 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.

In the case of a self-build property, a loan can be made 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. The value of the site cannot therefore be used as a deposit.

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. The cash savings should be no less than 3% of the market value of the property. Gifts of cash are permissible up to 7% of the market value of the property, where their source is verified.

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.

Home Loan Scheme

214. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if planning permission is sufficient for initial approval of a loan when a person applies for a Rebuilding Ireland home loan on a self-build; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8934/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Applicants for the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan, whether to purchase or self-build, must first of all satisfy all the eligibility criteria, details of which are available on the dedicated website, <http://rebuildingirelandhomeloan.ie/>.

Applicants applying for loan approval to build their own home may be approved for a loan, subject to the condition that they obtain planning permission for the site on which the construction is to occur. However they must have full planning permission for the site before they will be allowed to draw down the loan.

In addition to this, applicant(s) are required to submit with their loan application a valuation report that details the site value, cost of works and post construction market value of the completed property. The valuation report is required to be completed by an independent valuer and will be considered by the local authority in assessing the associated loan application.

Arts Funding

215. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the position regarding increasing funding for her Department; the position in relation to achieving 2024 targets; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5799/19]

216. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the pathway to the doubling of arts funding by 2024; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5800/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 215 and 216 together.

Our culture, heritage and language play a hugely positive role in our lives enhancing our physical and mental well-being and nourishing our national psyche. The Government recognises the importance of culture, heritage and the Irish language. That is why the Taoiseach has committed to doubling the spend on arts and culture by 2025.

Budget 2019 was an important milestone on this journey. The gross funding package of €339 million for 2019 for developing culture, heritage and the Irish language is an increase of €36 million, or 12%, on that of last year.

Last year the Government launched Project Ireland 2040 to ensure delivery of significantly improved social, economic and cultural infrastructure. Project Ireland 2040 gave explicit recognition to the importance of our culture, language and heritage to our sustainable development over the next decade and beyond. This recognition is underpinned by the unprecedented commitment by Government to invest €1.2 billion in our culture, our language and our heritage over the 10-year implementation of the NDP.

My Department's part in this is the €1.2 billion plan for investing in our culture, language and heritage. The level of investment proposed under this plan will transform our cultural, heritage and language infrastructure across the country. This year, we will see a very significant increase in capital spending by my Department, which will rise by €19.5 million to €74 million. This will allow for the very important planning and early-stage implementation phases of a number of Project Ireland 2040 culture, heritage and language projects.

In April last year, I was delighted to launch my Department's sectoral Plan - Investing in Our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 – 2027. The plan sets out significant investment on a phased basis over the next 10 years prioritised across 3 areas - €785m for Culture; €295m for Heritage and €178m for our Language. This level of investment will transform our cultural and heritage infrastructure right across the country and goes a long way towards honouring the commitment to double government spending on arts, culture and heritage.

The 2019 allocation for capital under this plan is some €74 million, an increase of €19.5 million or 36% on my Department's 2018 capital allocation. This unprecedented increase includes €6 million in respect of Galway 2020 European City of Culture, an additional €2 million for Screen Ireland, over €1.5 million extra for Cultural Infrastructure & Development, €5 million extra for the Heritage programme and an additional €2 million for Údarás na Gaeltachta.

In terms of current funding, allocations fall to be determined annually as part of the Estimates process. In 2019, total current funding for my Department increased by €16.5m or just under 7% to €265.159 million, including an additional €6m for the Arts Council; an additional €2m across all of the National Cultural Institutions; an extra €2m in additional funding for the Heritage programme and an extra €3m for the Irish Language, Gaeltacht and Islands.

In broad terms, of the total allocation of €339 million for 2019, almost €189 million is for culture, which is an increase of 13%. Of that €189 million, including €40 million in respect of capital, has been allocated to culture.

The transformation and renewal of our national cultural institutions is already under way. I note that work has commenced on the National Library's refurbishment and the National Archives will begin moving files off-site shortly in advance of starting its redevelopment work. Many other cultural institutions are at an advanced stage with their proposals, including the National Concert Hall, the Abbey Theatre and the National Museum of Ireland. Our capital

investment programme under the national development plan envisages expenditure of €460 million over the decade of the plan. In addition to this, in 2019 our national cultural institutions collectively will receive an increase of more than €2 million in current funding.

We also will be providing the funding for the essential preparatory work for Galway 2020. This increase in funding also provides for increases to key institutions and agencies that deliver arts, creativity and culture across the country and to further develop the core programme areas to increase citizen engagement with creativity.

The Arts Council, for example, will receive an additional €6.8 million in 2019 to enhance its support for artists and arts organisations. This allocation is more than double the 2018 increase and brings Government support for this very important body to €75 million. The Government and I welcome the very positive reaction of the Irish arts community to this news.

The cumulative impact of these funding increases is further testament to the commitment to double Government spending in the arts, culture and heritage sector. My Department and I will continue to work rigorously with an Taoiseach and all of my Government colleagues towards delivering on the commitment to increase Government spending in the arts and culture sector on a trajectory that will see funding doubled.

Departmental Staff Data

217. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of conservation rangers employed in counties Carlow and Kilkenny; if there are vacant positions; if so, the length of time each position has been vacant; if vacancies for conservation rangers can be filled by employees who wish to transfer from Inland Fisheries Ireland; if there is a list of those wishing to transfer; if so, the number on the list; the process relative to requests for transfer; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8826/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Staffing resources required to meet my Department's business needs are assessed through my Department's workforce planning process, having regard to emerging business needs and Government policy on public sector pay and staffing as advised by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. My Department's Workforce Plan does not identify vacancies per se across the different work sectors, whether arising from retirements or other factors, but seeks rather to identify gaps in service delivery that can be addressed on a priority basis in light of available resources.

I am advised that there are eight Conservation Rangers in the South Eastern Region, which takes in Counties Carlow and Kilkenny. The Public Appointments Service held an open competition to recruit Conservation Rangers for this Department and, arising from that competition, a panel of suitably qualified persons is in place. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that my Department is currently working to fill fourteen Conservation Ranger posts across the country from this panel. The new appointees will be allocated to fill gaps where it is considered that insufficient cover exists at present. It should be noted that, where such gaps exist, a measure of cover is already provided by way of higher management grades, particularly District Conservation Officer.

I am not aware of any mechanism whereby Conservation Ranger posts can be filled by employees that wish to transfer from Inland Fisheries Ireland, nor of the existence of a list of those wishing to transfer, such as described by the Deputy.

Architectural Heritage

218. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she plans to protect endangered historical sites or structures nationally; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8957/19]

221. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she continues to support heritage houses throughout County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8961/19]

223. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of listed buildings including sites throughout County Kildare; the extent to which she continues to interact with a view to future protection and ongoing maintenance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8963/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 218, 221 and 223 together.

My functions as Minister with regard to the protection of our architectural heritage are set out in the Planning and Development Acts, as are the responsibilities of local authorities and owners.

The Planning and Development Acts give primary responsibility to planning authorities to identify and protect our architectural heritage by including structures on the relevant local authority's Record of Protected Structures. I draw on information provided by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, maintained by my Department, to recommend structures for inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures.

Inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures places a duty of care on the owners and occupiers of protected structures and also gives planning authorities powers to deal with development proposals affecting them and to seek to safeguard their future.

The decision as to whether a building is placed on, or removed from the Record of Protected Structures is a reserved function of the relevant local authority. My Department does not keep a record of derelict or semi-derelict sites across the country, nor does it keep heritage sites under review generally, except where these sites are national monuments in State care or otherwise part of the historic national heritage estate which is managed by the Office of Public Works.

As Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, I am the owner or guardian of almost 1,000 national monuments in State care right across the country, ranging from prehistoric burial monuments to medieval fortifications and religious sites. Sites in my ownership or guardianship are maintained by the Office of Public Works. Conservation matters in relation to these sites are managed through regular liaison between the OPW and my Department, identifying condition issues and proposing appropriate conservation actions, carried out under consent where relevant.

My Department is also providing funding to the OPW in 2019 to assist in the conservation and presentation of historic buildings and national monuments in State ownership. As in previous years, in cooperation with its Office of Public Works and local authority partners, my Department's National Monuments Service will also make available such funding as may be required over the course of 2019 in relation to the discharge of my functions as Minister under the National Monuments Acts, 1930-2014 to support rescue excavations and post excavation research at archaeological sites where there is an urgent risk to such being irreparably lost or damaged.

In November 2018, I announced €4.3 million in funding for the Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) and the Historic Structures Fund (HSF) 2019 (formerly the Structures at Risk Fund). The 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.

The HSF is for conservation and enhancement to heritage structures and historic buildings, in both private and public ownership, for the benefit of communities and the public.

Both schemes were open for applications until 31 January 2019. Full details are available on my Department's website and on each local authority's website.

The Heritage Council, which my Department funds, also provides grants for the protection and preservation of the built heritage. It is primarily a matter for the Heritage Council to decide how its funding should be allocated across the range of research, education and conservation programmes it supports. Grant schemes are advertised by the Heritage Council on its website www.heritagecouncil.ie.

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

The public consultation for Heritage Ireland 2030, which I launched on 1 November, gives everyone the opportunity to have their say on the future of our heritage and to help identify the priorities for €285 million identified in Project Ireland 2040 for investment in our built and natural heritage.

There are four ways that people can engage with this consultation and have their say: by logging on to my Department's website and completing the short survey at www.chg.gov.ie/heritage/heritageireland2030; by email to heritageireland2030@chg.gov.ie ; by participating in ongoing local events and workshops; or by post to Heritage Ireland 2030, The Custom House, Dublin 1, D01 W6XO.

National Monuments

219. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of historical sites or structures under archaeological investigation nationally; the progress in respect of such sites; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8958/19]

228. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of archaeological excavations nationally; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8968/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 219 and 228 together.

Under the provisions of the National Monuments Acts, my Department has established and maintains the Record of Monuments and Places, which affords legal protection to over 120,000

recorded archaeological sites and monuments in the State. Anyone proposing works in relation to a monument that is included in the Record of Monument and Places must give my Department two months prior notice before works can start. My Department also continually updates an inventory of archaeological monuments in the State, to ensure protection of newly-discovered archaeological sites. Furthermore, investigations are carried out where the Department receives a report of a threat or damage to a monument. Responsibility for management and maintenance of historical buildings and sites in State ownership rests with the Office of Public Works.

My function as Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in relation to archaeological excavations is to regulate this activity through the licensing system under section 26 of the National Monuments Act 1930, as amended. The majority of archaeological excavations are carried out by private sector archaeological consultants for the purpose of assessing the impact of proposed development on possible archaeological features or mitigating the impact of development on archaeological heritage. A much smaller number are carried out for conservation or research purposes. In deciding whether to grant an archaeological excavation licence, appropriate consideration is given to the need to maintain the integrity of affected archaeological sites.

In 2018, 956 excavation licenses were issued by the Department's National Monuments Service, while 83 excavation licenses have been issued up to the end of January this year. All archaeological excavation licences are granted subject to conditions requiring the excavations to be conducted to an appropriate standard and that reports on the results are furnished to my Department's National Monuments Service.

National Monuments

220. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of round towers nationally in need of improvement and or restoration works; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8959/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Round towers that are, or form part of, national monuments in my ownership or Guardianship under the National Monuments Acts, 1930-2014, are conserved and managed on a day-to-day basis by the Office of Public Works, in close cooperation with my Department's National Monuments Service, which ensures their long-term preservation. National monuments are fully protected under the provisions of the National Monuments Acts, and any works at or in their vicinity may only be conducted with Ministerial Consent under Section 14 of the National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended).

Other round towers which comprise national monuments in the ownership of a local authority are the responsibility of the relevant local authority, while Ministerial Consent is also necessary for works at or in their vicinity. Other round towers may also be in local authority ownership, or may be in the ownership of other organisations or individuals. The upkeep of such structures is the responsibility of the relevant owners. Those that are included in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) or Register of Historic Monuments (RHM) are protected by the provisions of Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994, and Section 5 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1987, respectively. Anyone proposing works in relation to a monument that is included in the RMP or RHM must give my Department two months' prior notice before works can start.

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) provides assistance 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 local authorities' websites.

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.

Question No. 221 answered with Question No. 218.

Creative Ireland Programme

222. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she continues to engage with various local community groups involved in musical and artistic productions throughout County Kildare and nationally with particular reference to the best means of supporting their voluntary efforts; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8962/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Creative Ireland Programme is a culture-based programme led by my Department designed to promote individual, community and national wellbeing. Its core proposition is that participation in cultural activity drives personal and collective creativity, with significant implications for individual and societal wellbeing and achievement.

Under Pillar 2 - 'Enabling Creativity in Every Community' of the Programme, in 2018, my Department allocated a sum €2m and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government allocated a sum of €1m to all 31 local authorities (€96,000 each approximately) to enable them support an extensive programme of activities, events and initiatives in each county. This level of funding will be replicated this year.

In total in 2018, over 1,200 different initiatives around Ireland were funded under Pillar 2. These include arts projects, grant schemes, concerts, conferences, exhibitions, festivals, outreach projects, publications, research programmes, and workshops among other activities. They cover topics such as archaeology, architecture, biodiversity, crafts, heritage, dance, film, history, literature, music, photography, poetry, storytelling, theatre and the visual arts.

In Kildare in 2018, up to thirty projects were supported under the Creative Ireland Programme, many of which included musical and artistic elements. Among the highlights in 2018

were the following projects:

Arts and Heritage Seminar - an initiative between the Irish Walled Towns Network, Creative Ireland, Kildare Heritage Office and Arts Office to explore ways to work together for the benefit of communities and arts practitioners.
Be-Lingual: Sense of Place: artist Marta Golubowska created 3 or 4 separate pieces of art reflecting on the process of learning the Irish language and immersing herself into the Irish culture in Kildare County.
Citizen Scientist: the project engaged with the members of the John Sullivan Centre (The Clane Irish Wheelchair Association) to record flora and fauna in the centre's biodiversity and heritage garden and submit their findings to the National Biodiversity Data Centre.
Creative Rathangan - Meitheal, exploring the transformation of Rathangan's people & environs, boglands, streetscapes and waterways through arts, heritage and local history.
Creative Rathangan workshops , June – December 2018, engaged with a number of selected themes, exploring the transformation of Rathangan's people and environs, its natural and manmade structures especially its boglands, streetscapes, and waterways.
Cruinniú na nOg Library events including Autism Friendly Sensory Story time, Craft and Gardening events at Leixlip Library, Immersive Story telling experience with The Gruffalo in Kildare Town and Celbridge Library and many others
Engaging the Senses Symposium: Helium Arts in partnership with Creative Ireland and Kildare County Council Arts Service hosted a symposium and practical workshop for arts, healthcare, and early years professionals interested in exploring multi-sensory, creative play through the arts for very young children with complex needs.
Féile na Sollán Festival – a celebration of music, dance, singing, language and Irish traditional culture, the festival is jam-packed with events for every age group.
Griese Youth Theatre: Commemoration of Armistice Day
Growing Gardens: Forest School in collaboration with Earthforce Education ran a 'Traditional Crafts Forest School' on the grounds of Castletown House, Celbridge.
If These Walls Could Talk: a project centred around young people from the north Kildare Area who explored themes of Wellbeing, Sense of Place, and Heritage.
Irish Sign Language (ISL) Festival in Athy Town: students of ISL taught others what they knew and helped them understand the beauty of ISL
Kildare Culture Night offered a myriad of cultural events, showcasing artistic endeavour that has taken place throughout the year across the county. Projects ranged from youth theatre, Irish language, and traditional Irish Music, orchestral, big-band and choral performances, pop-up galleries, and bat-walks to salsa dancing, book launches, comedy shows and historical tours.
Kildare Fáilte is reinvigorating the events calendar to communicate heritage, historical, creative and cultural activities in Co. Kildare.
Kildare Military Seminar June 2018
Kildare Readers' Festival 2018 an entirely free literary festival connecting readers with authors and artists with a multitude of different events.
Kildare Walking Festival 2018 which promoted walking and a healthier lifestyle. It also showcased the natural beauty of Kildare and took walkers to locations they may not know and can return to.
Liffey Stories: a series of interpretation initiatives developed to interpret the built, natural, archaeological and geological heritage of the River Liffey from source to Sea.
Naas Youthreach Art Skills Development: artist photographer Brian Cregan worked together with two groups of young people at Naas Youthreach during an artist residency to develop their practical and artistic skills
Peat Crossing Borderlines: Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC) marked European Year of Cultural Heritage and International Bog Day by organising this event
Prosperous Heritage Festival: a weekend full of history talks, music, re-enactments, a 1798 museum, old-fashioned crafting displays, a commemoration ceremony, and much more.
Seachtain na Gaeilge in Naas & Sallins. Highlights include Bricfeasta as Gaeilge, Pop-Up Gaeltacht, outdoor family concert with Michael Harrison, Andrew Meaney, Janine Redmond and Aoife Scott
Swift & Vanessa: A Love Story. This project involved commissioning author and dramatist Martina Reilly to research, write, direct and stage a play that depicts the tragic love-story of Jonathan Swift and Vanessa (Esther Van Homrigh), which unfolded in the grounds of Celbridge Abbey.

The Watchers: Climate Observations explored links between the local and global in terms of planetary scale systems of climate observation.

These activities were delivered under Kildare's five-year Culture & Creative Strategy which was launched by me - along with those of every other local authority- last September.

These strategies highlight the critical role our Local Authorities play as providers and enablers of cultural and creative experiences in communities across Ireland, with all of the vitally important social, and indeed economic, consequences that follow. The strategies recognise that the arts and creative endeavours are crucial to society and community growth. With collaboration and shared purpose at the heart of the Creative Ireland Programme, each strategy provides meaningful opportunities for people and their communities, together with each Local Authority, to build and nurture a creative society. All the strategies are available online at <https://creative.ireland.ie/en/creative-communities>

In addition to funding directly from my Department, the Arts Council also provides significant supports for the arts at local level.

Question No. 223 answered with Question No. 218.

Film Industry

224. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she continues to engage with the film industry with a view to encouraging production filming and location here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8964/19]

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

Both myself as Minister, and my Department, have a strong relationship with the film industry with meetings and other interaction taking place on an ongoing basis. In Budget 2019, I announced an increase of 14% to Screen Ireland bringing the total allocation to over €20 million.

During the course of my work I and officials in my Department continue to meet with the Chair and the Chief Executive Officer of Screen Ireland, and with representatives from the industry. In the last year I have visited the animation production studio of Brown Bag Films and Troy Studios.

As part of the Government's Audiovisual Action Plan, launched last June, I established an oversight steering group charged with the overall implementation of the plan's recommendations. I have put this in place as previous strategic plans have lacked an agency or group responsible for implementation. The group includes representatives of all Departments and State agencies with involvement in the audiovisual industry. The steering group will report to me at regular intervals and is engaging proactively with stakeholders in the film industry.

My Department continues to 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.

Arts Funding

225. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the degree to which she continues to attract philanthropic involvement and support for the arts here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8965/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Private support for the arts is an important funding source and the Government continues to support this through tax incentives and other initiatives. While my Department does not have a breakdown of the total flows of philanthropic funding to the sector, the Programme for a Partnership Government does contain a commitment to encourage strong, mutually beneficial links between the business community and the arts community to assist arts organisations to capitalise on sponsorship opportunities and to develop business partnerships and fundraising skills. In this regard, I recognise the important work carried out by Business to Arts for which my Department provides a small amount of assistance.

In addition, the Arts Council, which is funded by my Department, operates the RAISE programme, which seeks to enhance fund-raising skills in arts organisations with a view to diversifying the sector's sources of funding. It is designed to assist the sector in securing philanthropic contributions to the arts in Ireland.

In terms of other capital investment requiring co-funding, a €10 million investment scheme for arts and cultural centres is in progress, focussed on upgrading the existing stock of such centres around the country. The funding, which is being made available as part of the Capital Investment Framework 2016-2021, is dependent on matching funding being secured by project promoters and therefore provides an opportunity for philanthropic support.

In addition, Project Ireland 2040 provides for investment of €460m in a significant number of capital projects in our National Cultural Institutions over the next 10 years and states that individual cultural institutions will be raising their own contributions (typically around 10%-15% of project costs) through philanthropic effort.

Film Industry Development

226. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the degree to which home production can be encouraged in the making of films for cinema or television; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8966/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Screen Ireland is the national development agency for Irish film making and the Irish film, television and animation industry. Its statutory remit is to assist and encourage the making of film in the State and the development of a film industry in Ireland. Screen Ireland supports writers, directors and production companies across these sectors by providing investment loans for the development, production and distribution of film, television and animation projects. Screen Ireland has a vision for a vibrant, creative and sustainable Irish film, television and animation industry, with diverse voices, talent and opportunities which speaks to and connects Irish film culture with audiences at home and abroad.

In Budget 2019, I was able to allocate an additional €2 million to Screen Ireland to build on its vital work in supporting Irish film, television drama, documentary and animation. This increases its annual budget by 11% overall to €20 million.

In April of last year, I was joined by the Taoiseach and the Minister for Finance in launching Investing in Our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 – 2027. This is a capital investment plan and it provides funding of €200m for the audio visual industry and media production through Screen Ireland over the next 10 years.

In June 2018 I launched the Government's Audio-visual Action Plan which is an industry-wide, long-term plan, under the Creative Ireland Programme, to support the Government's ambition to enable Ireland to become a global hub for the production of Film, TV drama and animation.

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

Section 481 film relief is a valuable asset to the film industry in Ireland. It is one of the primary mechanisms by which the Government supports the film industry and attracts new film projects to Ireland. It provides support in the form of a corporation tax credit related to the cost of film production. I am glad to note that Budget 2019 also included an announcement that Section 481 has been extended to 2024. An additional time-limited tax incentive of 5% (regional uplift) is also being introduced for productions based in certain regions.

Arts Council

227. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which employment in the arts continues with particular reference to ensuring continuity; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8967/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Our culture, heritage and language play a hugely positive role in our lives enhancing our physical and mental well-being and nourishing our national psyche. The Government recognises the importance of culture, heritage and the Irish language. That is why the Taoiseach has given a commitment to double the spend on arts and culture by 2025.

Budget 2019 was an important milestone on this journey. The funding package of €339 million for 2019 for developing culture, heritage and the Irish language is an increase of €36 million, or 12%, on that of last year.

Primary support for the Arts is delivered through the Arts Council. Funding for the Arts Council has increased in recent years and now stands at €75 million in 2019, and increase of some €6.8m or 10% over 2018. The Arts Council, which is independent in its funding decisions under the Arts Act 2003, operates within a published 10 year strategic framework entitled Making Great Art Work. This strategy prioritises support for artists throughout their careers, by the involvement of many agencies in cultural provision, by the impact of the arts on the creative economy, and by the depth and breadth of people's engagement with the arts. For example the Arts Council now include as an assessment criterion, an organisation's policy on the remuneration of artists in an effort to ensure that organisations in receipt of Arts Council funding should offer fair and equitable remuneration to artists.

In April last year, I was delighted to launch my Department's sectoral Plan - Investing in Our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 – 2027. The plan sets out significant investment on a phased basis over the next 10 years prioritised across 3 areas - €785m for Culture; €295m for Heritage and €178m for our Language. This level of investment will transform our cultural and heritage infrastructure right across the country and goes a long way towards honouring the commitment to double government spending on arts, culture and heritage.

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The cumulative impact of these funding increases is further testament to the commitment to double Government spending in the arts, culture and heritage sector. My Department and I will continue to work rigorously with an Taoiseach and all of my Government colleagues towards delivering on the commitment to increase Government spending in the arts and culture sector on a trajectory that will see funding doubled by 2025. In this context, I am already delivering additional supports to the arts and culture sector, thus leading to increased activity and employment across all sectors of my Department.

Question No. 228 answered with Question No. 219.