

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 7, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 8 to 52, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 53 to 60, inclusive, answered orally.

Trans European Transport Network Programme

61. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason his Department has not applied to the EU for the revision of the TEN-T core network, including applying for the reinstatement of the cross-Border Western Arc and the western rail corridor as stated in the programme for a partnership Government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22913/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Under the Programme for Partnership Government, the Government committed to applying to the European Commission for the revision of the TEN-T Core Network, including in relation to the Western Arc. A submission is currently being prepared in this regard, which would seek to facilitate consideration of transport-related project proposals for funding under the Connecting Europe Facility for transport in the Western Arc region.

Importantly, the submission will also take into account national developments since the TEN-T Network was established, including the publication of our National Development Plan (NDP) and National Planning Framework (NPF) in 2018, as well as consideration of the implications for Ireland, including on western and north-west regions, stemming from the UK exiting the EU.

The TEN-T Regulation explicitly states that the European Commission should take into account national implementation plans when carrying out the review of the TEN-T Network. In Ireland's case, these would include both the NDP and the NPF. Both of these Government documents will shape the future development of Irish planning and infrastructure across a range of sectors, including transport.

Additionally, the UK's Withdrawal from the EU has been an evolving process over the last number of years, both in terms of the negotiations between the EU and the UK and in terms of contingency planning for a range of possible Brexit scenarios, which has been a whole-of-government effort coordinated by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The preparation and making of a submission calling for a review of the TEN-T network should be strengthened by the proposals under the NDP and the NPF and by the added urgency of the implications of

Brexit.

Separately, in late February 2019, my Department received correspondence from European Commissioner for Transport, Violeta Bulc, which stated that the European Commission is considering advancing the review of the TEN-T Network, which is due to take place no later than the end of 2023, as stipulated in the TEN-T Regulation. The Commission's review process will include: an evaluation study, which will conclude in spring 2020; a public stakeholder consultation process, which will conclude on 17 July 2019; and targeted consultation with Member States and a wide range of stakeholders, to commence in the coming months. My Department intends to be fully engaged as part of this review process.

With regard to the Western Rail Corridor, both the Programme for a Partnership Government and Project Ireland 2040 commit to an independent review of the costings for a proposal to extend the existing Corridor. Iarnród Éireann has appointed consultants to prepare a financial and economic appraisal, which will involve all relevant stakeholders, and the public consultation phase is underway. Upon completion, the review will itself be subject to a verification process by my Department to ensure requirements are met and in particular, that a wide consultation has taken place. I expect the findings of the review, which will advise as to the business case for an extension of the Corridor, in the Autumn. It is my intention to bring the findings to Government for consideration at that point.

Finally, I recently met with Minister of State Seán Canney, in his capacity as Chair the Atlantic Economic Corridor Forum to discuss the review of the Core TEN-T Network and the potential for EU funding in this regard. I am committed to working with the Taskforce and Minister of State Canney on this matter and will be sharing a copy of my draft submission with the Department of Department of Rural and Community Development and the Taskforce in advance if its submission to Commissioner Bulc.

Questions Nos. 62 to 64, inclusive, answered orally.

Road Network

65. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to invest in the national road network in County Meath. [29514/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Firstly, I would like to explain that, as Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. However, under the Roads Acts 1993-2015, the planning, development and construction of individual national road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

The National Development Plan (NDP) provides the strategic and financial framework for TII's national roads programme from 2018-2027. The focus of TII's activities over the coming years is, accordingly, directed towards the major national road improvement schemes listed in the NDP.

Following consultation with TII, I can provide the following information and update to the Deputy on investment in the national road network in County Meath:

N2 Slane Bypass

The proposed N2 Slane Bypass is included amongst a number of major national road

schemes that are identified for development during the period of the NDP. The scheme is also contained in the NTA Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area.

An N2 bypass of Slane is required to alleviate traffic congestion in the village and to reduce the potential for serious incidents due to the steep approaches to the very narrow Slane Bridge and the high commercial vehicle content in the traffic flow.

Current Status

The project is currently at route selection stage. This process is well advanced. Once the preferred route is identified, the scheme will be progressed through planning and design. A Business case will then be prepared for the approval of both my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform. In addition, statutory documentation will be prepared, including the environmental impact assessment. Meath County Council has confirmed that the scheme will be lodged with An Bord Pleanála in 2020, after adoption of the new County Development Plan.

TII has provided €1m to Meath County Council for planning work on the scheme this year.

N2 Rath to Kilmoon scheme

The proposed N2 Rath Roundabout to Kilmoon Cross scheme is among a number of major national road schemes identified in the NDP for progression through pre-appraisal and early planning. In this regard, Pre-Appraisal for the proposed scheme has been approved.

This 6 km Dual Carriageway scheme will address existing operational and safety problems on the N2, which has an annual average daily traffic of around 16,000 vehicles per day and experiences considerable peak time congestion.

Current Status

TII has issued approval to Meath County Council to procure technical advisors to commence design of the scheme. These Tenders have been received and are currently being assessed. Once that contract is awarded, it typically takes three to five years from this point through Phases 1 to 4 of the Project Management Guidelines, to have a scheme ready to submit to An Bord Pleanála for planning approval.

This year, TII has provided an allocation to Meath County Council of €250,000 to allow the scheme to progress to planning and design.

Curragha Junction

Traffic problems at Curragha are exacerbated by traffic trying to avoid the delays at Primatetown and also traffic heading to Tayto Park.

The Ashbourne Municipal District Engineer has been installing and maintaining signage at the junction as well as hedge-cutting. Meath County Council has also prepared a preliminary design to calm traffic and improve definition at the junction and safety on the approaches, including the R155 as it passes through the village of Curragh itself.

Road Projects Status

66. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the Bonagee link road project in County Donegal; when the project will commence;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29429/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Firstly, I would like to explain that, 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, construction and development stages of individual road projects is a matter for

(a) the relevant road authority (i.e. local authorities) in relation to local and regional roads, or

(b) Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), in conjunction with the local authorities concerned, in relation to national roads.

Overview

The National Development Plan (NDP) provides the strategic and financial framework for the national roads programme for the period from 2018 to 2027. In the ten years, over €11 billion will be invested in the overall road network.

The National Development Plan (NDP) identifies two categories of national road improvement project. The first covers projects to advance to construction, subject to the satisfactory outcome of project appraisal and development consent. The second relates to projects at pre-appraisal and early planning to be assessed, to develop a pipeline of suitable projects. Advancing projects in the second, pipeline, category will be subject to prioritisation within the overall national road programme and funding.

Having consulted with the relevant authorities, I can provide the following information and update to the Deputy on the Bonagee Link Road project, also referred to as the Letterkenny Inner Relief Road.

- In Co. Donegal the Trans European Network-Transport (TEN-T) Comprehensive road network runs from the Leitrim County Boundary (on the outskirts of Bundoran to the Border with Derry in the Northeast at Bridgend, on the outskirts of Derry City, and involves sections of the N13, N14 and N15.

- In 2016 Donegal County Council commissioned a Corridor Needs Study on the TEN-T Comprehensive network within Donegal. The study identified projects to improve the TEN-T Comprehensive network to the required standard under TEN-T regulations. The Study identified a priority list of schemes. It recommended three priority projects to advance:

- N15/N13 Ballybofey – Stranorlar Bypass

- N56/N13/N14 Letterkenny Bypass, and Letterkenny-Manorcunningham Dual Carriageway

- N14 Manorcunningham-Lifford Realignment, including the N14/N15 link to the A5 in Northern Ireland

The Bonagee Link Road, or the Letterkenny Inner Relief Road, forms part of the proposed Letterkenny Bypass.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) has provided an allocation of €2.5m in 2019 to Donegal County Council to progress planning work on priority national road improvements projects that were identified in the study on the TEN-T Network I mentioned. These projects are identified as Strategic Investment Priorities in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the NDP.

Current Status

Feasibility Studies for the priority schemes commenced in 2017 and the route selection process is ongoing. Public consultations on identified route options were held in April and May 2018 in Letterkenny, Lifford and Ballybofey.

An Emerging Preferred Route Corridor for each section has now been identified. Public Consultations on these Emerging Corridors took place in February.

It can typically take 8 to 13 years to bring a major project from conception to completion. There is no timeframe fixed yet for completing the Bonagee link road project, as it will need to obtain both Business Case approval and Planning Consent and will be subject to the availability of funding in the future.

Rural Transport Services

67. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether there is sufficient public transport in rural Ireland; and the status of pilot projects in this regard. [29576/19]

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. I do not have responsibility for the day-to-day operations of public transport services.

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 Local Link services funded under the Rural Transport Programme.

Public transport in rural areas of the country is primarily provided by bus and coach services, as well as rail and small public service vehicles (SPSV) services, which include Taxi, Hackney and Local Area Hackney services.

The bus and coach services include Public Service Obligation (PSO) services operated by Bus Éireann and other operators, Bus Éireann Expressway services, licensed services provided by commercial operators and Local Link services.

These services comprise conventional fixed services with regular routes, stopping places and timetables and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services which respond to local demands and which constitute the vast majority of Local Link services.

I am committed to the further development of bus services in rural areas and that is why funding has been increased over the past number of years, for both PSO and Local Link services in rural areas.

The increased funding has enabled the introduction of 66 new commuter services into the Local Link network, operating five, six or seven days per week, as well as demand-responsive services. Key features of these new services include greater integration with existing public transport services and better linkage of services between and within towns and villages.

Following my engagement with key stakeholders, I tasked the NTA to examine how to extend existing Local Link services to provide additional services in the evenings. These new services, which are a mixture of extension to existing services and demand responsive services, have been operating on a pilot basis since last summer and 59 services are continuing until the

end of this year.

I am aware that public bus transport cannot meet the demands for travel for many people in rural Ireland, either because it is not available at all or it is not available at the time needed. Taxis and hackneys play an important role in meeting the travel demand when public transport is not available. However, there are gaps in the provision of taxis and hackneys in many rural communities.

To address gaps in service delivery, the NTA is developing two pilot schemes for implementation this year. Both schemes will be administered locally by the existing network of Local Link offices who will act as agents of the NTA. The overall management, funding and regulation of both schemes rests with the NTA. The NTA has advised that it proposes to issue the call for applications for both the Local Area Hackney and the Community Transport Services together by the end of the summer.

Football Association of Ireland

68. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether it will be appropriate for an organisation (details supplied) to alter its governance structure following an internal review of governance in advance of the completion of other external reviews into the organisation, including that being conducted by the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement. [29574/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I welcome the recent publication of the Report of the Governance Review Group, which was established by the Football Association of Ireland and Sport Ireland to develop reform proposals for the FAI. I would like to recall that this Group had five members, three of whom were independent corporate governance experts appointed by Sport Ireland, including the Chair, Aidan Horan. The purpose of the Group was to review the existing governance arrangements within the FAI and to propose a governance framework which would support the Board and the organisation in achieving and observing good governance practice.

It is clear from their report that the Group conducted a very comprehensive review of governance practices and procedures in the Association. This is a necessary first step for the FAI to rebuild public confidence in the association.

It has become increasingly evident over the last few months that the standards of corporate governance and financial management within the FAI currently were unacceptable. The Review Group has presented a detailed set of proposals covering a wide range of issues including the association's Board, commercial partnerships as well as audit and risk management. These proposals have been endorsed by Sport Ireland. The proposals will now be considered by the FAI membership at an Extraordinary General Meeting on 20 July and at the Annual General Meeting on 27 July. I hope that the members will seize this opportunity to adopt many of the proposals in this review.

I am aware that there are a number of other reviews and investigations ongoing into specific matters at the FAI, including an investigation by the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement. Any determinations or recommendations made by the ODCE on foot of its investigation should, of course, be abided by. I have no information on when the ODCE's investigation or any of the other reviews commissioned by the FAI will be completed.

I know that there is a long and steep road ahead for the Association in terms of the transition that must be achieved for the good of the Association, its members and Irish football and I would encourage all of those who are responsible for enabling the transition to support and lead all necessary reforms.

Light Rail Projects

69. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he expects the response to the public consultation on the preferred route for MetroLink for south Dublin; and if the National Transport Authority will be directed to carry out assessments of two alternative route options (details supplied). [29508/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) have statutory responsibilities to develop and deliver MetroLink.

In March this year, the NTA and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) launched a public consultation on what is called the “Preferred Route” for MetroLink.

This consultation period followed last year’s consultation held on what was then known as the “Emerging Preferred Route”. During last year’s consultation a number of specific issues were raised by members of the public, and indeed elected representatives, including issues in relation to the proposed upgrade of the Luas Green Line to a metro-style service.

These issues helped inform this year’s development of MetroLink’s “Preferred Route”. I understand that approximately 2,000 submissions have been received during this most recent consultation period and those submissions are currently being considered by the NTA and TII and a summary report of submissions will be published by the NTA and TII later in the year.

As regards strategic transport planning for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), the Deputy is well aware of the well-developed, modern, statutory framework which underpins the development of public transport infrastructure. It is a plan-led, long-term and integrated approach toward strategic transport planning with statutory links into land-use planning in the GDA and it reflects international best practice in the field.

The framework is underpinned by the development by the NTA of a statutory Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area. The current Strategy was approved in 2016 and sets out a wide range of projects and programmes to be delivered across active travel, rail, metro, light rail and bus. The increased funding made available under Project Ireland 2040 means that we can turn the ambition of the Strategy into reality and fund construction of the various prioritised projects over the next 10 years.

The Strategy is, however, flexible and allows for consideration of demographic and other changes over the period to be considered every six years. This statutorily required review period also allows for consideration of whether there are additional projects and programmes that warrant inclusion within any revised Strategy. I understand that the NTA will commence a review of the current Strategy toward the latter half of 2020 and that will allow for stakeholders to make their views known.

Those who seek to overturn this plan-led approach toward strategic transport planning endanger the advances made in integrating transport and land-use planning in recent years, advances which are vitally important if we are going to deliver a more sustainable Ireland in the years ahead.

Public Transport Initiatives

70. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to reduce the cost of public transport and increase its reach within rural Ireland in order to reduce congestion and pollution. [29562/19]

78. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on making public transport free at the point of use in order to reduce the use of cars and carbon emissions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29585/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 70 and 78 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport.

The NTA has statutory responsibility for securing the provision of public transport services by way of Public Services Obligation (PSO) contracts in respect of services that are socially necessary but commercially unviable. The NTA also has been given statutory responsibility for the regulation of fares in relation to public passenger transport services.

The funding of those services comprises both the fares paid by passengers and the subvention payments from the Exchequer. The main purpose of the subvention payment is to meet the gap between the income from fares and the cost of operating services. In 2019, the Irish Exchequer will provide just over €300m in subvention for public service obligation (PSO) transport services and Rural Transport Local Link services. The Deputy is suggesting an idea of abolishing fares. One of the factors to take into account is that the amount collected from fares is approximately €600 million annually. This means that the rough cost to the taxpayer of eliminating fares would be in the region of €600 million more every year - in addition to the amounts already spent on PSO and on capital investment. And this amount would only enable continuation of the existing level of service and passengers, without factoring in the costs of catering for increased passenger travel demand.

The Deputy is correct in focussing on the need to reduce private car emissions and also to stimulate and support increased uptake of public transport. That is exactly the Government's approach as set out in our recent Climate Plan. According to 2017 emission estimates:

- Around 52% of transport emissions come from private car use;
- Just over 18% comes from the freight sector; and
- Around 4.4% of emissions come from the public transport fleet.

As such, it is clear that inroads must be made in reducing the dominance of the private car in Ireland's transport sector.

Modal shift from the private car to sustainable means of transport remains central to the transport sector's response to climate change. Investment in public transport led to an increase of almost 58 million journeys on subsidised public transport and commercial bus service since 2012. Last year we saw an increase of 16.3 million passenger journeys provided by Dublin Bus, Bus Éireann, Irish Rail, Luas and Go-Ahead Ireland on PSO services. That is an increase of over 6.5% compared to 2017. I think the Deputies would agree that this increase in passenger growth is very positive. The growth in public transport services has been supported by higher levels of subvention in 2016, 2017 and 2018 and as I mentioned earlier it was increased again this year to provide a total allocation of over €300m.

In order to reduce the prevalence of the private car and encourage a shift to more sustainable forms of transport, a number of key policy measures to increase public transport capacity will be progressed over the next decade. The National Development Plan has earmarked €8.6 billion for investment in public and sustainable transport to 2027.

I am committed to the further development of bus services in rural areas and that is why funding has been increased over the past number of years for both PSO and Local Link services in rural areas. The increased funding has enabled the introduction of new commuter services into the Local Link network, including new evening services. Key features of these new services include greater integration with existing public transport services and better linkage of services between and within towns and villages. The NTA is also developing two pilot schemes for implementation this year for both a Local Area Hackney and a Community Transport Service, to be administered locally by the existing network of Local Link offices throughout the country.

Fáilte Ireland Funding

71. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the new capital fund of Fáilte Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29570/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): My Department is primarily involved in the development of national tourism policy, while the tourism agencies have responsibility for the implementation of that policy. While my Department provides capital funding to Fáilte Ireland for investment in tourism product development, it is not directly involved in individual tourism projects or programmes and has no role in the administration of the agency's grant programmes.

As part of the Project Ireland 2040, the Government has committed to invest in the development and enhancement of tourist attractions to provide the type of experience that visitors are seeking.

In line with this commitment, on 29th May, Minister Ross launched Fáilte Ireland's new capital fund to which the Deputy refers - the Platforms for Growth Investment Programme. Under the programme, Fáilte Ireland intends to allocate in the order of €150 million in the development of major new visitor attractions of scale across the country. The first targeted funding call under the programme focuses on large capital projects with a minimum cost of €2.5 million that can provide a "platform" for future growth of the tourism sector in that region. The theme of this funding call is "Immersive Cultural and Heritage Attractions". These are attractions that build on our culture and heritage in an engaging way that allows the visitor to get involved and not just be a passive recipient.

This first funding call will close for expressions of interest (Stage One of the process) on 17th July. There is a deadline of 7th August for the submission of project ideas (Stage Two) by those applicants who have successfully passed Stage One. There are three further stages in the process, culminating in a project delivery phase for successful applicants.

I am aware that Fáilte Ireland has held a series of workshops around the country to support applicants, which I understand have been very well attended. Workshops continue to be held every week in Fáilte Ireland's offices both in Dublin and Limerick and will run until the first closing date of 17th July, at which time all expressions of interest must have been received.

Tourism Policy

72. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of efforts to support the rural tourism industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29580/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): My Department is primarily involved in the development of national tourism policy, while the tourism agencies have responsibility for the implementation of this policy. In line the Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021 Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland aim to grow Irish tourism in a sustainable manner, having regard to both the regional and seasonal spread of tourists.

Under the Action Plan, Tourism Ireland’s international marketing will place a greater emphasis on regional growth and season extension. Tourism Ireland’s new global marketing campaign – ‘Fill your heart with Ireland’ – features lesser-known attractions and regions, in order to spread the regional benefits of our growing tourism economy. This campaign will also focus on seasonal growth by timing marketing campaigns to drive bookings outside of the peak tourism season.

Fáilte Ireland develops and promotes tourism in line with the relevant tourism experience brands including Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands, Ireland’s Ancient East, and the Wild Atlantic Way. Priority areas for tourism capital investment include the development and enhancement of tourist attractions and activity-based tourism. As set out in the Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021, the aim of this investment is to increase regional spread, extend the season and promote sustainable growth with consequential increases in visitors and benefits for the local economy and jobs right across Ireland. This capital investment is further supported by Fáilte Ireland’s current investment in festivals and events and supports and training for tourism businesses across the regions.

Separately, Minister Ross and I recently announced €40m in funding to develop greenways projects across Ireland in counties such as Offaly, Cork, Wexford, Kilkenny, Waterford, Galway, Kerry, Kildare, Mayo and Wicklow. By the end of this year, the Maynooth to Athlone Greenway is scheduled to be completed bringing walkers and cyclists from just outside Dublin across the Midlands to the River Shannon in both Westmeath and Longford. These tourism focused developments have proven in the past, particularly the greenways in Waterford and Mayo, that they can be strong magnets for visitors.

I have asked both agencies to provide the Deputy with further information. Please contact my office if you have not heard within ten working days.

Sports Capital Programme

73. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the sports capital programme will be announced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29567/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) as operated by my Department provides funding to voluntary, sporting and community organisations for the provision of sports and recreational facilities. The programme has transformed the sporting landscape of Ireland with improvements in the quality and quantity of sporting facilities in virtually every village, town and city in the country.

The 2018 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on Friday 19th October last. By that deadline, a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of

€162m in funding.

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

619 equipment only applications were assessed next and 466 allocations with a value of €9.8m were announced in May.

Work is now underway in assessing the remaining applications for capital works.

For the first time applicants who submitted incorrect documentation under this round are being given the opportunity to correct their application during the assessment period. While there will be no undue delay in completing the assessment process, in view of the opportunity to correct documentation, the record number of applications received and the detailed information contained in each application, it is likely to be towards the end of the third quarter of this year before the full set of allocations are announced.

As soon as allocations have been made, my Department will carry out a review of all aspects of the 2018 round of the programme to include any possible improvements for the future. This review will include consideration of the timing and scale of the next round but I fully expect that the SCP will again be open for new applications before the end of this year.

Climate Change Adaptation Plans

74. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he expects the transport and tourism sectors to comply with the climate change objectives set out in the Climate Action Plan 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29518/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The recently published Climate Action Plan sets out a whole-of Government approach to climate action and maps a potential pathway to meet Ireland's 2030 emission reduction commitments. The Plan clearly recognises that Ireland must significantly step up its commitments to tackle climate disruption.

The transport sector, which accounts for about 20% of Ireland's overall carbon emissions, plays a key role in the national decarbonisation effort. It is worth noting that transport emissions are classified under both the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) and non-ETS systems. Generally, non-domestic emissions such as those from international aviation within Europe are accounted for under the ETS system while domestic transport emissions fall under the non-ETS system. The Climate Action Plan deals primarily with the non-ETS sector, where Ireland has a legal binding emissions reduction target of 20% by 2020 and 30% by 2030 (relative to 2005 levels). Accordingly, the focus of the transport elements of the Plan relate mainly to reducing land transport emissions and not those generated by international travel and in-coming tourists.

My Department has worked hard to develop an ambitious, challenging and wide-ranging set of actions for inclusion in the Climate Action Plan, particularly in relation to public transport and active travel. A critical challenge is reducing the 52% of transport emissions that come from private car use. Our aim in expanding the carrying capacity and the attractiveness of our public transport and active travel networks is to provide a viable sustainable alternative to private car use for more people for more of their journeys. Under Project Ireland 2040, an indica-

tive allocation of €8.6 billion is assigned to support sustainable mobility ensuring that public transport and active travel become more available and attractive alternatives.

A switch to electric vehicles (EVs) is a key mitigation measure of the Plan, with a target of almost 950,000 EVs on Irish roads by 2030. While this level of transition is incredibly challenging, as technologies improve and become cheaper, and if we continue incentives and invest in the recharging network we are ambitious that with a real push we can make real progress towards this target by 2030. Concerted efforts across several Departments will be essential if we are to maintain a supportive environment to assist citizens in making the greener choice and switching to an EV. My Department and I will work closely with Ministers Bruton and Donohoe and their respective Departments to map out the roadmap that will be necessary to achieve our collective ambition.

In terms of tourism, while there are no specific actions in the Plan, climate change can have direct and indirect impacts on Ireland's tourism industry. Urban tourism may be less affected than coastal tourism where sea level rise, increasing ocean acidification and coastal erosion can threaten Ireland's coastal tourism infrastructure and natural attractions. It is difficult to predict possible changes to Ireland's attractiveness as a destination as a result of climate change and the impact of this on the economic value of tourism in Ireland and tourism demand. Destination attractions such as Skellig Michael and the Burren could be especially vulnerable; therefore the role of the tourism sector in adaptation planning is extremely important.

The range of implications of climate change on the transport, tourism, and even sport sectors means that I and my Department is fully committed to achieving the climate change objectives set out in the Climate Action Plan. I am personally committed to the decarbonisation of the transport sector and I hope to see transport emissions levels continue to fall as they did in 2018. Indeed, every sector must step-up if Ireland is to meet our emission reduction targets in 2030 and beyond.

Ports Policy

75. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason it is more appropriate for responsibility for Galway Port to transfer to the local authority rather than its present structure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29110/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Galway Harbour Company, as a Port of Regional Significance, is designated under National Ports Policy 2013 to transfer to local authority control.

The transfer process has been on-going for a number of years and the due diligence process is moving towards completion.

National Ports Policy recognises that the five Ports of Regional Significance, which collectively represent less than 4% of total market share, retain important roles as facilitators of their regional economies and, in some instances, as centres of marine-related amenity and tourism activities. However, the scale and nature of these activities are not such as to warrant continued central Government involvement.

Transport Policy

76. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his

plans to review the Galway transport strategy and plans for a light rail system in view of the declaration of a climate emergency and the recently published Climate Action Plan 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29500/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, the Galway Transport Strategy was prepared by the National Transport Authority in partnership with Galway City Council and Galway County Council in 2016. The development and Implementation of the Strategy is primarily a matter for the local authorities in line with their statutory roles and responsibilities.

The Galway Transport Strategy supports opportunities that will reduce congestion and car dependency through increased capacity of reliable and sustainable public transport and the promotion and facilitation of cycling and walking. This in turn promotes the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Deputy will also be aware that during the development of the Strategy, it was concluded that bus-based public transport represents the most appropriate system for Galway over the period of the transport strategy. The Strategy found that a light rail service would provide capacity far in excess of what is practically required. It determined that a high-quality bus-based public transport service will cater for the forecasted passenger demand and will provide significant flexibility in terms of network options and the ability to integrate with other modes.

The Strategy also commits toward much improved active travel infrastructure across the city through improvements to the public realm and increased investment in cycling infrastructure. Funding to support the development of this infrastructure is available through the indicative allocations provided under Project Ireland 2040 and administered on my Department's behalf by the National Transport Authority.

Project Ireland 2040 provides an indicative allocation of €200 million to support the development of a BusConnects programme in Galway. Under the BusConnects programme, the bus fleet will transition to low-emission technologies. The recently published Climate Action Plan also contains actions to accelerate the decarbonisation of the public bus fleet with the objective to only have low-emitting buses in the urban PSO bus fleet by 2035. These are part of a wide-ranging set of actions for transport in the Climate Action Plan particularly in relation to public transport and active travel. These actions will be implemented in line with the commitments given within the Plan.

Waterways Issues

77. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which communities that wish to develop blueway projects should pursue their projects; the funding available for such projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29571/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Waterways Ireland, which is under the remit of my colleague the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, is the lead agency in developing Blueway trails in Ireland. They are defined by Waterways Ireland as network of multi-activity recreational trails, based on or alongside idyllic lakes, canals and rivers in Ireland that provide scenic routes into the heart of rural Ireland by canoe, bike or on foot. Those seeking to develop a Blueway should contact Waterways Ireland for guidance in the first instance although a number of partners including the local authority may be involved in the delivery of the eventual Blueway. If the proposed Blueway incorporates a Greenway, then it is open to the project promoters to apply to my Department for Greenways funding for that

element when there is an open funding call. I announced the allocations for the most recent Greenway funding call last month.

Question No. 78 answered with Question No. 70.

Ports Policy

79. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to review the National Ports Policy 2013 in view of the changes in the economy and particularly in view of the impending implementation of Brexit and the proposed development of Galway port; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29111/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The core objective of National Ports Policy (NPP), which was published following Government approval in 2013, is to facilitate a competitive and effective market for maritime transport services. The implementation of the key measures outlined in the policy document is still on-going.

NPP introduced clear categorisation of the ports sector into Ports of National Significance (Tier 1 and Tier 2) and Ports of Regional Significance.

Galway port as a Port of Regional Significance is designated under NPP to transfer to Local Authority control. The transfer process has been on-going for a number of years and the due diligence process is moving towards completion. Although the economy is growing, the scale of existing commercial shipping in the port represents only approximately 1% of national traffic. Galway port plays an important role as a facilitator of its regional economy and the port has capacity to continue to grow trade within its existing facilities.

The two ports that will be most affected ports by Brexit are Dublin Port Company and Rosslare. Preparations are underway in those ports in relation to Brexit.

Light Rail Projects Provision

80. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on extending light rail and metro to large population centres such as the Dublin 15 area in view of the pressures on the existing transport infrastructure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29586/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, including light rail and metro projects.

The Deputy is aware that public transport infrastructure planning within the Greater Dublin Area has a statutory basis as set out in the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 (as amended). This Act requires the NTA to prepare a transport strategy for the Greater Dublin Area which sets out the proposed infrastructure development for a period of up to twenty years and it is also a statutory requirement that relevant land-use strategies in the Greater Dublin Area are consistent with the approved transport strategy.

This is a vitally important link between transport planning and land-use planning and is a key enabler of a plan-led approach toward sustainable development in the Greater Dublin Area.

The current Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area was approved in 2016 and sets out the current infrastructure proposals up until 2035. The Act requires the NTA to review the Strategy every six years and I understand that such a review will commence in the latter half of next year. Any new or additional projects can only be considered within the framework provided by the transport strategy.

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

Roads Maintenance

81. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether local and regional roads are in a satisfactory and safe condition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29575/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Each local authority is the statutory road authority for its area and has primary responsibility for the maintenance and improvement of its regional and local roads. Within available budgets and where applicable, my Department does provide grant support to road authorities while emphasising the importance of local authorities' prioritising expenditure on roads when allocating their own resources.

As well as providing grant support to local authorities, my Department has been supporting the development of a Road Asset Management System for regional and local roads over the last number of years. The Road Management Office, which has been established as a shared service between 31 local authorities, together with my Department, has been working with local authorities to ensure that this road pavement management system includes a record of all pavement-related works and information on road surfaces and pavement condition.

The objective of the MapRoad pavement management system is to provide the data needed for evidence-based prioritisation and management of road work programmes by each road authority.

My Department has also produced a Pavement Survey Standard for Regional and Local Roads for use in respect of road pavement management by Local Authorities. This standard requires Local Authorities to carry out a Pavement Survey Condition Index (PSCI) visual survey on regional, local primary and local secondary roads every two years and every five years for local tertiary roads.

A road condition survey of the whole regional road network was commissioned by my Department and undertaken in 2018. The results of the survey have been conveyed to local authorities via the MapRoad system.

Rail Services Provision

82. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans and timelines to increase the capacity of the rail network through the acquisition of new trains; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29563/19]

83. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the considerable capacity issues being experienced across the rail system; if there will be additional capacity delivered within the next few years; and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [29577/19]

667. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans and timelines to increase the capacity of the rail network to Ceannt station, Galway, through the acquisition of new trains and new lines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29908/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 82, 83 and 667 together.

I refer the Deputies in the first instance to my reply earlier this afternoon to Deputy Mac-Sharry's Priority question on this matter.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding of public transport. The operation of the heavy rail network and for assessing rolling stock requirements for the rail network including Galway, are a matter for Iarnród Éireann in consultation with the National Transport Authority (NTA) which also has statutory responsibility for the development and implementation of public transport in the Greater Dublin Area and regional cities.

As explained in my earlier reply, Iarnród Éireann in consultation with the National Transport Authority, are currently examining how best to source additional rolling stock as efficiently and effectively as possible and ensuring value for money for the taxpayer.

Noting the responsibility of the agencies, I have referred the Deputies questions to the NTA, for a more detailed direct reply on the issues raised. Please advise my office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Climate Change Policy

84. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the absence of a reference to an e-bike strategy in the Climate Action Plan 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29564/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The recently published Action Plan to Tackle Climate Breakdown sets out a whole-of-Government approach to climate action and maps a potential pathway to meet Ireland's 2030 emission reduction commitments. The Plan clearly recognises that Ireland must significantly step up its commitments to address climate disruption. A wide-ranging set of bold and challenging actions for transport are set out, particularly in relation to active travel (cycling and walking) and public transport.

I want to make sure that we provide high-quality cycling and walking infrastructure as well as a reliable public transport system, to make public and active travel options a viable alternative for as many people as possible and for more of their journeys than ever before. In this way we will lower climate-harmful emissions, begin to tackle congestion and see an improvement in local air quality.

This Plan includes our commitment to deliver an additional half a million public transport and active travel journeys daily by 2035. This is a significant step up in our ambition and requires expanding the capacity and attractiveness of our walking and cycling networks as well as our public transport system.

Under Project Ireland 2040, we have assigned €8.6 billion to support sustainable mobil-

ity. In addition to support for key public transport projects this investment will vastly improve the cycling and walking infrastructure in all our major cities. In fact, this €8.6 billion investment budget is well above what we will be investing in new roads, which is a reversal of the balance of investment in the past.

Over the period 2018-2021:

- €110 million will be specifically dedicated to cycling and walking infrastructure in our major urban areas;

- €750 million is earmarked for the BusConnects programme in Dublin to include the delivery of around 200 kilometres of segregated cycling lanes; and

- €53 million will be used to support the development of new Greenways.

This will support the increasing numbers of people who choose cycling as their preferred mode of transport, including E-bikes users. It is clear that prioritising investment in our cycling network is already working; the number of annual cycling trips is increasing, particularly within the Greater Dublin Area with surveys such as the Canal Cordon Count showing cycling numbers almost doubling between 2011 and 2018.

We need to build on this and do even more. Key actions under the Climate Plan underpin this commitment to increasing cycling as a mode of travel, including the establishment of a Cycling Project Office within the National Transport Authority and the development of implementation plans and increased cycling infrastructure for Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford. The Cycling Project Office will ensure that the new cycling infrastructure is delivered optimally, in line with the significantly increased funding that is being provided.

The Cycle to Work Scheme also continues to encourage the use of bicycles and e-bikes to travel to and from work. Under the scheme an eligible employer can buy a bicycle for their employees and the employee pays the amount, less the tax relief, over up to 12 months through a salary sacrifice arrangement. Up to €1,000 can be provided for towards the purchase of a new bicycle or e-Bike which is a generous contribution towards any commuter bicycle, but especially towards an e-bike which are generally more expensive.

The climate challenge needed a step-up in ambition and a renewed determination across Government and society to tackle climate disruption - the Climate Action Plan has given us this required level of focus and drive. I am personally committed to the decarbonisation of the transport sector and I hope to see transport emissions levels continue to fall as they did in 2018. Cycling will play an important role in this decarbonisation effort and I am dedicated to investing and improving our cycling network.

Public Transport

85. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the costings to build and run a national transport training centre; if due diligence and correct procurement procedure has been followed; the procurement procedure that took place; and the documentation and public notice in relation to same. [29512/19]

97. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the level of consultation that has taken place with the wider disability community further to the announcement on 26 June 2019 that the National Transport Authority is to provide funding for the development of a national transport training centre by an organisation (details supplied); and the

details of the consultation. [29513/19]

637. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the future for the training centres in Dublin Bus, Irish Rail and a company (details supplied) in view of the fact that Dublin Bus already trains persons with disabilities to use all public transport. [29531/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 85, 97 and 637 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport.

Under the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008, the National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for promoting the development of an integrated, accessible public transport network.

The NTA is to provide funding towards the development by the National Council for the Blind Ireland of the National Transport Training Centre (NTTC) referred to by the Deputy.

In light of the NTA's responsibilities in this matter, I have forwarded your questions to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Smarter Transport

86. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to promote car sharing to reduce demand for car ownership; and if projections are available for the extent of such ownership models. [29509/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, my Department recognises the role car-pooling or car-sharing can play in reducing the number of cars on our roads. The various transport strategies detail the measures to be taken across all modes of transport.

For example, the *Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016 to 2035* is the statutory framework for the development of public and sustainable transport in the Greater Dublin Area out to 2035. The *Strategy* states that the National Transport Authority will support the implementation and expansion of car club schemes, car-pooling and car sharing. The NTA supports the development of car-pooling through the Smarter Travel programme, which is funded by my Department. The Deputy may be aware that there are currently two car-sharing operators already providing services in Ireland.

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

Bus Éireann Services

87. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he expects Bus Éireann and the National Transport Authority to implement changes to the 233 bus route; if he will request Bus Éireann and the National Transport Authority to prioritise the

changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29583/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) in conjunction with Bus Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Trans European Transport Network Programme

88. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the Trans-European Transport Network core status with particular reference to the Dublin to Rosslare railway line and Rosslare Europort connectivity to the European Union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29113/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The TEN-T Core Network is a subset of the Comprehensive Network and represents the strategically most important nodes and links of the trans-European transport networks.

The TEN-T Core Network on the Island of Ireland links the main urban centres of Belfast-Dublin and Cork and encompasses the road, rail and other transport modes on this route. There is also an offshoot to the Core Port of Shannon Foynes. The Dublin - Rosslare Europort rail line links to Rosslare Harbour, a harbour which is on the TEN-T Comprehensive Network but which does not meet the threshold for TEN-T Core port status.

EU Transport Commissioner, Violeta Bulc, wrote to Transport Ministers in February 2019 announcing that the Commission is considering advancing the review of the TEN-T Network, which was due to take place no later than December 2023. My Department is giving due consideration to this announcement and will very shortly make a formal submission to the Commission, as outlined in the Programme for a Partnership Government. This submission will note that national developments since the TEN-T Network was established should be taken into account during the review, including the National Development Plan, the National Planning Framework, and the implications of Brexit.

Separately, the Deputy will be aware that Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) co-funding is available to projects on both the comprehensive and the core parts of the TEN-T Network, subject to such projects satisfying the eligibility criteria of a given call for proposals, and being selected in the evaluation process.

The current CEF programme finishes at end 2020. A proposal for a new Regulation of the Connecting Europe Facility for the period 2021 –2027 was published by the European Commission in May 2018. Ireland has advocated at EU level for projects on our comprehensive network to continue to be eligible for co-funding during the period 2021 - 2027.

Ireland submitted written comments to the European Commission in conjunction with two other island Member States, Cyprus and Malta, calling for projects on the comprehensive network in Member States which have no land border with another Member State to be included as eligible actions. This position was accepted by the Commission during negotiations, and as a result the latest text of the proposal retains this amendment. Subject to the proposed Regulation being adopted, this means that during the period 2021 – 2027, projects on Ireland's comprehensive TEN-T network, including the rail network, will be eligible to apply for CEF co-funding through relevant calls for proposals.

Greenways Development

89. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the progress of the roll out of the Bearna greenway for Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29499/19]

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 and active travel. However, the development of individual projects, including the Bearna Greenway, is a matter for the relevant implementing agencies.

The Galway Transport Strategy was developed by the local authorities in co-operation with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and adopted by the elected members of the councils in 2016. As part of the Strategy's cycling network I understand it is proposed to develop a 5km greenway known as the Bearna Greenway between Bearna and Salthill. Implementation of the Strategy is a matter for the local authorities; however, funding from my Department is available to support its implementation under programmes administered by the NTA.

Noting the NTA's role, I have referred your question to the NTA for a more detailed reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Bus Services

90. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to implement a phased approach to the BusConnects programme; and the timeline for the next phase of the consultation. [29510/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, including BusConnects.

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

Taxi Regulations

91. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether legislative or regulatory change is needed in order to better protect taxi drivers from violence and antisocial behaviour in the course of their work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29114/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The security of workers, including taxi drivers, during the course of their work is important and criminal behaviour should be reported to An Garda Síochána who have a range of powers to pursue such matters.

As the Deputy may be aware the regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry – which comprises taxi, hackney, and limousine - is the responsibility of the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013. As my col-

league, the Minister for Justice and Equality, mentioned in a recent Topical Issue Debate in this House in May, all taxi drivers, as part of their initial training and preparation for examinations, are provided with the Official Manual for Operating within the SPSV Industry. This manual is produced by the National Transport Authority in consultation with the Garda Crime Prevention Unit and contains a chapter entitled Staying Safe. This chapter offers a range of information and suggestions on how to deal with difficult customers or dangerous situations.

The Deputy may be interested to know that the NTA undertook a public consultation a few years ago on the question of making safety equipment a mandatory requirement for taxis. Such equipment could include screens between the driver and passenger and closed circuit television cameras. I understand that the overwhelming response to this consultation was that such safety equipment should not be mandatory and should instead be left to the discretion of the individual driver.

Public Transport

92. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has had discussions with his counterparts across Europe or sought reports from his counterpart in Luxembourg on plans to introduce free public transport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29573/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has the statutory responsibility for the regulation of fares in relation to public passenger transport services.

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

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

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

In 2019, the Irish Exchequer will provide just over €300m as subvention for public service obligation (PSO) transport services and Rural Transport Local Link services. I understand from the NTA that, in 2018, passengers paid €625.5 million in fares on subsidised bus and rail services.

Therefore, if such services were to be provided free to passengers, then the expected cost to the Exchequer would be in excess of the €625.5m collected in fares in 2018. This amount would be additional to the 2019 Exchequer allocation of €300m for PSO support and the further amount (€95m allocation for 2019) that the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection pays to public transport providers in respect of its Free Travel Scheme which provides free transport to almost 1 million people in the State, including all people aged over 66 living permanently here, along with some other qualifying people. So taking round approximate figures, the Deputy's idea would cost the taxpayer about €625 million per year, in addition to the €400 million that the Exchequer already spends on public transport services. And this is just the

cost of the actual services; it does not count the Exchequer investment in public transport infrastructure which in 2019 is about €350 million and will be rising sharply over the coming years.

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

In summary Introducing free public transport for all users would require substantial additional funding by the taxpayer or from other sources. While I currently have no plans to meet my counterparts throughout the EU to discuss this particular subject, I am interested in hearing about innovative, radical and cost-effective ideas that would meet the needs of passengers, and encourage more people out of their cars and onto public transport, thus alleviating congestion and helping to tackle climate challenges.

Taxi Regulations

93. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the taxi share pilot scheme being run by a company (details supplied); if he has had discussions with the company or representatives of taxi drivers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29572/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and statutory frameworks in relation to public transport. The regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry - which encompasses taxis, hackneys and limousines - is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013

Therefore, I have referred your question to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days

Road Network

94. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be considered for the extension of the M3 motorway to Cavan town and the east-west link which are urgently needed in the north-west; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29214/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Proposals to deliver an upgraded East-West route linking Dundalk to Sligo, taking in Cavan, involve linking elements of the national road network and regional roads along as direct a route as possible. Essentially the route involves upgrade/realignment works on the regional routes from Dundalk to Cavan and on national routes from Cavan to Sligo.

As regards the regional road aspect of the proposal which are the subject of this PQ, the improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads in its area is a statutory function of local authorities in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act, 1993. Works on such roads are a matter for the relevant local authority to be funded from its own resources supplemented by State road grants.

My Department provided funding to Cavan County Council (acting as lead authority with Monaghan and Louth County Councils) with over €2m in the period 2007-2014 to progress the regional road element of the project to preliminary design.

This year I gave an allocation of €100,000 to Cavan County Council to enable the Council to undertake a detailed appraisal, in line with the current requirements in the Public Spending Code and the Capital Investment Framework, of the Cavan to Dundalk section of the route. The aim of this appraisal would be to assess the extent to which the scheme or elements of it can be justified in terms of appraisal and advanced for further consideration in relation to schemes for development post 2021. Preparation of the appraisal is the responsibility of the Council.

Regarding the reference by the Deputy to extending the M3 motorway to Cavan town, I would like to explain that, 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, construction and operation of individual national roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

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

Sports Organisations

95. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on proposals to create a single all-Ireland soccer league; if the required funding will be provided; and if he has had meetings or interactions with groups or persons on the matter. [29565/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The organisation and delivery of sport in Ireland is mainly a matter for National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs). NGBs are independent and autonomous bodies and any proposals regarding an all-Ireland league would be a matter for the relevant NGBs.

The organisation of sport on an all-island basis has worked very successfully for many sports, such as cricket, Gaelic games, hockey and rugby. I am very supportive of cross-border sporting initiatives and collaborations between sporting organisations. Such approaches have excellent potential to enhance relationships on both parts of the island of Ireland. The Football Association of Ireland and Irish Football Association have created a new cross-border competition called the Unite the Union Champions Cup. It is a welcome addition to the football calendar, which has received a warm welcome from clubs and supporters. I fully support this initiative which has the potential to bring people together and enhance relationships in both parts of the island of Ireland.

While I am aware that there are proposals regarding an all-Ireland soccer league, I have not had any meetings or discussions on those proposals with the groups or persons involved.

Any such proposals would be a matter for the NGBs concerned and if the organisations were to bring forward any proposals, Sport Ireland would be happy to offer guidance and assistance where appropriate.

Greenways Development

96. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the impact which recent greenway announcements will have on tourism in County Kildare and nationally; his future plans for funding in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29568/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I hope that the recent funding announcements for Greenways, including for the section of the Grand Canal in Kildare, will have a substantial impact on tourism in Kildare and the country as a whole. In Kildare specifically I expect an increase in numbers visiting Sallins and Hazelhatch and enjoying this extension of Arthur's Way particularly given its proximity to Dublin.

We have seen the impact the Waterford Greenway and the Great Western Greenway have had on their communities, in towns such as Dungarvan, Kilmacthomas and Newport. Waterford Greenway alone attracted over 250,000 users in its first twelve months of operation. It is my hope the likes of Sallins will see the benefits of this investment, as well as towns such as Lis-towel, New Ross and Blessington which will also be gaining new Greenways.

The inclusion of Greenways in Project Ireland 2040 shows the importance attached to them by Government in terms of tourism and rural regeneration as well as for health and wellbeing. I am aware of the widespread interest across the country in developing Greenways as evidenced by the recent funding call and to subject the allocations in annual Estimates process I will explore options for further funding calls over the coming years. In regards to funding in the Kildare area, greenway funding schemes are competitive processes and therefore I cannot guarantee funding for any specific greenway.

Question No. 97 answered with Question No. 85.

Cycling Policy

98. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the target set for the increase in cycling; and the initiatives set to encourage more persons to take up cycling and e-cycling in view of the fact under the Climate Action Plan 2019, a target of 950,000 electric vehicles was set by 2030. [28532/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Sustainable mobility clearly has an important role to play if we are to reduce congestion, lower climate-harmful emissions, and improve air quality. In the recently published Climate Action Plan 2019 this Government has committed toward an additional 500,000 daily journeys by 2035 being made by sustainable modes as compared to today.

To support that ambition, I have secured significant increases in funding which will deliver improved and expanded sustainable transport networks.

The Deputy will welcome the fact that Project Ireland 2040 provides indicative allocations toward sustainable mobility measures which are well above what we will be investing in new roads over the period. This rebalancing of investment priorities is a reversal of the balance of investment between these two areas in the past and is very much welcome.

Active travel, both walking and cycling, have an important role to play, particularly in our larger urban areas, in supporting the shift toward sustainable mobility and the increased funding being made available will support people's choice in making the shift.

This increased funding is significant and over the period 2018 to 2021 amounts to approximately:

- €110 million specifically dedicated to cycling and walking infrastructure in our major urban areas;

- €135 million for sustainable urban transport measures;

- €750 million towards the BusConnects programme in Dublin which will include the delivery of around 200 kilometres of segregated cycling lanes, where possible; and

- €53 million to support the development of new Greenways.

This year alone a number of important active travel projects are under construction or scheduled to start construction and I am keenly aware of the need to ensure timely delivery of new infrastructure to facilitate ever greater numbers of people making active travel part of their daily lives. As stated in the Climate Action Plan the National Transport Authority will later this year establish a new Office within its organisation to work with local authorities in making sure that the increased investment now available results in increased activity on the ground.

At a policy level I will shortly launch a public consultation in relation to our current public transport and active travel policy and this consultation will inform the development of a new policy statement which will then provide the policy backdrop for the years ahead. I look forward to the Deputy's engagement in this review and hearing his views on what measures should be considered.

Electric Vehicles

99. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the measures he is undertaking to increase the attractiveness of electric vehicles; his views on whether his Department can meet the targets laid out in the Climate Action Plan 2019 regarding electric vehicle take-up; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29578/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The recently published Climate Action Plan sets out a whole-of-Government approach to climate action and maps a potential pathway to meet Ireland's 2030 emission reduction commitments. The Plan clearly recognises that Ireland must significantly step up its commitments to tackle climate disruption. As the transport sector accounts for a little over one quarter of Ireland's non-ETS emissions there is no question that it must feature strongly in the national decarbonisation effort.

In 2017 the passenger car fleet accounted for approximately 52% of land transport emissions and accordingly electric vehicles (EVs) are a prominent mitigation technology in the Plan, with a target of almost 950,000 EVs on Irish roads by 2030. This is a very challenging target; however, as technology improves and becomes cheaper, and if we continue to incentivise and invest in EVs and the associated recharging network, we are ambitious that we can make real progress towards getting the electric vehicles we need on the road by 2030. Concerted efforts across several Departments will be essential if we are to maintain a supportive environment to assist citizens in making the greener choice and switching to an EV. The target is a very challenging one and is indicative of the scale of transformation required across all sectors if Ireland is to reduce national emissions and reach its legally binding emission ceilings.

Globally, electric vehicles are the leading solution to the decarbonisation of private car transport. It is the Government's job to ensure that conditions and policies are in place to support citizens in making the greener choice and selecting electric vehicles now and in the years to come.

To that end, an interdepartmental Low Emission Vehicle Taskforce, co-chaired by my Department and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment (DCCAE), was established to consider the range of measures and options available to Government to accelerate EV take-up. Preliminary recommendations from the Taskforce were considered ahead of Budgets 2018 and 2019 and a suite of continued and new EV supports were subse-

quently announced. Principal supports, such as the EV Purchase Grant Scheme, the Domestic Charger Grant and the roll out of an extensive recharging network, fall under the remit of the Minister of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment. In tandem, I am responsible for two further initiatives: the Electric Vehicle Toll Incentive (EVTI) Scheme and the Electric Small Public Service Vehicle (eSPSV) Grant Scheme.

The EVTI was designed to encourage private car commuters who regularly use tolled roads to consider switching to an EV. It is estimated that there are approximately 400,000 heavy toll users in Ireland so reduced tolls act as a meaningful incentive for a large number of vehicle owners. I have committed to continuing this incentive until 2022 or until a threshold of 50,000 registrations has been reached.

The eSPSV Grant Scheme promotes the use of EVs in taxis/hackneys/limousines. Recognising the important role that the SPSV sector can play in demonstrating EV technology to a wider audience I have agreed, under the Climate Action Plan, to improve the value of the eSPSV grant to those transitioning to wheelchair accessible electric SPSVs to make EVs available to a greater number of our citizens.

Finally, support from the Department of Finance has also been fundamental in establishing the current positive policy environment under which we have already seen electric vehicle sales rise steeply over the past year, albeit from a low base. According to the latest figures, approximately 11,500 EVs were under taxation at the end of May 2019. This is double the amount that was on Irish roads at the end of May 2018. In order to continue this trajectory I will continue to work closely with Ministers Bruton and Donohoe and their respective Departments to map out the new policy pathway that will be necessary to ensure that Ireland is well positioned to avail fully of increased supply of EVs, of improved technology and falling prices that are expected worldwide.

Taxi Regulations

100. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the discussions he has had regarding the relaunch of the local area hackney scheme; the specific proposals planned to simplify the application process; his plans in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22794/19]

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.

Under the Taxi Regulation Act 2013, NTA has statutory responsibility for the regulation of the small public service vehicle sector.

The NTA is also responsible for the recently announced pilot schemes relating to the Local Area Hackney Scheme and the Community Transport Service.

In light of the NTA's responsibilities in this matter, I have referred your question to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Rail Services

101. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when a feasibility study will be carried out on the reopening of the Navan to Dublin rail line. [29561/19]

646. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when a feasibility study on the reopening of the Navan to Dublin rail line will be carried out. [29693/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 101 and 646 together.

The Deputy is aware that public transport infrastructure planning within the Greater Dublin Area has a statutory basis as set out in the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 (as amended). This Act requires the NTA to prepare a transport strategy for the Greater Dublin Area which sets out the proposed infrastructure development for a period of up to twenty years and it is also a statutory requirement that relevant land-use strategies in the Greater Dublin Area are consistent with the approved transport strategy.

The current Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area was approved in 2016 and sets out the current infrastructure proposals up until 2035. The Act requires the NTA to review the Strategy every six years and I understand that such a review will commence in the latter half of next year and the issue of the Navan rail line will be specifically considered by the NTA as part of the statutory review of the current Strategy.

Public Transport

102. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his targets to convert the public transport fleet to electric vehicles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29462/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The recently published Climate Action Plan to Tackle Climate Breakdown sets out a whole-of-Government approach to climate action and maps a potential pathway to meet Ireland's 2030 emission reduction commitments. The Plan clearly recognises that Ireland must significantly step up its commitments to address climate disruption.

The transport sector, which accounts for about 20% of Ireland overall carbon emissions (and about 27% of Ireland's accountable emissions in the non-ETS sector), plays a key role in the national decarbonisation effort. My Department has worked hard to develop an ambitious, challenging and wide-ranging set of actions for inclusion in the Climate Action Plan, particularly in relation to public transport and active travel.

It is estimated that public transport (bus, rail and taxi) accounts for a little over 1% of Ireland's overall non-ETS carbon emissions, and less than one-twentieth of the emissions from the transport sector. Accordingly, converting our public transport fleets to lower-carbon alternatives including electricity will have a limited, though positive, impact on reducing national CO2 emissions. That said, I believe that moving to low-emission alternatives for public transport is important so as to promote and normalise the use of non-conventional lower-emitting fuels and technologies.

In the urban bus fleet, a clear trajectory to low-emission buses has been outlined. We are committed in Project Ireland 2040 to no longer purchase diesel-only buses for the urban public bus fleet from this month. In preparation for both this immediate transition and the develop-

ment of a longer-term low-carbon bus procurement strategy, my Department, together with the National Transport Authority (NTA), Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann, has undertaken a comprehensive series of low-emission bus trials which are expected to conclude in the coming weeks. Under the BusConnects Programme it is expected that approximately half of the public urban bus fleet will have moved to lower-emitting alternatives by 2023 with full conversion by 2030.

The NTA has recently initiated a tender competition to award a “Framework Agreement for the Supply of Double-Deck Diesel-Electric Hybrid Buses” with the number of vehicles to be purchased being decided on an annual basis in line with replacement requirements, capacity needs and funding availability, in addition to taking into account developments in other vehicle technologies.

Electrifying key, heavily used elements of the rail network must also be considered if the transport sector is to achieve its decarbonisation objectives. We plan to create a full metropolitan area DART network for the Greater Dublin Area, which is the part of the national rail network that carries over 75% of total rail passengers each year. It will mean high-frequency electrified rail services to Drogheda, Celbridge/Hazelhatch, Maynooth and M3 Parkway, as well as new interchange stations with bus, LUAS and Metro networks. The NTA and Iarnród Éireann have recently commenced a procurement process for the establishment of a 10-year framework agreement for the purchase of additional lower-emitting rail fleet required for the expansion of the DART network. These major rail projects will help supplement the range of viable low-carbon alternatives to private passenger car travel and positively impact our sectoral emissions profile.

Finally, in the small public service vehicle (SPSV) or taxi sector, the Electric SPSV Grant Scheme opened to applicants in February 2018 and provides purchase reliefs of up to €7,000 for battery electric vehicles and up to €3,500 for plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. The Scheme was continued into 2019.

I am happy that a comprehensive programme of work is well underway to reduce the public transport sector’s carbon footprint.

Aviation Industry

103. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the issuing of a permit to an airline (details supplied) to operate a service between Dublin and Madrid under the fifth freedom; his views on whether this provides the airline with an unfair competitive advantage over domestic and European airlines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29581/19]

613. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which he will ensure that the recent fifth freedom agreement with an airline (details supplied) protects competition and consumers here. [29226/19]

614. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether the recent fifth freedom agreement signed with an airline (details supplied) will undermine or threaten EU airlines operating here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29227/19]

624. **Deputy Frank O’Rourke** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason for the recent granting of a fifth freedom permit to an airline (details supplied) to operate a service between Dublin and Madrid in view of the fact that the Dublin to Madrid route is already served by three EU airlines that are cumulatively providing over 39 services per week;

his views on whether the granting of routes under the fifth freedom is commercially damaging to domestic airlines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29454/19]

656. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason for recent decision to grant fifth freedom rights to an airline (details supplied) to operate commercial flights from Dublin to Madrid; if unions that represent workers in the aviation industry were consulted regarding the change; if not, the reason; his views on whether unions in cases of this nature should be consulted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29755/19]

657. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether the granting of a fifth freedom licence to an airline (details supplied) to operate a Dublin to Madrid service will place EU based airlines at a competitive disadvantage; the reason for issuing the licence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29763/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 103, 613, 614, 624, 656 and 657 together.

The Ireland - Ethiopia Bilateral Air Services Agreement, signed in 2014, allows for the granting of fifth freedom air traffic rights for airlines of both countries, on a reciprocal basis and subject to the approval of the relevant aeronautical authorities.

Ethiopian Airlines applied to both the Spanish and Irish Aeronautical Authorities in 2018 for approval of their Addis Ababa - Madrid - Dublin (return) route. Following confirmation of approval by the Spanish Aeronautical Authorities and having consulted with Irish air carriers, the Department authorised the route as it conformed to the rights provided under the Air Services Agreement.

Ireland traditionally has a liberal aviation policy and remains positively disposed towards the development of competitive air services. In that context, my Department will continue to consider applications for fifth freedom air traffic rights under bilateral air services agreements, on a case-by-case basis.

Road Projects Status

104. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the progress of the A5; the funding made available for the project; when funding will be made available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29428/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The planning and implementation of the A5 upgrade project is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland authorities.

The current funding arrangements in relation to the A5 are governed by the Stormont House Agreement and Implementation Plan - A Fresh Start. Under this Agreement the Government is committed to provide funding of £75 million (sterling) towards the cost of Phase 1a of the A5 upgrade scheme. The aim of this funding commitment is to facilitate the delivery of this phase of the scheme as soon as possible once the planning process in Northern Ireland is concluded.

Brexit Preparations

105. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the preparations the maritime transport division of his Department is making for a no-deal Brexit;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29459/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Brexit has been identified as my Department's highest strategic risk and the Department along with other Government Departments and key Agencies, has been preparing for Brexit for three years. The maritime side of my Department has participated extensively in these preparations. Consultations regarding Brexit on the maritime side with key maritime stakeholders have included a Transport and Logistics All Island Sectoral meeting in Dundalk in January 2017, three Brexit Maritime Transport Workshops / Seminars (in April 2017, March 2018, and January 2019) with a further Maritime Transport Workshop / Seminar planned for September 2019.

Brexit was a key focus in discussions between the maritime side of my Department and individual Irish ports in 2018 and 2019 to date. Two Dublin Port Brexit Workshops have been held (in February and May, 2018), and 18 meetings have been held by the maritime transport side of my Department at individual ports where Brexit has been discussed during 2018 alone. Ports have continued their preparations for the UK's departure from the EU by examining all possible options to avoid delays to goods transiting through their facilities, and by adjusting their infrastructural plans and they, as well as shipping companies, continue to examine possible new trade routes to mainland Europe, avoiding the landbridge through the UK.

Eight meetings have been held with shipping companies and shipping interests in January and February 2019, and these discussions with shipping companies have been continued by my Department since then, while the Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) have been consulting extensively with the Maritime sector, including shipping, port and other maritime interests, regarding Brexit issues on an ongoing basis.

Five 'Brexit-related' Marine Notices have been published by the Maritime side of my Department. These are Marine Notice No 7 of 2018. (March 2018) regarding Industrial Products, Seafarers Certificates of Competency, and Maritime Transport, Marine Notice 23 of 2018 (June 2018) regarding Maritime Transport / EU Ship Recycling Regulations, Marine Notice No. 34 of 2018 (September, 2018) regarding Preparedness in general, including legislative changes necessary at EU level regarding the Connecting Europe Facility, and regarding the transfer of the assessment of two recognised ship inspection and survey organisations from the UK, Marine Notice 37 of 2018 (October 2018) regarding Maritime transport security, and Marine Notice 1 of 2019 (January 2019) regarding monitoring and verification of CO2 emissions from maritime transport post-Brexit.

The Maritime side of my Department has drafted legislation regarding pilotage exemption certificates which was included in Part 9 of the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2019, and which is ready to be commenced in the event of a no-deal Brexit. This legislation will enable the continued efficient operation of Dublin Port and Port of Cork in a no-deal Brexit scenario and will minimise delays for vessels such as ferries which make regular visits to a port enabling harbour pilots to concentrate on more difficult pilotage assignments.

Amending secondary legislation has been prepared by the Maritime side of my Department to give full effect to a new Brexit-related EU Regulation relating to the assessment arrangements for ship inspection and survey organisations recognised at an EU level so as to facilitate the continued assessment of such recognised organisations by the Commission and any Member State that has authorised a recognised organisation to act on its behalf.

Extensive contingency planning and stakeholder engagement by the Maritime side of my Department, in conjunction with and in close consultation with the IMDO, is continuing to prepare for a no-deal Brexit. This will include a focussed awareness campaign from early Sep-

tember aimed at shipping companies, importers and exporters to facilitate further a dialogue between them, for example, to identify as early as possible the extent of new or additional market demands for direct connections to continental Europe.

Tourism Policy

106. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for a wild Atlantic walkway; the potential impact such a walkway could have on tourism in rural areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29569/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): My Department's role in relation to tourism lies primarily in the area of national policy development. Implementation of that policy is a matter for the tourism agencies, Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland, as well as other bodies. The management and development of the tourism experience brands, including the Wild Atlantic Way, is an operational matter for Fáilte Ireland.

I have, however, engaged with Fáilte Ireland in progressing a feasibility study on the development of a Wild Atlantic Way Coastal path, the first stage of which was a pilot study in 2018 to examine linking the existing Kerry Way and Dingle Way routes. Early indications from the study show that there is strong economic value to rural hinterlands for developing long-distance iconic walks.

I am also aware that the Wild Atlantic Way Journey Review, which is reviewing the entire route, is currently at draft stage and that Fáilte Ireland will be consulting with Local Authorities to agree recommendations.

As these matters are operational matters for Fáilte Ireland, I have referred the Deputy's question to the tourism agency for further reply to the Deputy. Please contact my private office if you have not received a reply within ten working days.

Light Rail Projects Status

107. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide a report on the plans and timetable for MetroLink; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29461/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, including MetroLink.

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

Public Transport

108. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans

to invest in public transport infrastructure in County Meath. [29515/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, which includes Co. Meath.

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

Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

109. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he has recently met the leader of the DUP, Mrs. Arlene Foster, and the vice president of Sinn Féin, Ms Michelle O'Neill. [29524/19]

The Taoiseach: The Tánaiste and I met with Ms Mary Lou McDonald T.D. and Ms Michelle O'Neill MLA on 18 June in Leinster House when we discussed the current political situation in Northern Ireland and Brexit. We discussed what could be done to get the institutions in Northern Ireland up and running again. Once again, I emphasised the Government's full commitment to all aspects of the Good Friday Agreement, and our continuing determination to secure the effective operation of all of its institutions.

The Government wants to see an agreement in place to secure the operation of the devolved institutions and we will continue to engage with the British Government and the political parties in Northern Ireland to seek to progress that in the period immediately ahead.

Ultimately the challenge is for the parties to find an agreement. This will be difficult, but the two Governments believe that this can, and must, be achieved to get the devolved, power-sharing Assembly and Executive and the NSMC functioning again.

I last met with DUP Leader Arlene Foster while in the United States for St. Patrick's Day. We discussed the situation regarding Brexit, as it stood at the time, including prospects for ratification by the UK of the Withdrawal Agreement. We also discussed political developments in Northern Ireland, including the importance of the restoration of the institutions under the Good Friday Agreement. I also spoke with Ms Foster at events we were both attending.

The Tánaiste has engaged extensively with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and with the leaders of the political parties there in every week of the talks so far, to encourage the parties to reach an accommodation, and I receive regular updates from the Tánaiste and from my officials who are involved in the talks process.

Departmental Offices

110. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Taoiseach the availability of bike parking spaces and lockers in all buildings used by his Department. [29120/19]

The Taoiseach: Bicycle racks are provided within Government Buildings for use by staff of and visitors to my Department.

Departmental Advertising Expenditure

111. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Taoiseach the amount spent on digital marketing in each of the past eight years; the items on which funds were spent; the criteria by which target audiences were selected; the amount of the digital spend targeted here; the amount targeted abroad; the amount that related to private companies; the amount that related to policy initiatives; and the purpose of the digital advertisements. [29203/19]

The Taoiseach: Expenditure on digital and online space over the past eight years was as follows:

2011 – Nil

2012 – €639.90

2013 – Nil

2014 – Nil

2015 – €861.00

2016 – Nil

2017 – Nil

2018 - €451,351.03

2019 - €1,355.46

Total Expenditure: €454,171.09

A decision was taken in 2017 to fund and run cross-Government public information programmes centrally. As a result of this, in the period between Quarter 4 of 2017 and July 2018, a number of public information campaigns aimed at improving citizens' lives, such as the Healthy Ireland campaign, the Project Ireland 2040 campaign and the Self-Employed Benefits campaign, were run and funded from my Department. This was a departure in approach from previous years, when such campaigns would have been led and funded by the relevant line Department. Since July 2018, the Department has reverted to the previous model.

These public information programmes were aimed at the Irish general public, with the exception of the promotion of Global Ireland, which was targeted at international audiences in the UK and the US. The total amount spent was €184,869; the remainder of expenditure outlined above was targeted at a general audience here in Ireland.

The purchase of digital and online space is managed through a media-buying company contracted to the Department, PHD Media.

As stated above, all expenditure related to cross-Government public information programmes. These consisted of:

- The National Digital Strategy
- Budget 2019
- End of Dáil Term Legislation
- Global Ireland

- Back to School 2017
- Rugby World Cup 2023
- Bliain Na Gaeilge
- Project Ireland 2040
 - Self-Employed Benefits
 - Healthy Ireland
 - 25th Anniversary of Decriminalisation of Homosexuality
 - Government Health Measures
 - Irish Aid Campaign
 - The Action Plan for Education
 - The UN Disability Campaign

It is important that Government communicates across a variety of platforms, including on-line and in social media, to ensure transparency and clarity for all citizens. Engaging with search engine promotion helps ensure the public is directed to the sites that deliver the services/information they are looking for. Using sponsored posts on Social Media ensures a strong dissemination of Government Information.

Unemployment Levels

112. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Taoiseach the criteria that determine an area as an unemployment blackspot; the areas listed as youth unemployment blackspots; and the rate of youth unemployment in each of these areas. [28644/19]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Seán Kyne): In its Census 2016 Summary Results - Part 2, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) published an analysis of Electoral Divisions (EDs) where the unemployment rate in April 2016 was highest relative to the State overall. For this analysis, unemployment blackspots were defined as EDs which contained at least 200 persons in the labour force and which had an unemployment rate of at least 27 per cent, as defined on the basis of the Principal Economic Status question asked in the Census.

The Principal Economic Status question in the Census asked persons how they would describe their present principal status; the response options included the categories “at work” and “unemployed”. This is different from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) classification of unemployment used in the quarterly Labour Force Survey, in which unemployment is measured as persons who, in the week before the survey, were without work and available for work within the next two weeks, and had taken specific steps in the preceding four weeks to find work.

This analysis of unemployment blackspots is only available from the Census of Population; the CSO has no corresponding small-area statistics for more recent periods.

The CSO did not define or publish statistics on youth unemployment blackspots from the 2016 Census.

Therefore, the unemployment rates for the Electoral Divisions listed as unemployment blackspots in the Census 2016 results which are set out in the following table include all those aged 15 years and above.

Electoral Division	Unemployment rate 2016 (based on Principal Economic Status)
John's A, Limerick City	58.3%
Galvone B, Limerick City	45.0%
Ballynanty, Limerick City	43.6%
Abbey C, Limerick City	41.9%
Prospect B, Limerick City	40.7%
Glentworth C, Limerick City	40.2%
Longford No. 1 Urban, County Longford	39.7%
St. Laurence, Limerick City	39.2%
Killeely A, Limerick City	38.8%
Larchville, Waterford City	37.6%
Priorswood B, Dublin City	36.2%
Cavan Urban, County Cavan	35.8%
Mín an Chladaigh, County Donegal	35.3%
Athy West Urban, County Kildare	35.0%
Scainimh, County Galway	34.3%
Tipperary East Urban, County Tipperary	34.0%
Rathbane, Limerick City	33.8%
Glentworth A, Limerick City	33.7%
Singland A, Limerick City	33.6%
Knocknaheeny, Cork City	33.5%
Belturbet Urban, County Cavan	33.5%
Mullingar North Urban, County Westmeath	33.4%
Mayfield, Cork City	33.2%
Prospect A, Limerick City	33.1%
The Glen A, Cork City	33.1%
Tallaght-Killinardan, South Dublin	32.9%
Morrisson's Road, Waterford City	32.6%
Newport's Square, Waterford City	32.3%
Clondalkin-Cappaghmore, South Dublin	32.2%
Enniscorthy Urban, County Wexford	32.1%
Ballymun D, Dublin City	32.1%
Garmna, County Galway	31.8%
Ballymun B, Dublin City	31.8%
Lisduggan, Waterford City	31.5%
John's B, Limerick City	31.4%
Ardnaree South Urban, County Mayo	31.4%
Killeely B, Limerick City	31.1%
Rathkeale Urban, County Limerick	31.1%
Ballybeg North, Waterford City	30.9%
Clonleigh South, County Donegal	30.9%

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The Glen, Waterford City	30.9%
Rosbercon Urban, County Wexford	30.8%
Roanmore, Waterford City	30.8%
Dock A, Limerick City	30.7%
Gort an Choirce, County Donegal	30.4%
Mount Sion, Waterford City	30.0%
An Geata Mór Theas, County Mayo	29.9%
Kilmore C, Dublin City	29.9%
Fair Hill B, Cork City	29.7%
Ceannanas Mór (Kells) Urban, County Meath	29.7%
Kilrush Urban, County Clare	29.7%
Cnoc na Lobhar, County Mayo	29.6%
Kingsmeadow, Waterford City	29.3%
Raphoe, County Donegal	29.2%
Carrick-on-Suir Urban, County Tipperary	29.2%
Ennis No. 2 Urban, County Clare	29.1%
Finglas North A, Dublin City	28.9%
Finglas South C, Dublin City	28.7%
Farranferris B, Cork City	28.6%
Blanchardstown-Tyrrelstown, Fingal	28.1%
Kilkee, County Clare	28.1%
Tallaght-Fettercairn, South Dublin	28.0%
Dundalk Urban No. 2, County Louth	28.0%
Ballymun C, Dublin City	28.0%
Meathas Troim, County Longford	27.7%
Ballina Urban, County Mayo	27.7%
Castleblayney Urban, County Monaghan	27.7%
Shannon B, Limerick City	27.5%
Urlingford, County Kilkenny	27.5%
Longford Rural, County Longford	27.4%
Letterkenny Urban, County Donegal	27.4%
Custom House, Limerick City	27.3%
Tralee Urban, County Kerry	27.2%
Clondalkin-Rowlagh, South Dublin	27.2%
Rathmichael (Bray), County Wicklow	27.2%
Killincooly, County Wexford	27.2%
Leitir Mhic an Bhaird, County Donegal	27.1%
Boyle Urban, County Roscommon	27.1%
Cnoc na Ráithe, County Mayo	27.0%

Departmental Expenditure

113. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach the costs paid to companies (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and the reason each was engaged. [29450/19]

The Taoiseach: My Department has not paid any costs to the companies in question for projects, in the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019.

Departmental Expenditure

114. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach the costs paid to a company (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and the reason each was engaged. [29559/19]

The Taoiseach: My Department has not engaged the company in question for any projects in the years concerned. However, in 2018 my Department paid €14,205 to the company in question for expenses incurred by a witness following receipt of a direction under section 24 of the Commissions of Investigation Act 2004 by Judge Brian Cregan, Sole Member of the Commission of Investigation established concerning the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation. This payment was in respect of a service provided by the company to a witness in connection with the Commission's investigation.

Departmental Expenditure

115. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Taoiseach the amount spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the years 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by inquiry, tribunal or commission. [29840/19]

The Taoiseach: Details of expenditure on tribunals and commissions of investigation funded through my Department's Vote, in each of the years 2009 to date in 2019, is set out in the following table.

Moriarty Tribunal of Inquiry

Year	Admin	Legal Costs	3rd Party Costs	Total
2009	€444,767	€3,350,611	€0	€3,795,378
2010	€516,409	€2,608,484	€0	€3,124,893
2011	€469,609	€1,131,116	€0	€1,600,725
2012	€342,915	€748,772	€501,679	€1,593,366
2013	€210,873	€581,657	€1,720,497	€2,513,027
2014	€171,172	€979,268	€2,546,938	€3,697,378
2015	€197,585	€760,470	€1,897,744	€2,855,799
2016	€201,206	€703,708	€181,057	€1,085,971
2017	€206,895	€674,994	€5,670,156	€6,552,045
2018	€179,783	€643,630	€1,176,313	€1,999,726
end June 2019	€52,790	€201,245	€31,859	€285,894

McCracken Tribunal of Inquiry (Dunnes Payments)**

Year	Admin	Legal Costs	3rd Party Costs	Total
2015	€0	€0	€56,847	€56,847

**One payment made in 2015 in respect of a third party costs claim. Report published in August 1997.

Fennelly Commission of Investigation

Year	Administration	Legal Costs	Total
2014	€386,283	€191,683	€577,966
2015	€546,830	€612,738	€1,159,568
2016	€402,358	€889,791	€1,292,149
2017	€110,345	€388,630	€498,975

The Fennelly Commission completed its work in 2017.

Cregan Commission of Investigation (IBRC)

Year	Administration	Legal Costs	Total
2015	€344,655	€132,289	€476,944
2016	€722,949	€315,959	€1,038,908
2017	€782,059	€772,591	€1,554,650
2018	€924,559	€1,070,763	€1,995,322
end June 2019	€647,552	€650,591	€1,298,143

Cooke Commission of Investigation (NAMA)

Year	Administration	Legal Costs	Total
2017	€198,045	€151,694	€349,739
2018	€397,172	€484,108	€881,280
end June 2019	€303,103	€253,215	€556,318

Climate Change Policy

116. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Taoiseach if his Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics; the public bodies and agencies under his remit to which he has issued an instruction to cease the purchase and use of single-use plastics; when the instruction issued; the bodies which have confirmed that they no longer purchase and use single-use plastics, respectively; the bodies which have not provided such confirmation to date; when they will confirm. [29992/19]

The Taoiseach: Both my Department and the National Economic & Social Development Office (NESDO) have ceased the purchase of single-use plastics since July 2018. An instruction was issued on the matter at that time to ensure that single-use plastics are no longer purchased or used. A small existing stock has been phased out since then.

Departmental Advertising Expenditure

117. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the amount spent on digital marketing in each of the past eight years; the items on which funds were spent; the criteria by which target audiences were selected; the amount of the digital spend targeted

here; the amount targeted abroad; the amount that related to private companies; the amount that related to policy initiatives; and the purpose of the digital advertisements. [29389/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I have set out the details of the digital marketing agency and the costs incurred by my Department in relation to the Be Winter Ready campaign in the table below. There was no expenditure in this regard in 2011, 2012 or 2013, nor was there any expenditure to date in 2019, as the campaign is carried out in the last quarter of the year.

The advertisements were targeted at the general public within Ireland and the purpose of these advertisements was to inform the public of the annual ‘Be Winter Ready’ campaigns on behalf of the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning. The costs incurred did not relate to policy initiatives.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	TOTAL
Be Winter Ready Twitter campaign	€3,690.00	€5,041.78	€5,043.00	€5,535.00	€5,535.00	€24,844.78
Management of Twitter campaign	€2,214.00	€2,214.00	€1,476.00	€2,583.00	€2,583.00	€11,070.00

Departmental Expenditure

118. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the costs paid to companies (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason each was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29440/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): In 2016, my Department paid an amount of €4,000 to the fourth of the companies referred to in the details supplied by the Deputy. This was in respect of training related to procurement. This payment is the total extent of payments made by my Department in the period 1 January 2015 to 9 July 2019 to the companies listed in the details supplied by the Deputy.

Ministerial Meetings

119. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the bilateral meetings he has had with his EU counterparts to date in 2019, in tabular form. [29492/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): As part of my St Patrick’s Day Programme, I visited Cyprus and met with my Ministerial colleagues and had a wide-ranging discussion on security, defence and EU and UN issues more generally. In the course of my attending the UN Ministerial Peacekeeping Conference in New York in March, 2019, I had bilateral meetings with ministerial colleagues from The Netherlands, Poland and Hungary. A meeting with representatives from all 28 EU member States and the EU External Action Service in support of EU/UN Cooperation in peacekeeping and crisis management was also hosted at senior official level in Ireland’s Permanent Representation to the United Nations as part of my visit to the UN.

I continue to engage with my EU counterparts in relation to European Defence and Security matters and use the opportunity at EU Ministerial meetings to have discussions with my EU colleagues. My engagement with EU Colleagues on a wide range of areas of mutual interest is also reinforced by engagement at official level and, in this regard, high-level strategic dialogue meetings have taken place this year with France in February and with the UK in April.

Departmental Expenditure

120. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the costs paid to a company (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason it was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29549/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): In the period from 1 January 2015 to 9 July 2019, my Department did not make any payments to the company referred to by the Deputy.

Departmental Expenditure

121. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the amount spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the years 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by inquiry, tribunal or commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29831/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): No monies were expended by my Department on tribunals, commissions of investigation or statutory inquires in the period since 2009.

Army Equitation School

122. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the estimated cost of purchasing six extra horses for the Defence Forces equitation school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29895/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Army Equitation School was founded in 1926 to promote Ireland and the Irish horse.

I can assure the Deputy that the Army Equitation School continues to source suitable Irish-bred horses, acquired through either purchase or lease agreement, that meet the required standard as judged by the School's Horse Purchase Board.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the purchase price of any horse varies depending on a number of factors including age, ability, temperament etc. The School's budget allocation in 2019 for horse acquisitions is €350,000. While it is difficult to predict the number of acquisitions this year, the Deputy might note that in 2018 four new horses were acquired by the School.

I am satisfied that the current arrangements allow the School to maintain its competitiveness at national and international events.

Climate Change Policy

123. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if his Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics; the public bodies and agencies under his remit to which he has issued an instruction to cease the purchase and use of single-use plastics; when the instruction issued; the bodies which have confirmed that they no longer purchase and use single-use plastics, respectively; the bodies which have not provided such confirmation to date; when they will confirm; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29982/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Following receipt of the letter of 22nd January 2019 from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment advising the Department of the Government Decision of the 3rd January 2019, instructing Departments and Agencies on Single Use Plastics (SUPs) procurement, the Department of Defence immediately ceased purchasing and using plastic beverage cups, cutlery and drinking straws.

The Department requested the Defence Forces, on 29th January 2019, to comply with the requirements of the Government Decision. The Defence Forces have instructed all Procurement Officers to comply with the Government Decision and cease the purchasing of all single use plastic cups, cutlery and straws.

The use of the specified plastic items which have been purchased prior to the instruction continues in a small number of locations, but this will cease once current stocks are depleted.

Defence Forces Reports

124. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he met the Minister of State with responsibility for defence to discuss the Public Service Pay Commission's report on the Defence Forces, published on 4 July 2019. [29525/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): There are regular meetings between the Taoiseach and Government Ministers. The Public Sector Pay Commission Report on recruitment and retention in the Permanent Defence Force was accepted by Government on 4 July 2019. A High-Level Implementation Plan was also approved.

Foreign Conflicts

125. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to discuss with EU colleagues the opening of an independent and transparent international investigation into the events of 3 June 2019 in Sudan, in which live ammunition was used against civilians, who were also subjected to torture and gender-based sexual violence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29103/19]

126. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to reconsider the role of the State in contributing to the financial support provided by the EU to the rapid support forces in Sudan, which is being used to empower militias and enable the violent violation of the rights of refugees and asylum seekers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29104/19]

127. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

his plans for the State as a signatory to the convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence to provide practical and psychosocial support for victims of sexual and gender-based violence in Sudan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29105/19]

138. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on Sudanese diplomatic representation here in view of the political changes that have taken place in Sudan. [29534/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): I propose to take Questions Nos. 125 to 127, inclusive, and 138 together.

I refer the Deputies to the response to Questions Nos. 67, 68, 78 and 81 of 18 June.

Political developments in Sudan last week give cause for some cautious optimism, although the situation there remains fluid. I welcome the work by those engaged in regional processes, led by the African Union, which resulted in last week's agreement to establish a Sovereign Council with both civilian and military participation. Ireland, together with the EU and other Member States, will actively support a civilian-led political transition, including necessary economic reform and humanitarian assistance. The inclusion of a commitment within that agreement to establish an independent and transparent investigation into violent crackdown against protestors on 3 June is also welcome.

I am aware of the recent allegations that the Sudanese Rapid Support Forces, which emerged from remnants of the Janjaweed militia in Darfur, receive financial support from the EU Trust Fund for Africa, which was established to fight human trafficking and to provide protection and support for refugees. The EU has strongly refuted this claim and confirmed that it does not provide any financial support to the Government of Sudan, to the Transitional Military Council or to the Sudanese Rapid Support Forces. All EU support to Sudan is delivered by EU Member States, the UN, international organisations and non-governmental organisations and is underpinned by respect for human rights. My officials will continue to scrutinise all new proposals, to ensure adequate safeguards are in place, for funding to Sudan under the EU Trust Fund.

The Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade has condemned the use of sexual and gender-based violence against protestors in Sudan. Ireland's third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, launched on 21 June, strongly reaffirms Ireland's commitment to preventing sexual and gender-based violence in conflict settings and to ensuring support for recovery and relief in post-conflict settings. Today, 9 June, Ireland delivered a national statement on Sudan at the Human Rights Council in Geneva calling for all human rights violations and abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence, to be thoroughly investigated in an independent and transparent manner with those responsible held to account.

Senior officials from my Department met the Sudanese Ambassador to Ireland earlier this year to express concerns at the political situation. My Department's ongoing communication with the Embassy on the evolving situation in Sudan allows our concerns to be formally transmitted to the Sudanese authorities. Officials also recently met with representatives of the Sudanese community in Ireland to listen to their concerns and views regarding how the current impasse may be resolved.

Since 2012, Ireland has provided over €29 million in direct humanitarian assistance to Sudan. As well as this direct bilateral aid, Ireland has also contributed to humanitarian support in Sudan through the multilateral system. Ireland is a significant contributor to the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) Sudan Humanitarian Fund, and provided financing of €3 million in 2019. In 2018, the fund provided assistance to just under 2

million beneficiaries, including 489,556 girls and 609,162 women. Programmes funded by the Sudan Humanitarian Fund include Gender-Based Violence programming and supports.

Human Rights

128. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if Ireland and-or the European Union has expressed concern over the treatment of the LGBTQI community in Turkey; his views on the banning of pride parades nationally and the use of tear gas by police on participants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29155/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Commission's 2019 Enlargement Package report on Turkey noted that there are serious concerns regarding the protection of the fundamental rights of LGBTI persons. It found that, over the past year, LGBTI activities and Pride parades have been banned or stopped by police in several provinces; that hate speech against the LGBTI community is a common occurrence; and discrimination against the LGBTI community remains widespread throughout Turkey.

Around the world, Irish Embassies and Consulates cooperate closely with EU delegations and Embassies of the other EU Member States to advocate for the rights of LGBTI persons. For example, our Embassy in Ankara provides funding to a local LGBTI advocacy group, most recently for a project that focuses on the reporting of human rights violations against trans people, and in 2017 the Embassy sponsored the screening of 'Queen of Ireland', during the EU Human Rights Day Film Festival.

The banning of the Istanbul Pride Parade for the fifth year in a row is regrettable, particularly as the parade was allowed for many years before. The use of tear gas to disperse those who nevertheless gathered to mark the occasion is even more regrettable, as all Turkish citizens should be allowed to exercise their right to peaceful assembly.

Together with our European partners, we are deeply concerned by Turkey's backsliding on fundamental rights, which has negative effects not only on the LGBTI community, but also on wider society. Turkey is party to the European Convention on Human Rights, a member of the Council of Europe, and a candidate for membership of the European Union, and as such has committed to respect the fundamental rights of citizens.

Passport Applications Data

129. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of online, over-the-counter and postal passport applications, respectively, issued from the date on which the online option went live; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29217/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Online Passport Renewal Service was launched on March 30 2017. Since its launch, 545,542 passports have been issued on foot of online applications.

During the same time period, a total of 92,934 passports were issued on foot of applications submitted through the public counter at the Passport Offices in Dublin and Cork and 1,155,458 passports were issued on foot of applications submitted through postal application channels, including applications via Ireland's network of missions overseas.

The Online Passport Renewal Service brings significant benefits to citizens, including faster

turnaround times, a user-friendly application process, and a reduced application fee.

The Online Passport Renewal Service is part of the ongoing passport reform process. This programme is delivering major upgrades to passport service technology platforms and business processes as well as making significant customer service improvements to the Passport Service. It is envisaged that as part of this reform the online application process will be rolled out to first-time applicants by 2021.

From January to June this year, the Passport Service has seen a 10.1% increase in passport applications compared to the same six-month period in 2018. 45% of all applications received in the first six months of this year have been online applications. In this period, 62% of all those eligible to use the online renewal service have chosen this option. This compares to 31% for the same time period in 2018.

A strong take-up of online services will greatly improve the capacity of the Passport Service to manage increasing application volumes. Efficiencies gained mean that staff resources can be redeployed towards the processing of more complex applications, protecting the integrity of the Irish passport and enhancing the customer service we offer to citizens.

Passport Applications Data

130. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of passports issued by office location outside Ireland in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29218/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Irish citizens living overseas can submit their passport application via Ireland's network of Embassies and Consulates overseas. The following table outlines the number of passport applications made via each Embassy or Consulate for the years requested. Many Irish Embassies have accreditation for other countries and provide passport services for Irish citizens for more than one country.

The figures cited do not include passports issued to Irish citizens residing overseas who applied for their passports through the Online Passport Renewal Service. The Online Passport Renewal Service was launched in March 2017 and allows citizens residing anywhere in the world to submit their passport renewal application online.

Mission	2016	2017	2018	2019*
ABU DHABI	1,667	1,449	1,101	329
ABUJA	268	265	264	45
ADDIS ABABA	18	20	17	4
ANKARA	112	96	82	23
ATHENS	169	118	107	52
AUCKLAND	2,254	1,814	1,258	570
BANGKOK	411	294	277	124
BEIJING	193	169	139	34
BERLIN	1,959	1,548	1,039	522
BERNE	941	762	525	197
BOSTON	2,027	1,597	1,404	509

Mission	2016	2017	2018	2019*
BRASILIA	131	128	86	30
BRATISLAVA	25	26	23	22
BRUSSELS	813	596	417	172
BUCHAREST	95	54	53	17
BUDAPEST	72	60	38	15
BUENOS AIRES	168	188	99	45
CAIRO	140	158	121	34
CANBERRA	6,828	5,002	3,653	1,269
CHICAGO	1,126	2,046	1,597	679
COPENHAGEN	232	232	123	80
DAR ES SALAAM	42	35	14	8
HANOI	131	115	68	32
HELSINKI	102	70	56	28
HONG KONG	548	574	450	171
JAKARTA	68	70	56	13
KAMPALA	43	31	19	7
KUALA LUMPUR	174	147	110	39
LILONGWE	14	30	17	
LISBON	155	153	158	69
LONDON	63,452	65,678	14,254	6,441
LJUBLJANA	55	35	20	5
LUSAKA	97	89	66	18
LUXEMBOURG	325	246	196	82
MADRID	1,662	1,480	1,086	612
MAPUTO	39	35	13	3
MEXICO	180	158	78	26
MOSCOW	94	92	74	25
NAIROBI	0	0	151	44
NEW DELHI	153	124	140	43
NEW YORK	7,032	6,297	4,182	1,861
NICOSIA	137	134	88	35
OSLO	182	125	75	50
OTTAWA	3,346	2,754	2,114	692
PARIS	2,205	1,985	1,170	773
PRAGUE	121	110	99	49
PRETORIA	3,207	2,969	1,792	609
RIGA	17	14	7	10
RIYADH	451	424	306	118
ROME	524	403	272	113
SAN FRANCISCO	4,331	4,220	2,744	1,057
SEOUL	97	65	52	14
SHANGHAI	114	113	91	19
SINGAPORE	539	496	413	123
SOFIA	31	43	30	17

Mission	2016	2017	2018	2019*
STOCKHOLM	324	227	157	92
SYDNEY	3,850	2,982	1,857	676
TALLIN	11	9	8	5
TEL AVIV	229	152	162	56
THE HAGUE	928	663	496	290
TOKYO	185	137	71	39
VALETTA	127	100	69	37
VIENNA	294	220	169	56
VILNIUS	32	31	34	6
WARSAW	119	156	123	86
WASHINGTON	1,117	1,013	627	264

* to June 30 2019.

Passport Applications Data

131. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of passports issued since the Brexit referendum in the UK under criteria (details supplied) in respect of persons resident in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29219/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): All passport applications are subject to the provisions of the Passports Act, 2008. The Passports Act provides, among other things, that a person must be an Irish citizen before a passport can be issued to him or her. Entitlement to Irish citizenship is governed by Irish law and in particular the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, under which and in general, Irish citizenship may be obtained, inter alia, by birth on the island of Ireland to parents meeting specified requirements.

Since 23 June 2016, the number of passports issued to Irish citizens resident in Northern Ireland is 290,346.

Diplomatic Representation Expenditure

132. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans and projected costings and-or budgets for the purchase of lands and-or buildings for projects similar to Ireland House in Tokyo for the next two, five and ten years, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29272/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The development of a site in central Tokyo, Japan, to establish a new Ireland House is advancing. This is the first time that the State has invested in a brownfield urban site overseas to facilitate the design and build-out of an Ireland House. This multi-year project includes the construction of a bespoke, modern building comprising an official residence and office accommodation for the Embassy of Ireland and state agencies, including Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Bord Bia and Tourism Ireland in Tokyo. It will house a large promotion space where the Embassy and the agencies and their client companies will showcase products and services, host business and community events and promote the vibrancy of our arts and culture. Japan is a key bilateral

political and economic partner for Ireland with exports of Irish goods in 2018 alone valued at over €4 billion. These links are expected to deepen further in the years ahead. The vision for a new Ireland House Tokyo was secured following the purchase of the urban site from the Government of Japan at a significant discount.

My Department currently does not have active plans, projected costings and/or budgets for the purchase of lands or buildings for projects similar in scale or ambition to Ireland House in Tokyo over the timeframe outlined. Where the establishment of a number of Ireland Houses are under consideration as part of ‘Global Ireland – Ireland’s Global Footprint to 2025’ as new Embassies and Consulates open in the coming years, there are no plans currently to purchase additional land or buildings.

All options in managing the state property portfolio in countries where Ireland has diplomatic representation are continually reviewed to ensure value for money. Where possible and appropriate, the Department examines the scope for purchase with a view to converting rental payments into long-term assets for the state. My Department follows guidance and seeks approval from Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on the acquisition and disposal of assets in such cases.

Human Rights Cases

133. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to reports of the beheading of minors in Saudi Arabia for minor transgressions; if he has raised this issue with the relevant authorities or at the EU Foreign Affairs Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29366/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am deeply troubled by reports of adults being executed by Saudi Arabia for alleged crimes committed when they were children. These death sentences directly contravene Saudi Arabia’s obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states, “Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility of release shall be imposed for offences committed by persons below eighteen years of age.”

Ireland is unequivocal in its stance against the death penalty, and the abolition of capital punishment is one of Ireland’s international priorities. My Department regularly conveys our stance on this matter to all countries where the death penalty is still in use. We have consistently raised this matter at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. Last week we reiterated our opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances in our national Item 4 statement at the Council. Ireland has also consistently raised concerns about the use of the death penalty in Saudi Arabia in our Item 4 statements. In our intervention at the last Universal Periodic Review of Saudi Arabia’s human rights record in November 2018 Ireland called on Saudi Arabia to abolish the death penalty.

Senior officials from my Department met with the Saudi Ambassador in June and raised our concerns on this issue directly. I myself met with the Saudi Ambassador in October 2018 and February 2019 and highlighted human rights concerns. Our Embassy in Riyadh consistently avails of appropriate opportunities to raise human rights issues with the Saudi authorities.

I remain deeply concerned by the inhumane use of the death penalty in Saudi Arabia. My officials and I will continue to raise our concerns about human rights issues, including the execution of adults for alleged crimes committed when they were minors and the issuance of death sentences to minors, directly with the Saudi authorities, and at EU and international lev-

els, whenever opportunities arise.

Departmental Advertising Expenditure

134. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the amount spent on digital marketing in each of the past eight years; the items on which funds were spent; the criteria by which target audiences were selected; the amount of the digital spend targeted here; the amount targeted abroad; the amount that related to private companies; the amount that related to policy initiatives; and the purpose of the digital advertisements. [29393/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department engages in public information advertising and awareness campaigns where there is important information that needs to be brought to the attention of citizens. Social media and on-line promoted content play a significant role in this connection. Examples of where my Department has advertised using social media have included public information campaigns in relation to the Online Passport Renewals Service and on the theme of ‘Getting Ireland Brexit Ready’.

In the time available, it has only proved possible to retrieve data as sought by the Deputy for the period 2016 to date. Details of relevant social media and online public information advertising campaigns as carried out within this timeframe are set out below. Unless otherwise indicated, and on the basis of the criteria outlined above, the target audiences in each case were Irish citizens located in Ireland.

- Online Passport Renewals Service

In 2017 and 2018, my Department concentrated on promoting the Online Passport Renewal Service as a fast and secure way for adults to renew their passports. Specific activities included advertisements on social media platforms, print ads, press releases and attendance at relevant promotional events, as well as participation by the Director of the Passport Service in over 25 interviews on regional radio stations.

In Q4 2018 the service was expanded to include online renewal of children’s passports, a passport card for children and a wider cohort of adults eligible to renew online. This expanded service means that all Irish citizens can now renew their passports online 24/7 from anywhere in the world. My Department ran a three-week public information campaign including advertisements on social media platforms, print ads and radio ads. The success of this campaign has led to a significant increase in online renewal applications in Q1 2019.

The direct costs of online and social media advertising to raise public awareness amongst Irish citizens in this regard are set out in Table 1 below.

- Ireland’s Campaign for Election to the UN Security Council

On July 2nd 2018, the Taoiseach and I publicly launched Ireland’s campaign to secure a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council in June 2020 for the 2021-2022 term. Ireland’s campaign is premised on three themes: Empathy, Partnership and Independence. To coincide with this launch, my Department used social media platforms to promote public awareness of Ireland’s campaign online, and the direct costs incurred in this regard are set out in Table 1 below.

- Government Brexit Update and ‘Getting Ireland Brexit Ready’

The Government Brexit Update email service and the Getting Ireland Brexit Ready public information campaign have formed part of the Government's overall strategy to keep citizens fully informed and up-to date on the implications and challenges of Brexit.

The Update is issuing on a regular basis via a commercial provider (MailChimp) and provides information on latest developments in the ongoing Brexit negotiations, on the latest available research publications and on engagement at Government level. It also highlights the range of business supports that are available through the various Government Departments and State agencies. This service has a global reach with 37.7% of the subscribers of the service coming from outside of Ireland.

My Department also coordinated a Government-wide 'Getting Ireland Brexit Ready Campaign' which I and Ministers Humphreys and Creed launched together on 20 September. This campaign updated citizens, communities and businesses about Brexit preparedness and support measures that are available as well as on public workshop events that were held over successive weeks throughout October and the last two weeks in November. A programme of awareness raising via online and social media platforms also took place. Costs incurred in this regard are set out in Table 1 below.

- St Patrick's Day

St. Patrick's Day is a unique opportunity to engage with the global Irish community and to promote Ireland's economic and political interests overseas, with levels of publicity and media attention unmatched by the National Day of any other country.

This year's programme had the largest number of countries ever visited for St. Patrick's Day. The Taoiseach and I, along with 13 Ministers, 19 Ministers of State, the Attorney General, Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach visited 56 countries across Europe, the Middle East, Africa, the Americas, and the Asia-Pacific region. These programmes allowed us to promote trade, investment and tourism with Ireland, to increase visibility in new markets, and to promote our values and our influence in global institutions, notably in support of our campaign to become a member of the United Nations Security Council. It also allowed us to deepen our connections with Irish people and friends of Ireland all over the world.

Team Ireland overseas delivered a total of 1,796 events in support of Ireland's interest over the 2019 St. Patrick's Day period in this context. To coincide with and complement these activities, a small amount of expenditure was incurred by my Department in relation to online promotion of an accompanying St. Patrick's Day video as outlined in Table 1 below. In addition to Ireland, the video in question was also promoted in certain areas of the USA and continental Europe (France, Germany, Italy and Spain) to audiences with strong Irish diaspora connections and/or related potential disposition to Ireland as a tourism destination.

- Global Ireland: Ireland's Strategy for the US and Canada 2019-2025

'Global Ireland' is an all-of-Government programme which aims to double Ireland's impact in the world by 2025. The programme was launched by the Taoiseach and myself and Ministers Humphreys, Madigan and McEntee in June 2018 and sets out Ireland's ambitions in relation to how we trade, the bilateral and multilateral partnerships that we seek to build and our wider contribution to the world.

Global Ireland: Ireland's Strategy for the US and Canada 2019–2025 is Ireland's first whole-of-Government strategy for the US and Canada. Its aim is for Ireland to build strong, strategic political partnerships with the US and Canada and assume a lead role in building stronger transatlantic relations.

To coincide with the programme of St. Patrick's Day-related activities held there earlier this year, a small amount of expenditure was incurred by my Department in relation to the online promotion of a video that outlined the Strategy's key objectives insofar as the US is concerned. In addition to Ireland, the video in question was also promoted in the various areas of the US where Irish diplomatic missions are located – viz., Atlanta, Austin, Boston, Chicago, New York, San Francisco and Washington D.C. – so as to support and facilitate Ireland's ongoing engagement with key audiences in each case.

- Travelwise

TravelWise is an award-winning smartphone app designed to help Irish citizens to stay safe and informed while travelling, living or working overseas.

A core part of our mission is to help ensure the safety and welfare of Irish people travelling abroad by providing accessible and relevant information. There are increasing numbers of Irish residents travelling abroad – more than 7 million trips abroad – and increasing numbers travelling to higher-risk locations.

TravelWise has been developed by the Department to provide travel advice and consular information to these citizens to keep them informed and aware. To coincide with its launch in 2016 my Department spent a small amount to promote its uptake.

- Other Projects

My Department has also engaged in social media promotion of certain other initiatives and projects that relate to Ireland's foreign policy activities.

- Commissioning, in conjunction with the Royal Irish Academy, the first public performance at the UN General Assembly of a new work of poetry by Eavan Boland ("Our Future Will Become The Past of Other Women") to mark the centenary of women's suffrage in December 2018;

- Ireland's participation (by video) in the 2 December 2018 'Global Citizen Mandela 100' concert; and

- A public consultation to help shape Ireland's new diaspora policy is currently taking place around the country, and to encourage public awareness of these events taking place my department has promoted these events on Facebook.

- The launch of Ireland's new policy for international development, 'A Better World', on 28 February.

2019

Campaign Details and dates	Company	Cost
Online Passport Renewals	PHD (Social media and online)	€7,127.78
Getty Ireland Brexit Ready	PHD (Twitter, internet and search optimisation)	€108,787.64
St Patrick's Day	PHD (Social media)	€9,181.60
Simon Cumbers Media Fund & 'A Better World'	Facebook & Twitter	€663.25
A New Diapora Policy for Ireland	Facebook	€400.02

		€126,160.29
2018		
Online Passport Renewals	Twitter & Facebook	€1,392.00
Getting Ireland Brexit Ready	PHD (Social media, internet and search optimisation)	€52,760.41
UN Security Council Campaign	PHD (Social media)	€9,641.17
Global Ireland	PHD (social media)	€5,837.80
D/FAT Missions		€93.09
		€69,724.47
2017		
D/FAT Missions		€113.60
Online Passport Renewals	Facebook & Twitter	€5,821.54
		€5,935.14
2016		
Consular Division - Travel-wise	Facebook	€4,000.00
DFAT Missions		€3,578.28
		€7,578.28

Foreign Policy

135. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on reports that Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is suppressing academic freedom and independent institutions in Hungary; the steps he believes should be taken to address the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29408/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The European Commission is taking a number of values-related infringements proceedings against Hungary regarding the NGO law and the Higher Education Law and its impact on the operation of the Central European University as well as in relation to asylum procedures.

Rule of law issues in Hungary have been discussed at the General Affairs Councils on a number of occasions since Autumn 2018. Ireland has actively participated in these discussions, involving the European Commission, Hungary and other Member States, to highlight the importance of respect for the rule of law.

These issues have also been discussed on a bilateral basis, most recently between the Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee T.D, and the Hungarian Minister of State for EU Policies and Coordination, Szabolcs Takács, in Dublin on 4 April last.

At the General Affairs Council meeting on 21 May, the Commission presented a Communication on further strengthening of the rule of law within the Union. I look forward to the Commission's follow-up proposals which are due to be published later this month.

Ministerial Meetings

136. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

the details of his meeting with his Russian counterpart; the outcome of the recent Ireland-Russia Joint Economic Commission; if he raised the issue of alleged interference from Russian sources in recent elections during the meeting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29430/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I met with Foreign Minister Lavrov in Moscow on 2 July. Agenda items for our consultations included our bilateral political and economic relations, as well as a range of regional and international issues such as the situation in Ukraine, Syria, Iran, the Middle East Peace Process, Iran, non-proliferation, the Council of Europe, human rights, cyber-security, disinformation, and Brexit.

Ireland supports the EU strategy of maintaining dialogue with Russia on issues of mutual interest. Ongoing engagement with Russia bilaterally and in multilateral fora such as the UN, Council of Europe, OSCE and through EU-Russia dialogue on key global challenges as well as regional conflicts is critical, especially where it can contribute to a relationship with a Russia that is underpinned by a commitment to the rule of law and international standards.

We discussed the outcome of the 12th Plenary Session of the Ireland-Russia Joint Economic Commission, held in Moscow on 10 April 2019. The JEC is a bilateral Government to Government entity which promotes economic and trade activity between the two countries within six working groups comprising of Education and Training; ICT/High Technology; Agriculture and Food; Energy and Renewable Energy; Aviation and Transport, and Trade and Economic Cooperation. The Irish delegation in April was led by Minister of State Cannon and included officials from the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Education and Skills; Business, Enterprise and Innovation, along with Enterprise Ireland and Sustainable Food Systems Ireland. At my meeting with Foreign Minister Lavrov we noted the encouraging economic growth in our bilateral trade, which rose by more than 30% in 2018, and the prospects for further development of bilateral trade in education services, agriculture, transport, innovation and the digital economy.

Departmental Expenditure

137. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the costs paid to companies (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason each was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29444/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is responsible for two votes - Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs and Trade) and Vote 27 (International Cooperation).

The Department seeks to minimise expenditure on consultants and commissions external expertise only in cases where highly specialised skills are not available internally. During the course of engagement, these consultants and experts may prepare reports and other analysis or documentation for the Department. The detail in relation to the companies referred to is set out in the table below.

Year	Company	Project	Cost (€)
2015	Mazars	Audit of IT Security and Disaster Recovery Systems (part I)	€23,072
2016	Mazars	Audit of IT Security and Disaster Recovery Systems (part II)	€1,648

Year	Company	Project	Cost (€)
2019	Mazars	Support to ICT Audit:(ICT Security, ICT Governance, Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery)	€13,390

In addition to the payments made to the company a total of €7,400 was paid in Withholding Tax to the Revenue Commissioners in respect of these payments.

Question No. 138 answered with Question No. 125.

Departmental Expenditure

139. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the costs paid to a company (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason it was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29553/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): In 2016, my Department made a payment to Deloitte of €8,034 for an ICT licence renewal.

Foreign Conflicts

140. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the action that will be taken by the EU following reports that 40 persons have been killed after an air strike hit a detention centre in Libya; the efforts being made to protect and safeguard refugees being detained in alleged appalling conditions in Libya; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29600/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I was shocked to learn of the attack on the detention centre in Tajoura, Libya, last week. Attacks against civilians, including refugees and migrants, are totally unacceptable, and contrary to International Humanitarian Law. On 3 July, I issued a statement condemning the attack, and supporting the calls of the EU and the UN for an investigation into the facts of what may well constitute a war crime.

All EU Member States have condemned in the strongest terms this attack in a statement issued on 5 July. EU Member States welcomed any fact-finding mission undertaken by the UN into the attack, called for an end to fighting in Libya, urged parties to return to the UN led mediation process, and reminded all Libyan parties of their obligations under International Humanitarian Law. EU Member States also expressed our readiness to urgently step up collective efforts to address the situation, and in particular, to improve protection and assistance to migrants and refugees.

As I said in my statement last week, this tragic event underlines the fact that the system of detention centres in Libya is completely unsuitable for migrants, and puts them at risk. Ireland and the EU's position is that Libya's system of detaining migrants must end, and that migration must be managed in full compliance with international law. In the meantime, the EU has been working to provide life-saving support to migrants and refugees in detention.

The EU has mobilised €318 million under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa for the protection of migrants, refugees and internally displaced people in Libya, and to provide sup-

port to local communities to cope with the migration challenge. Throughout the conflict in Libya, the EU has cooperated with the UNHCR and IOM, which have staff on the ground in Libya, to provide protection and assistance to vulnerable migrants and refugees in detention centres and elsewhere. We have successfully evacuated refugees and migrants from detention centres near the frontline, and, where possible, have enabled them to find safety outside Libya, including in the Emergency Transit Mechanism in Niger, with a view to their resettlement. Through our cooperation with the UN and the African Union, the EU has helped over 45,000 migrants stranded in Libya to return to their countries of origin, and has evacuated close to 4,000 persons in need of international protection. However, many more people remain at risk, and the EU will continue to work with its partners to relocate them to safe places swiftly to receive assistance.

Unfortunately, political fragmentation and the fragile security situation in Libya limit the capacity of the international community to access all areas where migrants are located, or to influence the situation on the ground. Ultimately, ensuring adequate treatment of migrants and refugees will require restoration of political stability, and a fully functioning Libyan Government. Ireland and the EU continue to support the efforts of the UN Special Representative, Ghassan Salamé, to bring this about. All Libyans, and all international parties, should give their full support to the UN-led political efforts, and parties should ensure that they follow through on commitments made during the talks. This is the only way to ensure that civilians in Libya, including migrants and refugees, are protected.

Passport Applications Administration

141. **Deputy Hildegarde Naughton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the roll-out of online renewal for children's passports since the project commenced in November 2018; the number of online child applications by county since then; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29631/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The award-winning Online Passport Renewal Service was launched in March 2017 and offers the convenience of an online application system 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for Irish citizens anywhere in the world.

In November 2018, the Online Passport Renewal Service was expanded to include the online renewal of children's passports, to introduce a passport card for children, and to expand the cohort of adults eligible to renew online.

Since the expansion of the service last year, 71,384 online passport applications for children have been submitted. The table below details the county of residence of the applicants for those same applications submitted who were resident on the island of Ireland at the time of application.

County	Applications
DUBLIN	17,602
CORK	5,852
KILDARE	3,444
MEATH	3,142
GALWAY	3,025
LIMERICK	2,117
WICKLOW	2,096

County	Applications
LOUTH	1,775
WEXFORD	1,663
DONEGAL	1,650
TIPPERARY	1,612
CLARE	1,427
ANTRIM	1,362
WATERFORD	1,337
MAYO	1,322
KERRY	1,225
DOWN	1,121
KILKENNY	1,090
WESTMEATH	960
DERRY	846
LAOIS	816
CAVAN	778
ROSCOMMON	714
OFFALY	664
SLIGO	657
CARLOW	600
MONAGHAN	593
TYRONE	545
ARMAGH	412
LEITRIM	377
LONGFORD	335
FERMANAGH	147
BELFAST	11
TOTAL	61,317

The online service brings significant benefits for citizens with faster turnaround times of 10 working days for all online applications, excluding postage. In addition, the cost of renewing a passport online is significantly cheaper than alternative methods, with fees for all online applications being reduced by €5 across all application types.

Public feedback with regard to the ease of use and accessibility of the website and with regard to the 10 day turnaround time has been hugely positive. Last month, the online child passport renewal website won a UX (User Experience design) Award for “Innovation in UX”. The awards celebrate achievement in the Irish user experience sector.

Brexit Preparations

142. **Deputy Hildegard Naughton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the way in which the passport service is dealing with the increased demand for passports due to Brexit to date in 2019; the plans of the service to deal with the various Brexit scenarios over the coming months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29632/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The demand for Irish passports has grown significantly in recent years. The Passport Service issued over 780,000 passports in 2017, over 822,000 passports in 2018 and so far this year, over 490,000 passports have been issued.

The increase in demand for Irish passports is driven by a number of factors including a general increase in the number of Irish residents travelling abroad and a growing population. There has also been a significant increase in passport applications from applicants in Northern Ireland and in Britain since the UK Referendum on EU membership in June 2016.

A number of measures have been taken by the Passport Service to manage increases in demand in recent years including the recruitment of additional staff, the continuous implementation of technological and service improvements and the re-organisation of production processes and administrative arrangements.

My Department continues to closely monitor the level of passport demand to ensure that all resources, including staffing, are effectively deployed to meet the ongoing anticipated strong demand for Irish passports.

At the end of 2018, the Passport Service employed 363 Full Time Equivalent staff. This is an increase of over 40 staff since the same point in 2017. Already this year, over 90 additional Full Time Equivalent staff have taken up roles in the Passport Service. Targeted overtime has been sanctioned for both permanent and temporary staff when required. The Passport Service has received approval to recruit over 230 Temporary Clerical Officers (TCOs) in 2019 to assist in processing passport applications and to deal with queries from the general public.

A new Customer Service Hub was established in January 2019 to ensure that the Passport Service is equipped to deal with the large volume of queries received through its phone and webchat services. The Passport Service is currently handling approximately 5000 calls and 3800 webchats per week. Thanks to this dedicated customer service team, we are able to quickly resolve most queries at the first point of contact.

The Passport Reform Programme continues to deliver major upgrades to the Passport Service technology platforms and business processes as well as significant customer service improvements. The award winning Online Passport Renewal Service was introduced in March 2017 and expanded in November 2018 to allow for the renewal of children's passports and to expand the cohort of adults eligible to renew online.

The online service brings significant benefits to citizens with faster turnaround times at a lower cost. 45% of all applications received in 2019 have been online applications and over 60% of those eligible to use the online application channel have done so. The online service has been instrumental in the efficient management of overall passport operations and in allowing the Passport Service to allocate staff resources more efficiently to cope with unprecedented demand.

To assist with forecasting future demand for Irish passports, my Department has commissioned research to better understand the potential demand for passports from Irish citizens in the United Kingdom who have not yet applied for a passport. Interim reports have been provided and in 2019 an additional forecasting report was commissioned which sought to update and revise projected demand estimates up to mid-2023. This research will assist the Passport Service in formulating plans on resource requirements for the future.

Ministerial Meetings

143. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has met the newly appointed United States ambassador to Ireland recently; and if so, the issues that were discussed. [29526/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Government and I were pleased to receive confirmation on 27th June last that the new US Ambassador to Ireland, Edward Crawford, had been sworn into his new role by US Vice President Pence. Ambassador Crawford then travelled to Ireland and presented his credentials to President Higgins on 01 July. My colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality, Charles Flanagan T.D., attended this ceremony on behalf of the Government, as did officials of my Department.

While I have not yet had the opportunity to meet with Ambassador Crawford, I look forward to doing so in the near future. Ireland's relationship with the US is one of our closest and most important. We share many common values, as well as a shared history, which allows for comprehensive engagement on a wide range of issues of mutual concern. In this regard, I look forward to meeting with the Ambassador to update him on a number of topical issues, including the Northern Ireland talks process, the challenges posed for the island of Ireland by the UK exit from the EU, and Ireland's role as a bridge between the US and the EU.

The Taoiseach met with Ambassador Crawford at the US Embassy Independence Day reception on the evening of 03 July last. The Taoiseach took the opportunity to welcome Ambassador Crawford to Ireland and spoke with him about his work in the coming years.

Departmental Expenditure

144. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the amount spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the years 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by inquiry, tribunal or commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29834/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department had no tribunals, commissions of investigation or statutory inquiries in the years 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019.

Climate Change Policy

145. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics; the public bodies and agencies under his remit to which he has issued an instruction to cease the purchase and use of single-use plastics; when the instruction issued; the bodies that have confirmed that they no longer purchase and use single-use plastics, respectively; the bodies that have not provided such confirmation to date; when they will confirm; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29986/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics as per the directive issued by the Department of Communications, Climate action and the Environment on 3rd January 2019. There are no public bodies or agencies under my remit.

Banking Sector Regulation

146. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if the Central Bank has engaged with banks over their interpretation of EU regulations regarding the imposition of break fees; if so, the nature and result of such engagements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29070/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Central Bank of Ireland has advised me that it has checked the methodologies applied by lenders to calculate fixed rate breakage fees on mortgages subject to the European Union (Consumer Mortgage Credit Agreements) Regulations 2016 and has seen no evidence of material failings in this regard.

In addition the Central Bank has stated that it cannot comment specifically on the compliance by individual financial service providers with their obligations under financial services legislation due to the Central Bank's confidentiality obligations and the requirement to apply fair procedures. However, the Central Bank has advised that it has intervened with a small number of lenders to ensure that the information provided to consumers on fixed rate breakage fees is clear and transparent.

VAT Rate Application

147. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Finance the dates since January 1991 on which the Revenue Commissioners published advice to the effect that the zero VAT rate for food supplements was specifically restricted to vitamins, minerals and fish oils by concession; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29106/19]

148. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Finance the date on which the Revenue Commissioners first publicised it had been operating a zero VAT rate concession to food supplements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29107/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 147 and 148 together.

VAT legislation does not apply the zero rate of VAT to food supplements but shortly after the introduction of VAT Revenue applied a concessionary zero rating to certain vitamin, mineral and fish oil products.

As the market developed over the years this treatment resulted in the zero rating by Revenue of further similar products, including products other than vitamins, minerals and fish oils, and these rulings were published in Revenue's VAT rates database. The evolution of the scope of the concessionary treatment of certain types of food supplements was well understood by the industry and by agents representing clients in the food supplements sector and has never been disputed by Revenue. Revenue has referenced the original scope of its zero rating concession but acknowledged that the scope had broadened progressively over time to the point that it had become increasingly difficult to maintain an effective distinction between food supplements that could benefit from the zero rate and those that were standard rated. After undertaking a comprehensive review of the VAT treatment of food supplements, including getting an expert report on the definition of food for the purposes of the VAT Consolidation Act, Revenue concluded that the status quo was no longer sustainable and engaged with my Department concerning policy options that might be considered in the context of Finance Bill 2018. The relevant legislation was not changed in Finance Bill 2018 and therefore Revenue issued new guidance in December 2018 which removed the concessionary zero rating of various food supplement products with effect from 1 March 2019.

Following representation from Deputies and from the industry I wrote to Revenue outlin-

ing my plans to examine the policy and legislative options for the taxation of food supplement products in the context of Finance Bill 2019. Revenue responded by delaying the withdrawal of its concessionary zero rating of the food supplement products concerned until 1 November 2019. This will allow time for the enactment of any legislative changes in the context of Budget 2020.

My Department has recently concluded a public consultation on the taxation of food supplement products. The consultation sought input from a wide range of interested parties, including health and nutrition experts as well as my colleague the Minister for Health, to ensure that any legislative changes brought forward are evidence based. Officials in my department are considering the submissions received and the outcome will be presented to the Tax Strategy Group (TSG) on 9th July. The TSG Papers will be published on the Department's website shortly afterwards.

Revenue Commissioners Staff

149. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons the Revenue Commissioners recruited since January 2019, by grade and county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29144/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Revenue is an integrated tax and customs administration. I am advised that Revenue has appointed 615 staff from open and interdepartmental competitions since the start of 2019. Of these, almost 400 were assigned to customs roles or to backfill positions from which existing staff were assigned to customs roles in preparation for Brexit, with the balance assigned to other Revenue functions. Resources are deployed based on business needs.

Table 1: Revenue staff appointed by grade from 1 January to 30 June 2019

Grade	PO	AP	HEO/AO	EO	CO	Service Officer	Total
Number	3	29	71	119	389	4	615

Table 2: Revenue staff appointed by location from 1 January to 30 June 2019

Location	Total
Dublin	346
Leinster (excluding Dublin and Louth)	38
Munster	191
BMW	40
Total	615

Tax Yield

150. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated revenue that would be raised if the air travel tax was reinstated at a rate of €5 per passenger, including exemptions for disabled passengers and cabin crew. [29148/19]

151. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated revenue that would be raised if the air travel tax was reinstated at a rate of €5 per passenger with no exemptions. [29149/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 150 and 151 together.

I am advised by Revenue that based on the number of departing passengers in 2018 as published by the Central Statistics Office (18,300,561), the expected revenue generated would be €91.5 million, if charged at a rate of €5 per passenger. There is no information available in respect of the number of disabled passengers and cabin crew to calculate the proposed exemptions.

Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme

152. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance his views on concerns raised by the Ombudsman relating to persons being denied access to the disabled drivers and disabled passengers scheme on the basis that they have been refused primary medical certificates and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29162/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Scheme provides relief from VAT and VRT (up to a certain limit) on the purchase of an adapted car for transport of a person with specific severe and permanent physical disabilities, payment of a Fuel Grant, and an exemption from Motor Tax.

To qualify for the Scheme an applicant must be in possession of a Primary Medical Certificate. To qualify for a Primary Medical Certificate, an applicant must satisfy one of the following conditions:

- be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both legs;
- be wholly without the use of one leg and almost wholly without the use of the other leg such that the applicant is severely restricted as to movement of the lower limbs;
- be without both hands or without both arms;
- be without one or both legs;
- be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both hands or arms and wholly or almost wholly without the use of one leg;
- have the medical condition of dwarfism and have serious difficulties of movement of the lower limbs.

The Scheme represents a significant tax expenditure. Between the Vehicle Registration Tax and VAT foregone, and the fuel grant, the scheme cost €65m in each of 2016 and 2017, rising to €70m in 2018. This figure does not include the revenue foregone in respect of the relief from Motor Tax provided to members of the Scheme.

I understand and fully sympathise with any person who suffers from a serious physical disability and can't access the scheme under the current criteria. However, given the scope and scale of the scheme, any possible changes to it can only be made after careful consideration, taking into account the existing and prospective cost of the scheme as well as the availability of other schemes which seek to help with the mobility of disabled persons, and the interaction between each of these schemes.

Accordingly, I have no plans to amend the qualifying medical criteria for the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers Scheme at this time.

Brexit Staff

153. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number recruited by the Revenue Commissioners to deal with Brexit-related issues in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade and county in tabular form; the number expected to be recruited to such roles in the immediate future; if a posting represented a new role; if not, if it was for the purpose of replacing staff and filling an existing position in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29181/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that no additional resources were recruited to Revenue in 2016 for Brexit. Following the decision of the UK in June 2016 to leave the EU, Revenue began a review of potential policy and operational implications and that work was undertaken within the then existing resources.

Budget 2017 provided Revenue with resources for an additional 40 staff to prepare for Brexit. This included provision to upgrade ICT systems to manage the anticipated increase in Customs transactions; and for additional staff to put in place and to facilitate the necessary training and upskilling arrangements for staff still to be recruited.

In the context of extensive and detailed Brexit preparedness and contingency work across all Government Departments and Agencies, Revenue determined that in a ‘Central Case’ scenario (i.e. an orderly withdrawal of the UK from the EU, to include a transition period until the end of 2020), an additional 600 Revenue staff would be required. In September 2018, the Government granted approval in principle for the phased recruitment of an additional 600 Revenue staff to meet the challenges posed by Brexit.

Budget 2019 provided Revenue with an additional €10 million pay provision, for 270 of the additional 600 staff to be recruited during 2019. Following a Government decision in December 2018, it was agreed to accelerate Revenue’s recruitment programme in preparation for Brexit.

Since the start of 2019, Revenue has appointed over 600 staff from open recruitment, inter-departmental and internal competitions. The majority of these have been assigned to customs roles or to backfill positions from which existing Revenue staff have been assigned to customs duties. As serving staff are taking up their new Brexit-related positions, Revenue is backfilling the vacancies created, from panels of candidates established in its general recruitment activity.

In the period from 2017 to date, Revenue has assigned over 450 additional staff to customs related roles, deployed across a range of functions, with the majority assigned to import and export trade facilitation activities and policy and operational roles. Resources are deployed based on the evolving business needs and to tackle any risks as they emerge. The following tables provide a breakdown of these additional staff.

Table 1: Additional staff assigned in preparation for Brexit in 2017, 2018 and 2019 to date

Grade/Year	PO	AP	HEO/AO	EO	CO	Total
2017	0	2	5	8	3	18
2018	0	1	5	10	49	65
2019	1	6	33	129	201	370
Total	1	9	43	147	253	453

Table 2: Additional staff assigned in preparation for Brexit by location in 2017, 2018 and 2019 to date.

Location	2017	2018	2019	Total
Dublin	12	56	213	281
Leinster (excluding Dublin and Louth)	0	0	40	40
Munster	6	9	104	119
BMW (in Donegal, Galway, Louth, Sligo)	0	0	13	13
Total	18	65	370	453

Revenue will continue to adjust its recruitment and training plans in response to business needs, including Brexit-related developments.

Tax Code

154. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the tax schemes, incentives, exemptions and other forms of tax measures that have sunset clauses; the annual cost of the measures based on the latest data; the dates on which the measures are set to expire; if the continuation of the measures is factored into the base in the summer economic statement in each of the years 2020 to 2024; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29204/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): It was not possible to collate the information sought in the time available and, therefore, I will make arrangements to provide the information to the Deputy as soon as possible and in line with Standing Orders.

Cycle to Work Scheme

155. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Finance if an amendment will be made to the cycle to work scheme to allow a person who had his or her bike stolen make a second claim during the five-year period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29206/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The purpose of the cycle to work scheme, introduced by the Finance (No. 2) Act 2008, is to encourage more employees to cycle to and from work, or between work places, thereby contributing to lowering carbon emissions, reducing traffic congestion and improving health and fitness levels. Under the scheme an employer may provide an employee with a bicycle and/or cycle safety equipment without the employee being liable for benefit-in-kind taxation. However, where the expenditure by the employer exceeds €1,000, the excess amount is liable to tax.

The legislation only allows for one purchase of a bicycle in respect of an employee in a five-year period irrespective of whether the bicycle was used for the full period or not. It operates on a self-assessing basis using straightforward rules. Any deviation from the current system would involve additional administrative procedures for either or both Revenue and employers in relation to the verification of loss, theft, insurance recovery, etc. As this runs counter to the existing provisions which are administratively simple, it would not be appropriate to alter the existing scheme.

Anyone obtaining a bicycle under the scheme would therefore be advised to ensure it is covered by insurance.

Departmental Expenditure

156. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Finance the amount spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the years 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by year, inquiry, tribunal or commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29234/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The amount my Department spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the years 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019 are in tabular form below.

Year	IBRC Commission of Investigation	Banking Inquiry
2019	€81,137.70	Nil
2018	€29,769.26	Nil
2017	€54,436.50	Nil
2016	€27,180.63	€34,348
2015	€223,724.55	€208,013

State Aid Investigations

157. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the amount accrued in interest on €13.1 billion since it was lodged to an escrow account (details supplied); his plans in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29267/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Notwithstanding the appeal in the Apple State aid case and the difference in view between Ireland and the Commission on the issue, the Government has always stated that it is fully committed to complying with the binding legal obligations the Commission's Final Decision places on Ireland. The State recovered the alleged State aid from Apple. The total amount lodged to the Escrow Fund was circa €14.285 billion (representing the principal amount and relevant EU interest).

The Department of Finance recently published the financial statements for the Escrow Fund for 2018 which are available at the following link - <https://www.gov.ie/en/news/9237ee-cover-note-on-financial-statements-of-ireland-apple-escrow-fund/>

The financial statements illustrate that the net assets of the Escrow Fund as at 31 December 2018 totalled €14.269 billion, representing a decline in value of €16 million. This decline in value for the Escrow Fund reflects the current negative interest rate environment as illustrated by the consistent negative official ECB Overnight Deposit rate (-0.4%) and negative yields on highly rated euro-sovereign and quasi-sovereign bonds.

The arrangements in the Escrow Framework Deed include the agreement that all claims of ownership and access to this money is suspended until the European Courts have concluded the proceedings that the Government and Apple have brought. In general terms, all income/expenses, including any gains or losses will accrue to the Escrow Fund. The final proceeds of the Escrow Fund will only be released when there has been a final determination in the European Courts over the validity of the Commission's Decision.

Land Transfers

158. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding the trans-

fer of approximately one acre of land from a person to a sibling as a site to build a house; and the implications from his Department and the Revenue Commissioners' points of view for such transfers on both parties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29308/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the transfer of one acre of land by a person to a sibling to build a house on that land constitutes a disposal of the land for capital gains tax (CGT) purposes. Any gain arising on the transfer of the land is liable to CGT for the person making the disposal. The first €1,270 of gains made by an individual in a tax year are exempt from CGT.

Relief from CGT is available for a transfer of land by a parent to his or her child to enable the child to build a house on the land provided certain conditions are met. This relief does not apply to transfers between siblings.

The transfer of land where no consideration has been paid for the land, or where any consideration paid was less than its full market value, could result in a gift tax liability for the sibling receiving the gift. For gift tax purposes, the relationship between the person who provides the gift and the person who receives the gift (i.e. the beneficiary) determines the life-time tax-free threshold - known as the Group threshold, below which inheritance tax does not arise. In the case of the gift between siblings, the Group B threshold (currently €32,500) applies, inter alia, where the beneficiary is a brother or sister of the donor.

Any prior gift or inheritance received by a beneficiary since 5 December 1991 from within the same Group threshold is aggregated for the purposes of determining whether any tax is payable on a benefit. Where a person receives gifts which are in excess of their relevant tax-free threshold, gift tax at a rate of 33% applies on the excess over the tax-free threshold.

As the transfer of land constitutes both a disposal for CGT purposes and a gift for gift tax purposes, a credit is given for any CGT paid against a gift tax liability in respect of the same land.

Stamp duty at the rate of 6% of the market value applies on the transfer of land. In this case the duty would be payable by the sibling receiving the land. However, there is a refund scheme in place in respect of the acquisition of land that is then developed for residential purposes. A refund of up to 2/3 of the stamp duty paid may be claimed where a house is built on the land and other qualifying conditions for the relief are met. A fixed timeframe for the commencement and completion of building work applies; construction work must commence within 30 months of the land being transferred and the house must be completed within two years of the commencement of construction.

Departmental Advertising Data

159. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the amount spent on digital marketing in each of the past eight years; the items on which funds were spent; the criteria by which target audiences were selected; the amount of the digital spend targeted here; the amount targeted abroad; the amount that related to private companies; the amount that related to policy initiatives; and the purpose of the digital advertisements. [29392/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The amount my Department spent on digital marketing in each of the past eight years; the items on which funds were spent; the criteria by which target audiences were selected; the amount of the digital spend targeted here; the amount targeted abroad; the amount that related to private companies; the amount that related to policy initiatives; and the purpose of the digital advertisements is outlined in the attachment

document.

Year	Supplier	Amount spent on digital marketing	Items on which funds were spent	The criteria by which target audiences were selected	The amount of the digital spend targeted here	The amount of the digital spend targeted abroad	The amount that related to private companies	The amount that related to policy initiatives	The purpose of the digital advertisements
2015	Carr Communications	€37,018.30 (Incl VAT)	Mortgage Arrears Communication Campaign (digital marketing was included but it is not possible to provide a breakdown of how much of the contract was specifically digital marketing).	Those in mortgage arrears.	Unable to disaggregate from total amount.	Unable to disaggregate from total amount.	Unable to disaggregate from total amount.	A Government Decision on mortgage arrears in May 2015, and under the direction of the Cabinet Committee on Construction 2020, Housing Planning & Mortgage Arrears, the Department was tasked with the coordination of a communications campaign to publicise State-funded services for borrowers in mortgage arrears.	The coordination of a communications campaign to publicise State-funded services for borrowers in mortgage arrears.
2016	Carr Communications	€73,135.76 (Incl VAT)	Mortgage Arrears Communication Campaign (digital marketing was included but it is not possible to provide a breakdown of how much of the contract was specifically digital marketing).	Those in mortgage arrears.	Unable to disaggregate from total amount.	Unable to disaggregate from total amount.	Unable to disaggregate from total amount.	A Government Decision on mortgage arrears in May 2015, and under the direction of the Cabinet Committee on Construction 2020, Housing Planning & Mortgage Arrears, the Department was tasked with the coordination of a communications campaign to publicise State-funded services for borrowers in mortgage arrears.	The coordination of a communications campaign to publicise State-funded services for borrowers in mortgage arrears.

Questions - Written Answers

2017 2017	Language Communications Ltd Twitter-Twitter	€421,460.42 (Incl VAT) (this figure includes €28,000 for web development) European Financial Forum (EFF) €24.60 Switch your Bank €73.80 Total: €98.40 including VAT	Research, Creative, Web Development, Project Management, Media Buys 1 x Tweets 4 x Tweets	Consumers in the Irish financial services market Location – Ireland Location – Ireland	Unable to disaggregate from total amount. The campaign is targeted at any consumers in the Irish financial services market whether at home or abroad. 100% 100%	Unable to disaggregate from total amount. The campaign is targeted at any consumers in the Irish financial services market whether at home or abroad. Nil Nil	All Ni Nil	€24.60 €73.80	Public awareness campaign Switch Your Bank. As part of a range of competition measures agreed with the European Commission under their respective EU-Restructuring plans AIB and Permanent TSB are required to provide funding to a public awareness campaign (such campaign to be facilitated by Ireland through an appropriate state body) to raise awareness and promote customer switching of financial products. Awareness of European Financial Forum Awareness of the Switch your Bank Campaign
2018	Language Communications Ltd	€402,210.00 (Incl VAT)	Creative, Web Development, Project Management, Media Buys	Consumers in the Irish financial services market	Unable to disaggregate from total amount. The campaign is targeted at any consumers in the Irish financial services market whether at home or abroad.	Unable to disaggregate from total amount. The campaign is targeted at any consumers in the Irish financial services market whether at home or abroad.	All		Public awareness campaign Switch Your Bank. As part of a range of competition measures agreed with the European Commission under their respective EU-Restructuring plans AIB and Permanent TSB are required to provide funding to a public awareness campaign (such campaign to be facilitated by Ireland through an appropriate state body) to raise awareness and promote customer switching of financial products.

2019	Language Communications Ltd	€2,066.40 (Incl VAT)	Web Hosting	Consumers in the Irish financial services market	Unable to disaggregate from total amount. The campaign is targeted at any consumers in the Irish financial services market whether at home or abroad.	Unable to disaggregate from total amount. The campaign is targeted at any consumers in the Irish financial services market whether at home or abroad.	All		Public awareness campaign Switch Your Bank. As part of a range of competition measures agreed with the European Commission under their respective EU-Restructuring plans AIB and Permanent TSB are required to provide funding to a public awareness campaign (such campaign to be facilitated by Ireland through an appropriate state body) to raise awareness and promote customer switching of financial products.
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Financial Services Regulation

160. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether commercial banks and building societies engaged in reckless lending practices between 2000 and 2008; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that in some cases depositors were contacted by the financial institutions and encouraged to invest their savings in buy-to-let properties using additional loans and that these properties ended up in negative equity; if the imparting of unsolicited and perceived irresponsible advice by the financial institutions has been investigated; the steps that can be taken to assist such depositors and borrowers at this stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29413/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The original Consumer Protection Code (the Code) was introduced in 2006 and effective from 1 July 2007 and set out rules and principles that all regulated financial services firms must follow when providing financial products and services to consumers. The general principles of the Code (which remain in place following the 2012 review of the Code) require regulated entities to ensure that they act honestly, fairly and professionally in the best interests of its customers and the integrity of the market; act with due skill, care and diligence in the best interests of its customers and do not recklessly, negligently or deliberately mislead a customer as to the real or perceived advantages or disadvantages of any product or service.

The Code requires that before providing a product or service to a consumer, regulated entities are obliged to gather and record sufficient information from the consumer to enable it to provide a recommendation or a product or service appropriate to that consumer. They must ensure that, having regard to the facts disclosed by the consumer and other relevant facts about that consumer of which the regulated entity is aware, any product or service offered to a consumer was suitable.

The Central Bank of Ireland uses a number of methods to monitor compliance with consumer protection requirements such as:

- inspections
- general reviews on a particular topic
- mystery shopping
- monitoring the advertising of financial services
- guide to Consumer Protection risk assessments

For further details please see <https://www.centralbank.ie/regulation/consumer-protection/compliance-monitoring>

Departmental Expenditure

161. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the costs paid to companies (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason each was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29443/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department engaged the companies mentioned in each of the years 2015 to 2019. Details of the fees paid are in the following table:

Year	Business Unit	Companies	Cost per year	Reason each was engaged
2015	207608	Arthur Cox	€934,654	Litigation
2016	207608	Arthur Cox	€242,234	Litigation, procurement advice, ongoing management and phased disposal of State investments
2016	207601	PwC	€73,031	Professional services in relation to National Risk Assessment
2017	207608	Arthur Cox	€286,961	Litigation, ongoing management and phased disposal of State investments
2018	207608	Arthur Cox	€435,061	Litigation, HBFI, ongoing management and phased disposal of State investments
2018	207608	KPMG	€119,138	ReBo Wind-down, HBFI
2018	207608	A&L Goodbody	€44,034	An Post
2019	207608	Arthur Cox	€23,077	Litigation

There is also a record of an Public Appointments Service invoice for €30,750 relating to a competition for the appointment of members to the Central Bank Commission for 2018 on behalf of the Department, this payment was in relation to costs the Public Appointments Service incurred engaging PwC in relation to this work.

Departmental Expenditure

162. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the costs paid to a company (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by his Department in each of the years

2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason it was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29552/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department engaged the company System Dynamics to provide technical support for an IT system. In July 2015 this company was acquired by Deloitte. On two occasions between 2015 and 2019 we made payments in relation to this engagement. Details of the fees paid are in the following table:

Year	Projects	Costs paid
2015	Oracle JDEWARDS Support Service	19,999.80
2016	Oracle JDEWARDS Support Service	5,803.00

The Deputy might note that details of my Department's spending on legal and consultancy fees are regularly published on my Department's website.

Vehicle Registration

163. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Finance if the level of vehicle registration tax being charged for cars imported from the UK will be reviewed; the way in which the tax is calculated; if the calculation will be reviewed in view of the high level charged to particular car models and engines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29599/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Ireland's Vehicle Registration Tax regime for passenger cars (VRT Category A) is based on CO2 emissions in order to encourage the purchase of vehicles with lower CO2 emissions. This is in line with broader climate change policy as well as EU Regulations which set ever lower binding emissions targets on the automotive industry in relation to new car and van fleets.

The Deputy can find an explanation for how the tax is calculated at the following link: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/importing-vehicles-duty-free-allowances/guide-to-vrt/calculating-vrt/index.aspx>

In relation to a review of the VRT regime, the Deputy will be aware that there is a commitment contained in the Government's Climate Action Plan to recalibrate the VRT regime for passenger cars in light of recent progress on emissions standards. This means that the environmental rationale of the current VRT regime must be strengthened. My officials will be addressing this matter further in the context of the Tax Strategy Group.

Tax Reliefs Data

164. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the tax reliefs available at the marginal rate of tax; and the estimated saving in 2020 and in a full year if these were standard rated. [29663/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by Revenue that the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 (TCA) provides the following reliefs and deductions at a taxpayer's marginal rate of tax:

- Section 114 provides a deduction for expenses wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred in the performance of the duties of employment.

- Sections 381 – 390 provide deductions in relation to losses incurred in a trade or profession

and property letting.

- Section 384 provides relief for Case V losses (can only be set against Case V profits).
- Section 467 provides for a deduction of up to €75,000 for employing a carer for an incapacitated individual.
- Section 469 provides relief at the marginal rate for expenditure incurred in respect of nursing home expenses. All other health expenses are relieved at the standard rate.
- Section 471 provides a deduction in respect of Permanent Health Benefit premiums up to a maximum of 10% of salary.
- Section 472B provides an allowance of €6,350 to qualifying seafarers.
- Section 482 allows 'loss relief' to any person who has incurred qualifying expenditure in respect of an approved building that is either owned or occupied by him/her.
- Section 483 provides relief for certain gifts made to the Minister for Finance.
- Section 485F allows the carry-forward of excess reliefs of high earners affected by the high earners' restriction.
- Section 664 provides for farmland leasing relief. This relief is given as a deduction (up to a specified limit) for profits from rent received under a 'qualifying lease'.
- Section 666 provides for stock relief of 25% for all farmers, section 667B provides 100% relief for young farmers and section 667C provides 50% relief for partners in registered farm partnerships. These reliefs are given as a deduction, which is calculated by reference to increase in closing stock value over opening stock value.
- Section 667D provides for the succession tax credit. It is given in the form of a €5,000 tax credit split between the partners in a succession farm partnership on the basis of their profit-sharing ratio.
- Relief for contributions to retirement benefits schemes and personal pensions (subject to certain maxima) – granted under Part 30 of the TCA (section 774(7) for occupational schemes, section 776 for statutory schemes, section 784 for retirement annuity premiums, Ch 2A of Part 30 for PRSAs.
- Section 790C provides relief for the Pension Related Deduction (PRD) up to 31 December 2018). Section 790CA provides relief for the Additional Superannuation Contribution (ASC) (from 1 January 2019).
- Section 792 provides relief in respect of deeds of covenant in favour of permanently incapacitated individuals.
- Section 823A provides for a deduction of up to €35,000 under the Foreign Earnings Deduction for qualifying travel to certain countries.
- Section 847A provides relief for donations to certain sports bodies by self-assessed taxpayers.
- Sections 1025 and 1031J provide relief for maintenance payments for separated spouses or civil partners, respectively. - Part 9 of the TCA provides that capital allowances in relation to industrial buildings and plant and machinery are available as deductions in taxing trading income and rental income.

- Part 16 of the TCA provides relief under the Start-Up Relief for Entrepreneurs scheme.

Revenue has also advised me that, based on 2016 data, which is the latest actual year for which data currently exists, the tentative yield, if the above reliefs were standard rated is of the order of €700m on a full year basis. This estimate does not account for alterations in taxpayer behaviour, or interactions between the reliefs.

Real Estate Investment Trusts

165. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Finance the details of plans and the timeline for implementation of same to address the tax loopholes enjoyed by private equity funds which are increasing their housing stock for buy-to-let purposes and which do not pay the same level of tax as residential landlords; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29671/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In light of recent commentary on the property market and in the context of the question asked, I believe the Deputy is referring to Real Estate Investment Trusts, Irish Real Estate Funds and section 110 companies.

Finance Act 2013 introduced the regime for Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) in Ireland. The function of the REIT framework is not to provide an overall tax exemption but rather to facilitate collective investment in rental property by removing a double layer of taxation which would otherwise apply on property investment via a corporate vehicle. Property rental income and gains arising are exempt from tax within the REIT and are taxed at the investor level when distributed through dividend withholding tax at 20%. The legislation requires that 85% of all rental income profits be distributed annually to shareholders. The REIT is subject to corporation tax on income and gains not arising from the property rental business of the REIT. Distributions to certain limited classes of investors such as pension funds and charities do not suffer the withholding tax as they are more generally exempt from tax.

Irish Real Estate Funds (IREFs) are investment undertakings, excluding UCITS, which derive 25% or more of its market value from assets deriving their value directly or indirectly from real estate in the State. The IREF regime was introduced in Finance Act 2016 in response to concerns raised regarding the use of certain collective investment vehicles to invest in Irish property. Investors had been using the structures to minimise their exposure to Irish tax on Irish property transactions. The regime provides, with some exceptions, that where a unit holder receives value from the IREF, an IREF withholding tax of 20% will generally apply.

Section 110 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 sets out the tax regime applicable to special purpose companies set up to securitise assets. Section 110 is designed to create a tax neutral regime for bona-fide securitisation purposes. Section 110 companies can only hold certain qualifying assets - real property, such as land and buildings, is not an asset that a qualifying company can hold. They can however hold loans and other financial assets that derive their value from Irish land and buildings. Amendments were made to the taxation of section 110 companies in Finance Act 2016 to address the issues relating to the taxation of Irish property. The changes related to the taxation of qualifying companies which held loans that derived their value from Irish land. The effect of these changes was to ensure that profits generated from Irish real estate remain within the charge to tax.

With regard to acquisitions of property by institutional investors, an investment strategy which includes the purchase (including by forward-funding) of an entire apartment block or development inevitably creates an impression that the investment is disproportionate to other

activities in the market, particularly the activities of private home buyers. However this needs to be seen against a background of still muted supply in the property market and a continuing shortage of rented residential accommodation.

Furthermore, while the role of institutional investors is growing, particularly in the urban apartment market segment, it is still minor in proportion to the total rental sector. Data provided to my Department by the Residential Tenancies Board for May 2019 shows that the rented residential accommodation market is still dominated by small landlords. The majority (over 70%) of landlords registered a single rental tenancy, with over 96% of landlords registering 5 tenancies or less. Landlords with 5 tenancies or less account for almost 72% of all registered tenancies. The top 21 landlords account for 3.11% of all registered tenancies. The percentage of landlords with 20 or more tenancies has decreased from 0.52% in 2017 to 0.43% in 2019.

Institutional investors have an important role to play in increasing property supply and I am satisfied that tax regimes which apply taxation at the level of the investor are appropriate to collective investment vehicles of this nature. Given the important implications which developments in the property market can have for the economy, my Department actively monitors developments in this sector on an ongoing basis. In this context, the Deputy may be aware, as part of the 2018 Finance Bill process I committed that my officials would undertake a report on REITs, IREFs and Section 110 companies as they invest in the residential property market. This report to be presented to the Tax Strategy Group this month.

Departmental Schemes

166. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a car scrappage scheme; the estimated cost of such a scheme; if consideration is being given to such a scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29718/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Government's Climate Action Plan contains the following action point: As an alternative to the current grant regime, consider in 2020 a car-scrappage scheme to promote the purchase of electric vehicles. This is directed to my Department.

The previous car scrappage scheme operated from January 2010 to July 2011. VRT relief of up to €1,500 was available upon registration of a new vehicle, subject to the scrappage of a qualifying old vehicle. The VRT relief was provided where a new category A, or passenger car of emissions band A or B with CO₂ emissions of 140g/km or lower was purchased and registered and an old car scrapped.

To qualify for relief, the scrapped vehicle must have been registered in the State in the name of the purchaser of the new car for at least 18 months previous to the date of scrappage; and on the day of scrappage been ten years old or more from the date of first registration.

The current situation is different. There are currently significant Government-backed incentives in place for electric vehicles including VRT relief of up to a further €5,000. Based on this existing relief, a person purchasing an electric vehicle with an Open Market Selling Price of under €36,000 would currently pay no VRT. This suggests that any car scrappage scheme that was based on the provision of VRT relief would be ineffective because no VRT is paid on the registration of most Battery Electric Vehicles to begin with. The principal effect of any such VRT relief would be to gift taxpayers money to reduce the acquisition costs for buyers of higher end BEVs. In that regard it is unlikely that there would be high volume of motorists with 10 year old cars who would be in the market for higher end Battery Electric Vehicles.

In addition, the market is more complex than in 2010 with the emergence of PCPs as a popular method of acquiring a car for use and potentially purchasing it. The default position is that the legal owner of the vehicle, generally the car financing company, would be the direct beneficiary of any such VRT relief.

VAT Rate Application

167. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the zero rate of VAT on food supplements; if public consultation has taken place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29726/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): VAT legislation does not specifically apply the zero rate of VAT to food supplements but shortly after the introduction of VAT in 1972 Revenue applied a concessionary zero rating to certain vitamin, mineral and fish oil products. As the market developed over the years this treatment resulted in the zero rating by Revenue of further similar products, including products other than vitamins, minerals and fish oils, and these rulings were published in Revenue's VAT rates database. The evolution of the scope of the concessionary treatment of certain types of food supplements was well understood by the industry and by agents representing clients in the food supplements sector. The scope had broadened progressively over time to the point that it had become increasingly difficult to maintain an effective distinction between food supplements that could benefit from the zero rate and those that were standard rated.

After undertaking a comprehensive review of the VAT treatment of food supplements, including commissioning an expert report on the definition of food for the purposes of the VAT Consolidation Act, Revenue issued new guidance in December 2018 which removed the concessionary zero rating of various food supplement products with effect from 1 March 2019.

Following representation from Deputies and from the industry I wrote to Revenue outlining my plans to examine the policy and legislative options for the taxation of food supplement products in the context of Budget 2020, including the opening of a public consultation. Revenue decided to extend the date of the removal of the zero rating from March to November 2019, to allow for the enactment of any potential legislative changes in the context of Budget 2020.

The public consultation in relation to the appropriate VAT rate for food supplements closed on 24 May.

Officials in my department are reviewing the submissions received and the outcome of this review will be presented to a meeting of the Tax Strategy Group (TSG) on 9th July. The TSG Papers will be published on the Department's website shortly afterwards.

National Economic Dialogue

168. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Finance if he will report on his attendance at the National Economic Dialogue. [29289/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware the National Economic Dialogue took place for the fifth time on June 26th and June 27th this year. The Dialogue provided an opportunity to foster discussion between the relevant stakeholders on how to best sustain and strengthen the recovery while taking into account the many competing economic and social priorities within the limited available resources.

The Dialogue was attended by representatives from community, voluntary and environmental groups, business unions and the academic community. A number of members of the Select Committee on Budgetary Oversight also contributed to the event.

The Chair's report and the reports of each of the six rapporteurs for the breakout sessions are currently being finalised, and once completed they will be made available on *www.budget.gov.ie*. My opening remarks on "Understanding the Context: Economic Perspectives", my closing remarks at the Dialogue and the paper presented at the NED are currently available on this website.

I believe the National Economic Dialogue is a very constructive exercise. Decisions that have been made on the content of previous budgets have been influenced by previous Dialogues and I intend to reflect on this year's discussion when formulating Budget 2020.

VAT Rate Application

169. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to change the hospitality VAT rate to 9%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29788/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The second reduced 9% VAT rate was introduced on a temporary basis as part of the Jobs Initiative from July 2011 to December 2013 and was aimed at boosting tourism and the creation of additional jobs in that sector. The rate was designed to be temporary, but was maintained in subsequent Budgets. In 2016, the Programme for Partnership Government committed to maintaining the 9% VAT rate, dependent on prices remaining competitive in the sector. I decided in Budget 2018 not to make any change to the 9% VAT rate. However, I accepted that the rate must be subject to analysis. In this context, I asked my Department to undertake a comprehensive study of all aspects of the 9% VAT rate ahead of Budget 2019.

The "Review of the 9% VAT rate: Analysis of Economic and Sectoral Developments" was published by my Department in July 2018, in order to better inform any decision in relation to the 9% reduced rate going forward. In addition to assessing the relevance, cost, value-for-money, and impact to date of the 9% VAT rate, the Review also looked at the estimated impact on the relevant sectors were the rate to be increased.

The Review found that tourism expenditure was more sensitive to income growth and the economic cycle than price changes. The economy is currently performing well, with high levels of employment and strong demand in the tourism sector. This positive economic outlook means that the income channel of demand is likely to ensure that economic activity within the sector remains strong. The Review concluded that the VAT rating applied to the tourism sector should not greatly impact demand or employment in the sector. The Budget decision to increase the VAT rate was made following this analysis.

Furthermore, the Revenue Commissioners also published a report on the 9% VAT Rate in June 2018 which analyses the output and employment impact of the 9% VAT rate using Revenue data. The analysis found an estimated increase in employment of on average 1.8 employees for each firm benefitting from the reduced rate in the accommodation and food sector in the year following the introduction of the reduced rate. However, beyond the short term, they were unable to distinguish the impact of the rate on employment from the impact of other factors in the economy.

Given the impact of an increase in the VAT rate on the hospitality sector has only recently been reviewed by my Department and the Revenue Commissioners, there does not seem to cur-

rently be a case for reviewing the impact of the increase.

However, in noting that changes made in Budget 2019 may present a challenge to the tourism and hospitality sector, an extra €35 million was allocated to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in order to provide more targeted supports. This allocation includes targeted supports of €4.5 million for regional initiatives such as Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and the Wild Atlantic Way, and nearly €10 million for the development of greenways.

Universal Social Charge Abolition

170. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to abolish the universal social charge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29801/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): An inter-departmental working group was established in February 2018 to examine and report on options for the amalgamation of USC and PRSI over the medium-term. The working group completed their work, in line with their terms of reference and their report was submitted to me in late 2018. Follow-on decisions will be taken in due course and I will make these public at the appropriate time.

More generally, the Government is committed to measures that positively benefit workers while also keeping the tax base broad.

Our income tax system has been transformed since 2008, following a necessary reform to broaden the income tax base in the interest of ensuring a stable revenue stream to fund essential public services.

I am determined to balance the priorities of ensuring that our personal taxation system remains progressive, competitive but also resilient in the future.

This is why we have been introducing targeted changes to the income tax system within available resources to make steady and sustainable progress in reducing the income tax burden, focusing on low and middle income earners. This has been done by making targeted changes to the USC and also by increasing the entry point to the higher rate of income tax.

Tax Strategy Group

171. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Finance the timeframe for the publication of the tax strategy papers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29802/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Deputy will be aware that the Tax Strategy Group (TSG) is in place since the early 1990s and chaired by the Department of Finance with membership comprising senior officials and political advisers from a number of Civil Service Departments and Offices. Papers on various options for tax policy changes are prepared annually by officials. The TSG is not a decision-making body and the papers produced are simply a list of options and issues to be considered in the Budgetary process.

In line with the Government's commitment to budgetary reform including greater engagement with the Oireachtas, the Tax Strategy Group papers are now published in advance of the Budget to facilitate informed discussion. It is my intention that publication of the Papers online will take place shortly after the annual meeting of the Tax Strategy Group. Therefore I would expect publication before the end of July.

Tax Code

172. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated time for the tax rate on roll your own tobacco to reach equivalence with manufactured cigarettes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29803/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that if tax on roll-your-own tobacco was increased using an annual tax escalator of 10%, it would take approximately four years for the tax rate on roll-your-own tobacco to reach equivalence with cigarettes. That is providing there was no further increase in Tobacco Products Tax on cigarettes during that period.

VAT Rate Application

173. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the feasibility of including nicotine patches in the list of medicines which are zero rated for VAT; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29804/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The VAT rating of goods and services is subject to the requirements of EU VAT law, with which Irish VAT law must comply. In accordance with Irish VAT legislation, oral medicines (for human consumption), licensed/authorised by the Health Products Regulatory Authority, are liable to VAT at the zero rate. Ireland's application of the zero rate of VAT to oral medicines derives from the derogation under Article 110 of the EU VAT Directive. Under that provision, Ireland may retain the zero rate on goods and services which was in place on 1 January 1991. As oral medicines were liable to the zero rate of VAT on that date, Ireland continues to apply this rate but may not extend its scope. I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that as nicotine patches cannot be considered an oral medicine there is no discretion, under the Directive, to zero rate these products.

Fiscal Policy

174. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the indicative nominal budgetary package figure for 2020 of €2.8 billion is after the transfer of €500 million to the rainy day fund; if the €500 million must not come out of the unallocated figure; if the treatment is consistent for 2021 to 2024; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29859/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I can advise the Deputy that the anticipated transfer of €500 million to the Rainy Day Fund (RDF) will not impact on the indicative nominal budgetary package of €2.8 billion for 2020 set out in the Summer Economic Statement (i.e. the proposed budgetary package is net of this payment) .

It is important to point out that transferring money to the RDF will not be considered general government expenditure, as the payment to the RDF is a flow within the general government sector. While this expenditure is a non-voted capital payment impacting upon the Exchequer balance, it does not affect the headline general government balance. This treatment will be consistent over the forecast horizon.

Tax Credits

175. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 42 of 27 June 2019, if the restriction referred to in subsection (8) (details supplied) applies even in circumstances in which the home carer has no income other than carer's benefit in a particular year. [29866/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Subsection (8) of section 466A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 (TCA) provides that a couple may not receive both the increased standard rate band and the home carer credit in a tax year.

Carer's Benefit is taxable income under section 112 TCA. As a result, a jointly assessed couple where one spouse or civil partner is in receipt of this payment is considered to be a dual income household and, thus, entitled to an increase in the standard rate band of the lesser of €26,300 or the income of the lower earner. This means that the maximum joint standard rate band a couple can have is €70,600 (€44,300 + €26,300), which is the equivalent of double the single earner rate band. However, it is not possible for one spouse or civil partner to have the full extended rate band of €70,600- an individual can have no more than €44,300.

If a couple decide to opt for the home carer credit instead of the increased standard rate band, the carer spouse or civil partner may earn up to €7,200 per year without affecting the amount of the credit awarded. However, Carer's Benefit is not taken into account when calculating the income of the carer spouse or civil partner for the purposes of the €7,200 income threshold. In other words, if the only income of the carer spouse or civil partner is Carer's Benefit, there will be no reduction in the home carer credit due to that spouse or civil partner.

Revenue will apply whichever relief is the most beneficial for the couple concerned.

Official Engagements

176. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to engage in bilateral meetings with the Austrian Minister for Finance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29890/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As part of my ongoing international engagements, I meet monthly with my EU counterparts at meetings of ECOFIN and Eurogroup, including with my Austrian counterpart, Eduard Muller.

I intend to continue my dialogue with him and my other Finance Minister counterparts in the period ahead.

At present, there are no arrangements in place for a bilateral meeting with Minister Muller.

VAT Rate Application

177. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance if EU VAT directives allow the Revenue Commissioners the discretion to operate a zero VAT concession rate for selected products or services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29914/19]

178. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the number to the nearest 10 of zero VAT rate determinations for food supplements issued by the Revenue Commissioners in each of the years 2011 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29915/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 177

and 178 together.

I am advised by Revenue that the provisions of the EU Directive are transposed into Irish VAT law, which is interpreted by the Irish Courts based on the principles and purpose of the Directive. Interpretation of this legislation evolves on a continuous basis, as a result of judgements handed down by Irish courts and, ultimately, the CJEU. Revenue continuously reviews its interpretation of VAT legislation in line with these judgements. In addition, the European Commission may challenge any Member State where they take the view that the VAT treatment of particular transactions or activities by a Member State are not in accordance with the VAT Directive.

The Directive does not specify the rate of VAT applying to the supply of every known product or service; it provides a framework for the application of rates to broad categories of goods or services. Within this framework there is room for differing interpretations of the legislation as to the rate of VAT applying to specific goods or services. In particular this may happen following the development of new goods or services. In these circumstances, Revenue and taxpayers interpret the law as it stands and if taxpayers disagree with Revenue's interpretation they can appeal the matter to the Tax Appeal Commissioners and ultimately to the CJEU.

VAT legislation does not apply the zero rate of VAT to food supplements but shortly after the introduction of VAT Revenue applied a concessionary zero rating to certain vitamin, mineral and fish oil products. As the market developed over the years this treatment resulted in the zero rating by Revenue of further similar products, including products other than vitamins, minerals and fish oils, and these rulings were published in Revenue's VAT rates database. The scope of the relatively narrow original zero rating of food supplement products permitted by Revenue broadened progressively over time to the point that it had become increasingly difficult to maintain an effective distinction between food supplements that could benefit from the zero rate and those that were standard rated. After undertaking a comprehensive review of the VAT treatment of food supplements, including getting an expert report on the definition of food for the purposes of the VAT Consolidation Act, Revenue concluded that the status quo was no longer sustainable.

My Department has recently concluded a public consultation on the taxation of food supplement products. The consultation sought input from a wide range of interested parties, including from health and nutrition experts, as well as my colleague the Minister for Health, to ensure that any legislative changes brought forward are evidence based. The results of the consultation will be included in the 2019 VAT Tax Strategy Group paper as part of the Budget 2020 process.

I am also advised by Revenue that it is unable to provide information on the number of instances in which it advised taxpayers over the years 2011 to 2017 that particular food supplement products were zero rated.

Climate Change Policy

179. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Finance if his Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics; the public bodies and agencies under his remit to which he has issued an instruction to cease the purchase and use of single-use plastics; when the instruction issued; the bodies which have confirmed that they no longer purchase and use single-use plastics, respectively; the bodies which have not provided such confirmation to date; when they will confirm; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29985/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department had already begun

eliminating single use plastics prior to the Government Decision earlier this year regarding actions by Departments and Agencies on single use plastics, prevention of waste and green public procurement. While it has not purchased any single use plastics since January 2019, my Department retains an existing inventory of non-single use, re-useable and recyclable plastic cups for use in selected areas for use by external visitors to the Department.

There are seventeen bodies under the aegis of my Department. While twelve have confirmed to me that they do not purchase or have ceased the purchase of single use plastics, a number of these bodies retain a stock of previously purchased plastic cups or cutlery and are in the process of using up such existing stock. These are the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Central Bank of Ireland, the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman, Home Building Finance Ireland, the Investor Compensation Company DAC, the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation, the Irish Financial Services Appeals Tribunal, the National Asset Management Agency, the National Treasury Management Agency, the Office of the Revenue Commissioners, the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland and the Tax Appeals Commission.

Office and administrative support facilities for the Credit Review Office are provided by Enterprise Ireland and as such any policies in regard to the use of single use plastic would be a matter for the Department of Business, Enterprise, and Innovation.

The Credit Union Advisory Committee convenes its meetings in my Department's offices.

While the Disabled Drivers Medical Board of Appeal is a body under the aegis of my Department, its meetings are held in the National Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH) premises which is under the remit of the Department of Health, and accordingly any policies in place in the NRH are a matter for the Department of Health.

The Irish Fiscal Advisory Council has informed me that it has no formal policies in place in relation to the purchase and use of single use plastics. However, it has indicated that it rarely purchases or uses items that would meet this criteria.

The Credit Union Restructuring Board has been wound down and legislation formally dissolving the body is currently going through the Houses of the Oireachtas.

NAMA Social Housing Provision

180. Deputy Darragh O'Brien asked the Minister for Finance the number of social housing units identified by NAMA; the number transferred to local authorities by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29999/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised that NAMA has conducted regular reviews of the assets securing its loan portfolio to establish if vacant residential properties could be utilised for social housing. Up until end-March 2019, NAMA had identified a total of 7,050 residential properties as being potentially suitable for social housing. Of the units identified, demand was confirmed by local authorities for 2,729 properties, of which 2,544 have been contracted or delivered for social housing use by end-March 2019.

It is important to note that the confirmation of demand and decisions regarding the suitability of properties is a matter for the Housing Agency and local authorities, and NAMA plays no role in this. I am advised that local authorities take account of the requirement to provide an appropriate mix of housing tenures and to avoid undue housing segregation within individual developments and wider residential area. Social housing units are provided to local authorities; approved housing bodies (AHBs) or the Housing Agency and delivery can take the form of di-

rect purchase or long-term leasing via NARPS. Of the 2,544 properties delivered to end-March 2019, local authorities have directly acquired or leased 244 units; AHBs have acquired or leased 2,281 and the Housing Agency has acquired 19.

The table outlines the number of potentially suitable residential units identified by NAMA and the total number completed/contracted to end-March 2019, indicating delivery either to the local authority, Housing Agency or to a AHB. This and other information on NAMA's social housing initiatives is available on the NAMA website, www.nama.ie.

Local Authority Area	Total completed/ contracted	Local Authority	Approved housing bodies	The Housing Agency
Carlow Co. Co.	103	0	103	0
Clare Co. Co.	55	17	38	0
Cork City Council	138	53	85	0
Cork County Council	322	35	282	5
Donegal Co. Co.	5	0	5	0
Dublin City Council	413	8	403	2
DLR Co. Co.	282	38	243	1
Fingal Co. Co.	143	25	109	9
Galway City Council	196	22	174	0
Galway County Council	32	8	24	0
Kerry Co. Co.	42	0	42	0
Kildare Co. Co.	235	8	227	0
Kilkenny Co. Co.	56	11	44	1
Laois Co. Co.	35	0	35	0
Limerick City and County Co.	17	0	16	1
Louth Co. Co.	27	12	15	0
Meath Co. Co.	39	0	39	0
Monaghan Co. Co.	38	0	38	0
Offaly Co. Co.	30	0	30	0
Sligo Co. Co.	4	0	4	0
South Dublin Co. Co.	146	5	141	0
Waterford Co. Co.	51	0	51	0
Westmeath Co. Co.	20	0	20	0
Wexford Co. Co.	102	2	100	0
Wicklow Co. Co.	13	0	13	0
Total	2,544	244	2,281	19

Home Building Finance Ireland Establishment

181. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the amount loaned out by Home Building Finance Ireland to date; the estimated number of homes to be built; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30000/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Since its launch earlier this year HBFI

has been actively engaging with small and medium sized builders and developers throughout the country through a range of market awareness raising initiatives. HBFI continues to benefit from a strong pipeline of interest from prospective borrowers as a result of these engagement activities.

The drawdown of funds relating to the first facilitates approved has already commenced with HBFI having approved a number of additional facilities since April. HBFI will publish information on its lending activities on a half-yearly basis with the first such report to be published next week.

Loan Books Purchasers

182. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance the steps he will take to protect the future of a small company (details supplied) in relation to a loan sale in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30007/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, as Minister for Finance, I cannot stop or reverse loan sales even by the banks in which the State has a shareholding. Decisions in this regard, as well as the criteria used to decide the make-up of loans to be included, are the sole responsibility of the board and management of the banks which must be run on an independent and commercial basis. The banks' independence is protected by Relationship Frameworks which are legally binding documents that I cannot change unilaterally. These frameworks, which are publicly available, were insisted upon by the European Commission to protect competition in the Irish market.

It is important to reiterate that the protections in place for all borrowers before a sale, either by way of securitisation or otherwise, remain unchanged. Under the Consumer Protection (Regulation of Credit Servicing Firms) Act 2018, which came into effect on 21 January 2019, if a loan is transferred the holder of the legal title to the credit must now be authorised by the Central Bank as a credit servicing firm.

Such credit servicing firms must act in accordance with Irish financial services law that applies to 'regulated financial service providers' including the Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013 (Section 14) (Lending to Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises) Regulations 2015 ('the SME Regulations'). This ensures that consumers whose loans are sold to another firm, maintain the same regulatory protections that they had prior to the sale.

In regards to the overdraft issue, my response to your PQ in April (17964/19) advised that when overdrafts were being converted into a loan facility and transferred to a Retail Credit Firm customers had the right to appeal the withdrawal of the overdraft facility to the Credit Review Office (CRO). However in this case the company has not appealed and the bank (as per the letter you supplied) has confirmed that the company may apply for a new facility. Should this application be unsuccessful then the company has the right to appeal the bank's decision to the Credit Review Office (CRO). The CRO is able to review cases where credit facilities up to €3m are refused, withdrawn, or offered on unreasonable conditions. Details of how to appeal to the CRO can be found on the website www.creditreview.ie.

VAT Exemptions

183. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the reason self-employed persons can reclaim VAT paid on diesel but not petrol; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [30040/19]

184. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated cost of allowing self-employed persons reclaim VAT on petrol purchased for business purposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30041/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 183 and 184 together.

Irish VAT law does not provide for a VAT rebate for diesel or petrol. The different treatment of VAT as regards petrol and diesel relates to the VAT input deductibility entitlement of VAT registered taxpayers. Businesses who make supplies that are charged to VAT are entitled to claim input VAT on their business expenses. VAT registered persons are entitled to claim the cost of VAT on the purchase of diesel used in the course of their business, as is the case with most business costs. However, section 60 of the VAT Consolidation Act 2010 prohibits VAT deductibility by businesses on certain goods and services which, by their ubiquitous nature, are not easily distinguishable from general non-business use. This is for anti-avoidance reasons.

Expenditure on petrol, as well as expenditure on food, drink, accommodation, and entertainment, is specifically excluded from deductibility entitlement, even where the petrol or other goods and services are acquired or used for the purpose of a taxable business.

Under Article 176 of the EU VAT Directive, Ireland can retain certain restrictions on VAT deductibility that were in place before 1979. As VAT input deductibility has been restricted on petrol since 1972, Ireland can retain that block on deductibility. While it is legally possible to apply the normal rules of VAT deductibility to petrol, once the block on deductibility is eased or removed it would not be possible to re-introduce it. There is a case for petrol and diesel to be treated equally in terms of input deductibility entitlements as there is a greater level of diesel-run personal motor vehicles in operation today than in the past. However, the provisions of Article 176 prohibit the application of a new deductibility restriction on diesel expenditure. As anti-avoidance concerns regarding petrol expenditure deductibility continue, the restriction on VAT deductibility remains valid.

I am advised by Revenue that items of expenditure such as the value of petrol purchases are not separately identified on VAT or self-assessed tax returns. Therefore, an estimate of the cost of allowing VAT registered, self-employed persons to reclaim VAT on petrol purchased for business purposes is not available.

Drainage Schemes Status

185. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if funding for a scheme (details supplied) is ringfenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29240/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The River Slaney (Enniscorthy) Flood Relief Scheme is at an advanced stage of planning and design. The proposed scheme was on formal Exhibition to the public from May, 17th to June 18th 2019 and this was well attended. The next steps are to finalise the design having regard, as appropriate, to the observations received from the public Exhibition and then to submit all required documentation to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, requesting formal confirmation of the scheme under the Arterial Drainage Act.

The proposed scheme will be funded by the Office of Public Works (OPW) and provision

for the cost of the scheme is included in the OPW's multi-annual capital budget framework.

Garda Station Refurbishment

186. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if funding will be provided for the replacement of windows at a Garda station (details supplied); when this work will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29352/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Office of Public Works is responsible for the maintenance of the Government Estate including the Garda Stations throughout the country .

The Office of Public Works has not been made aware of any problems with the windows at Howth Garda Station and replacement of the windows was not identified as a priority in the 2019 work schedule. The windows will be assessed in the coming weeks and, depending on the outcome of this assessment, will be considered for inclusion in the 2020 work schedule.

Public Procurement Regulations

187. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to change the minimum threshold of €25,000 to €100,000 for educational institutions required to go to national tender for projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30042/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Public Procurement is governed by WTO, EU and National rules and guidelines. The aim of these rules is to promote an open, competitive and non-discriminatory public procurement regime which delivers best value for money.

WTO rules and EU Directives on public procurement require that public works, supplies and service contracts above certain thresholds must be advertised on the Official Journal of the EU and awarded on the basis of objective and non-restrictive criteria. For works contracts, the threshold is €5,548,000; for supplies and service contracts awarded by Government Departments, the threshold is €144,000 and for the remainder of public bodies, the threshold is €221,000. The threshold for supplies and service contracts of entities operating in utility sectors (water, energy, transport and postal) is €443,000. For contracts below these thresholds, the general requirement is that they be advertised on the national public procurement website *www.etenders.gov.ie* or, depending on value, awarded on the basis of a competitive process of direct invitation to an adequate number of suitable suppliers.

In addition, the Office of Government Procurement developed Circular 10/14 which is aimed at facilitating small and medium-sized enterprises in competing for public procurement opportunities. In this regard, the following national rules apply to below EU threshold procurements:

- All public contracts for supplies and services with an estimated value of €25,000 (exclusive of VAT) and upwards should be advertised on the national public procurement website, *www.etenders.gov.ie*.

- The advertising threshold for works is set at €50,000 (exclusive of VAT).

- Suppliers of goods and services and especially the SME sector are encouraged to register

on the e-Tenders website and avail of its facilities including receiving automatic alerts in relation to future tendering opportunities.

It is worth noting that these thresholds were reviewed last year in consultation with the SME Advisory Group, chaired by my colleague, Minister of State O'Donovan, which is comprised of representatives from IBEC, SFA, CIF, ISME and Chambers Ireland and it was recommended that the national thresholds remain at the current levels. The main reasons for setting the national thresholds at these levels is to open up public procurement opportunities to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and to achieve value for taxpayer's money through competitive and transparent tendering processes. It is a basic principle of public procurement that a competitive process should be used.

These thresholds for advertising on eTenders will be kept under review in light of the impact on operational efficiency, value for money and accessibility to business opportunities, particularly the SME sector.

Public Sector Staff Retirements

188. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of persons who signed up for the interim measure to permit them to work for an extra year prior to the enactment of the Public Service Superannuation (Age of Retirement) Act 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29081/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): By way of background, on 5 December 2017, the Government made the decision to increase the compulsory retirement age to 70, for public servants recruited prior to 1 April 2004. Primary legislation was necessary in order to bring that change into effect. It was made clear at the time that until such legislation was enacted, the compulsory retirement age of 65, which applied to the vast majority of this cohort, remained in effect and pre-2004 public servants reaching that age would be required to retire.

Interim arrangements were provided for the cohort of public servants who reached their compulsory retirement age of 65 after the Government Decision because, while they would be aware of the Government's decision, they would be unable to avail of it. Those arrangements permitted these individuals to be rehired post-retirement for a period of 1 year until they reached the age of eligibility for the State Pension (Contributory). Without that specific arrangement, they would have been required to cease working on reaching the age of 65.

The Public Service Superannuation (Age of Retirement) Act 2018 was enacted on 26 December 2018. Under the Act, any relevant public servant who had not already reached their compulsory retirement age of 65 before that date has a new compulsory retirement age of 70. Enactment of the legislation had no effect on those public servants who retired at 65 prior to the 26 December 2018 and who availed of a one year contract under the interim arrangements.

Section 3 of the 2018 Act also provides that I, as Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, within three months of the passing of the Act, would prepare and lay before the Oireachtas a report on the public servants who were forced to retire between 6 December 2017 and the commencement of the Act, due to reaching the age of 65 years, and on potential remedies to assist this cohort of worker. This Report was laid before the Oireachtas on 26 March 2019 and is publicly available on the www.gov.ie website and in the Oireachtas Library online catalogue. A total of approximately 1,928 public servants are included in the ambit of the report; approximately 646 of whom availed of the interim arrangements.

Having considered all of the issues outlined in the Report, I am satisfied that the interim arrangements were an appropriate temporary policy response at the time of the Government Decision, pending enactment of the legislation. The terms of those arrangements were clear, unambiguous and made known to those who availed of them. Accordingly, for the reasons set out in the report, I decided not to make any changes to those terms.

The contract terms for the interim cohort continue to apply and they cease working when they reach the age of 66, as previously provided.

Flood Prevention Measures

189. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 223 of 21 May 2019, the number of tenders received in relation to the further study of flooding in the area by the closing date of 27 June 2019; when a contractor is likely to be chosen for the project; when work will commence and finish; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29254/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I am advised by Kildare County Council that the closing date for receipt of tenders was the 27th June 2019 and these will be assessed and evaluated over the coming days. The Council envisage that the study of flood risk in the Hazelhatch area will be completed by the end of 2019.

Forensic Science Ireland Laboratory

190. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 222 of 21 May 2019, the number of tenders received for the construction project by the closing date; the likely start and completion dates for the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29255/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): Further to my response to Parliamentary Question No. 222 of 21 May 2019 regarding the Forensic Science Laboratory Project at the Backweston campus. Delivery of this project is managed by The Office of Public Works. The deadline date for the return of tender was scheduled for end of June. However due to requests from the short-listed tenderers, the return date was extended until 12th July. Subsequently, tender assessment will take place during Q3 2019 and it is expected to start construction on site in Q4 2019.

Office of Public Works Projects

191. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of a proposed visitor centre (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29265/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Office of Public Works has, currently, no plans for the development of a visitor centre at Quin Abbey.

Proposed Legislation

192. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he was consulted by the Minister for Education and Skills regarding the financial liability to the State contained in section 31 the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Bill 2018. [29340/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I wish to inform the Deputy that my Department was consulted by the Department of Education and Skills on the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Bill 2018 in the course of a Memorandum to Government on the issue. The main issue from my Department's perspective, in relation to the draft Bill, concerned the funding of the Learner Protection Fund. The position of my Department was that the fund should be fully financed by providers and there should be no ongoing Exchequer impact of the Fund. I am advised by the Department of Education and Skills that this is the policy intention and, to that end, the Bill provides for an annual charge to be levied on those providers whose programmes and learners will be protected by the Fund. I understand that there may be a requirement for some limited initial pre-funding of the Learner Protection Fund, the source of which will be decided in due course following consultation between the two departments.

Departmental Advertising Expenditure

193. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount spent on digital marketing in each of the past eight years; the items on which funds were spent; the criteria by which target audiences were selected; the amount of the digital spend targeted here; the amount targeted abroad; the amount that related to private companies; the amount that related to policy initiatives; and the purpose of the digital advertisements. [29397/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The following table sets out the amount spent by my Department on digital marketing over the past eight years.

Year	Cost	Purpose	Provider	Target Audience	Policy initiatives	Audience criteria
2017	€46,190	Stakeholder support (Office of Government Procurement)	Private	Ireland	Yes	Video material on OGP YouTube channel, catering for Irish SME's and Public Bodies
2017	€444	Promoting the whereyour-moneygoes.gov.ie website which shows the Irish government's expenditure data	Private	Ireland	Yes	All Adults in Ireland

Year	Cost	Purpose	Provider	Target Audience	Policy initiatives	Audience criteria
2017	€205,439	To promote and raise awareness of the Public Services Card and MyGovID	Private	Ireland	Yes	All Adults in Ireland
2018	€47,337	Stakeholder support (Office of Government Procurement)	Private	Ireland	Yes	Video material on OGP YouTube channel, catering for Irish SME's and Public Bodies
2018	€99,669	The promote and raise awareness of MyGovID and the services it enables	Private	Ireland	Yes	All adults in Ireland

Departmental Expenditure

194. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the costs paid to companies (details supplied) for projects on which they were engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason each was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29448/19]

195. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the costs paid to a company (details supplied) for projects on which they were engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason it was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29557/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 194 and 195 together.

The following table sets out the payments to the companies in question from 2015 up to the end of Quarter 1, 2019.

Questions - Written Answers

Company	Purpose	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
KPMG	- Technical consultancy on e-invoicing and Government Cloud infrastructure.- Advisory Services on data hosting of Government cloud infrastructure and Build to Share business case.- Progress central delivery of ICT infrastructure services across the public service.	127,689	139,851	231,006	199,850	122,921
Mazars	- Fees for professional services in respect of ERDF audit.- Review of Garda and Prison Service payroll.	32,524	-	-	-	-

Company	Purpose	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
PwC	- Expert support for implementation of Public Service Reform initiatives and administration advice for outsourcing documents.- Banking Services for Central Government - Review of market	-	-	44,526	-	-
Deloitte	- Consultancy and external services for Public Service Reform, Civil Service Payroll Shared Services and Civil Service Financial Management Shared Service.- Advice on development of a procurement process framework.	44,881	1,816,430	1,802,408	1,533,960	6,150

Public Service Pay Commission

196. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when

the Public Service Pay Commission will complete its work on the examination of recruitment and retention challenges in the defence sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29653/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Public Service Pay Commission was tasked under the Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020 to conduct a comprehensive examination of underlying difficulties in recruitment and retention of staff in the public service, including the Defence Forces.

The Report by the Pay Commission on Recruitment and Retention in the Defence Forces has been published and is available on the Public Service Pay Commission's website here: <https://paycommission.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/Dept-of-Defence-PSPC-report-2019-WEB.pdf>

This report represents a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the Permanent Defence Forces encompassing commissioned and enlisted personnel.

The Report's main conclusions are that the Defence Forces face challenges in meeting full strength and retaining certain skilled and experienced staff. The implementation of the Report's recommendations, is provided for under the Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020.

The main findings of the Report, which have been accepted by Government, include:

- An increase of 10% in the Military Service Allowance which is a unique payment to the Defence Forces and paid to the majority of ranks. The overall annual estimated cost of this measure is €4.8m p.a.

- Restoration of a 10% reduction in respect of duty allowances such as Security Duty Allowance and Patrol Duty Allowance that were introduced under the Haddington Road Agreement. The 10% cuts to overseas allowances will also be restored.

- The overall estimated cost of the restoration of these measures is €3.3m p.a.

- Restoration of premium weekend payment rates which were approximately halved under the Haddington Road Agreement. The annual estimated cost of this measure is €1.4m p.a.

- Restoration of the Pilots Service Commitment Scheme for Flying Officers which is aimed at attracting pilots to continue in service on being able to stand down from the Air Corps. This Scheme was withdrawn in 2010. The cost of this measure is estimated at €600k pa depending on take up.

A high level plan for the implementation of all of the recommendations in the Report has been approved and work will commence on the actions in the plan immediately.

The above measures are in addition to the current Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA) which is currently delivering pay benefits of between 7.4% and 6.2% (or up to 10% for new entrants hired after 2012) for our public servants, including Defence Force personnel at a cost of over €1.1bn, out to 2021. The Pay Commission's recommendations on the Defence Forces taken together with the pay measures provided for under the PSSA, represent a tangible package of pay improvements at this time for the members of our Defence Forces.

Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme Applications

197. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to

Parliamentary Question No. 162 of 5 December 2018, the status of the minor works application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29797/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I have been advised that Clare County Council submitted an application to the OPW under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works & Coastal Protection Scheme for the provision of rock armour to protect against cliff erosion caused by waves and tides at Spanish Point.

Following assessment of the application and further to a meeting between OPW and Clare County Council in May 2019, the OPW has requested additional information. When received, assessment of the application will be completed and a reply will issue to the County Council.

Departmental Expenditure

198. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the years 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by inquiry, tribunal or commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29838/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has not incurred any costs in relation to tribunals, commissions of investigations or statutory inquiries since it was established in 2011.

Voluntary Sector Remuneration

199. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his attention has been drawn to the fact that an organisation (details supplied) is no longer reimbursed to allow it to pay increments to staff that care for clients and that this is leading to staff shortages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29848/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The issue raised by the Deputy is a matter for the Minister for Health, to whom I understand an identical question has been submitted.

Climate Change Policy

200. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics; the public bodies and agencies under his remit to which he has issued an instruction to cease the purchase and use of single-use plastics; when the instruction issued; the bodies which have confirmed that they no longer purchase and use single-use plastics, respectively; the bodies which have not provided such confirmation to date; when they will confirm; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29990/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Prior to the announcement by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment in January 2019 that “no government department or agency will buy single-use plastic cups, cutlery or straws for use within their offices”, the Departments of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform – through their shared Facilities Management Unit (FMU) – had already begun eliminating such plastics. In line with the announcement on Single-Use Plastics, the FMU confirms

that no Single-Use Plastics have been purchased since January 2019. It retains an existing inventory of non single-use, re-useable and recyclable plastic cups for water in the main reception and selected areas for external visitors to the Department.

The instruction relating to Single-Use Plastics issued to the bodies under the aegis of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on 14 March 2019. All of the bodies under the aegis of the Department (the Office of Public Works, the National Shared Services Office, the Public Appointments Service, the Office of the Ombudsman, the National Lottery Regulator, the State Laboratory, the Institute of Public Administration and the Economic and Social Research Institute) have confirmed that they are no longer purchasing single-use plastics. One organisation has advised that it still has some single-use plastics in stock but this is almost exhausted.

Schools Establishment

201. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a multi-denominational school in the Palmerstown, Ballyfermot, Chapelizod and Cherry Orchard areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29075/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The requirement for new schools in this area is being kept under ongoing review and in particular will have regard for the increased rollout of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

Palmerstown/Ballyfermot/Chapelizod/Cherryorchard was one of 43 areas surveyed as part of the patronage divesting process in 2013. The outcome was that there was sufficient parental demand for a multi-denominational school in this area.

A number of years ago (c. 2013) there were proposals in relation to re-organisation of four of the Catholic schools in the area by the Dublin Archdiocese, largely to bring about co-educational provision. These proposals met with resistance from some of the local community at the time and there was much discussion between the patron of the schools and the school community in this regard. I understand that the outcome of this interaction undertaken by the patron is that three of the four schools, have changed to co-educational status, following consultation with their parents, staff and Boards of Management. The other school closed on 30 June 2019, when the last group of pupils completed sixth class. From the outset it was clear that the Trustees of the school, the De La Salle Brothers, planned to sell the school property in which the latter school was located and accordingly the property would not be made available under the patronage divesting process. According to Department records, my Department does not hold any legal interest, such a charging lease, over the property.

The Programme for Government commits to increasing the number of multi-/non-denominational schools to 400 such schools by 2030. As the Deputy will be aware, my Department has developed the Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process to deliver on this commitment through patronage transfer, in line with the choices of local parents and school communities. The process involves the transfer of live schools and has the potential to significantly increase patronage diversity in our school system.

In addition to the main provisions of this process, the “early movers” provision enables school communities which have already decided to seek a transfer of patronage (independent of the survey process) to request that their existing patron makes an application to the Minister for a direct transfer of patronage under section 8 of the Education Act. I encourage any school community which is seeking a transfer of patronage to make contact with their school patron

in this regard.

While the new structures to support the schools reconfiguration for diversity process are being introduced, my Department will continue to work to progress delivery of diversity in areas already identified, including the areas referred to by the Deputy.

Summer Works Scheme Applications

202. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a funding application by a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29095/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The school referred to by the Deputy has submitted an application for car parking (Category 10) under my Department's multi-annual Summer Works Scheme (SWS) 2020 onwards.

I wish to advise the Deputy that commensurate with the level of funding available for the SWS in 2020, applications will be assessed on a top down basis in accordance with the prioritisation criteria outlined in the governing Circular Letter for the Scheme. This Circular Letter (0027/2019) is available on my Department's website www.education.ie.

It is my intention to publish a list of successful applicants in Q4 2019 for works to be carried out in summer 2020.

Schools Refurbishment

203. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the works outstanding at a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29097/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The roof remediation works at the school to which the Deputy refers were completed over the Easter period.

My Department has previously asked the school to report back directly to the Department if there are other issues which need attention. A response from the school is still awaited. Officials will contact the School Authority again regarding these matters.

Separately, a programme for works identified under the fire risk assessment report is being developed by my Department. Once this is finalised my Department will contact the school authorities directly.

Schools Grievance Procedures

204. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the further steps open to parents that are dissatisfied with the manner in which a particular issue such as the alleged bullying of their child has been dealt with by a school, including by the board of management; his plans to introduce changes in this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29099/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Under the Education Act 1998, legally, all schools are managed by the school Board of Management and as my Department has no role in the employment of staff in schools or the day to day management of schools, a

complaint about a child's school and its staff should be made to the school itself.

Accordingly, while my Department provides funding and policy direction for schools, my Department does not have the power to instruct schools to follow a particular course of direction with regard to individual complaint cases or to investigate individual complaints except where the complaint involves a refused enrolment, expulsion or suspension, in accordance with section 29 of the Education Act, 1998. In dealing with parental complaints, my Department's role is to clarify for parents how their grievances and complaints regarding schools can be progressed.

Where a parent has a concern about a child at school they can discuss the matter informally with the class teacher and/or the principal. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, the school should have a formal complaints procedure that can be followed. This procedure should set out what a parent may have to do and how long it should take to deal with a complaint. The role and responsibilities of the principal and board of management should also be set out. The complaint procedures currently operated by most schools are the standard procedures that have been agreed between the teacher unions and school management bodies and a copy should be provided by schools to a parent on request.

The Action Plan on Bullying, which was published in January 2013, sets out my Department's approach to tackling bullying and promoting an anti-bullying culture in schools. As part of the implementation of the Action Plan my Department published new anti-bullying procedures for all primary and post primary schools at the beginning of the 2013/14 school year. The procedures are designed to give direction and guidance to school authorities and school personnel in preventing and tackling school-based bullying behaviour amongst its pupils.

In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures, where a parent is not satisfied that a school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with the procedures the parents must be referred, as appropriate to the schools complaints procedures.

Where a parent is of the view that a school's board of management has failed to investigate or adequately investigate their complaint, they should bring the matter to the attention of the patron. In the event that, after raising its concerns with the school patron, a parent still considers that the matter has not been resolved, it is open to the parent to raise the matter with the Ombudsman for Children.

The Office of the Ombudsman for Children may also independently investigate complaints relating to the administrative actions of a school recognised by the Department of Education and Skills provided the parent has fully followed the school's complaints procedures. The key criterion for any intervention by the Ombudsman for Children is that the administrative actions of a school has, or may have, adversely affected the child.

The Deputy may be aware that my Department has been working on the drafting of the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019 in conjunction with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel.

Under the Bill, each school will be required to prepare, publish and implement a Student and Parent Charter in accordance with national guidelines to be published by the Minister after consultation with the education partners, including those bodies representing parents.

The key aim of the legislation is to improve how schools engage with students and their parents. Schools will be required to respond to feedback and comments from students and parents where appropriate on matters relating to the school, including as appropriate in relation to their anti-bullying policy.

The legislation also provides for the development of new complaints procedures in schools to ensure that grievances of students or their parents relating to the school are dealt with efficiently, effectively, fairly and consistently across schools.

Subject to Government approval, I intend to publish the Bill in the Autumn.

Schools Building Projects Status

205. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if correspondence has been received from a group (details supplied) regarding a school project in County Donegal; if a reply has issued to the correspondence; the status of the progress being made to deliver the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29108/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I have not received correspondence from this group in relation to a building project for the school named by the Deputy.

School Staff

206. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school (details supplied) will not lose a teacher for the forthcoming academic year 2019-2020 in view of the altered circumstances since the original determination on teaching resources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29126/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the previous 30th September.

The school referred to by the Deputy is due to have a teaching post suppressed due to a fall in enrolments in September 2018.

The staffing process includes an appeals mechanism for schools to submit a staffing appeal under certain criteria to an independent Appeals Board. It is open to Boards of Management to assess the criteria which best applies to their school and submit an appeal to the Primary Staffing Appeals Board. To date, the Department has not received a staffing appeal from the school referred to by the Deputy.

Circular 0019/2019, “Staffing Arrangements in Primary Schools for the 2019/20 School Year” provides details for schools wishing to make an appeal. The next meeting of the Primary Staffing Appeals Board to consider staffing appeals for the 2019/20 school year will be held in October.

Third Level Fees

207. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if universities are free to set out their own level of non-refundable capitation fee for students; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29142/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): In accessing third level education in this State, students may be liable to pay tuition fees and a student contribution.

The Exchequer meets the cost of tuition fees through the Free Fees Initiative which was

introduced in 1995 by the then Government to assist third level undergraduate students in publicly funded higher education institutions. Currently, under the terms of the Initiative, the Exchequer meets the cost of tuition fees in respect of eligible students who are pursuing full-time undergraduate courses of study which are a minimum of two years duration in an approved higher education institution. The main conditions of the scheme are that students must be first-time undergraduates, hold inter alia EU/EEA/Swiss nationality in their own right, and have been ordinarily resident in an EU/EEA/Swiss state for at least three of the five years preceding their entry to an approved third level course

The Student Contribution, which currently stands at €3,000, was introduced by my Department with effect from the 2011/12 academic year replacing the previous Student Services Charge. It should be noted that there has been no increase in the Student Contribution since the 2015/16 academic year.

Measures are in place to assist students and their parents in meeting the cost of the Student Contribution. Almost 50% of full-time undergraduate students have all, or part of, the contribution paid by the State on their behalf through the Student Grant Scheme.

Students may also be requested by their respective institutions to pay an additional student levy. The determination of the level and payment of such levies are a matter for the institutions themselves and are not collected centrally by my Department.

In addition, tax relief provisions are also available so that second and subsequent siblings do not have to bear the full cost of the Student Contribution. Full details are available from the Revenue Commissioners.

Schools Building Projects Status

208. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an extension approved for a school (details supplied) in April 2017; the status of applications for a further extension or changes to that already approved in relation to the school. [29152/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy might be aware, the school to which he refers was granted approval to build one Mainstream Classroom with en-suite toilets and one WC for assisted users under the Additional Accommodation Scheme 2017. A letter confirming this was issued to the school in April 2017. The project is devolved for delivery to the School Authorities and it currently lies with the School Authorities to progress the project to the next stage.

Schools Building Projects Status

209. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the development of a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29188/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The delivery of a new building project for the school to which the Deputy refers is being devolved to Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB). To enable this, my Department is currently preparing a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for issue to the ETB.

The execution of this SLA will allow LOETB to procure a Design Team to take the project through the various stages of architectural planning and onwards through statutory planning

requirements and construction.

The timeframe for the construction of the project will not be known at least until the relevant design stages have been completed and planning permission secured.

Summer Works Scheme Applications

210. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an application by a school (details supplied). [29192/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The school referred to by the Deputy has submitted an application for car parking (Category 10) under my Department’s multi-annual Summer Works Scheme (SWS) 2020 onwards.

I wish to advise the Deputy that commensurate with the level of funding available for the SWS in 2020, applications will be assessed on a top down basis in accordance with the prioritisation criteria outlined in the governing Circular Letter for the Scheme. This Circular Letter (0027/2019) is available on my Department’s website www.education.ie.

It is my intention to publish a list of successful applicants in Q4 2019 for works to be carried out in summer 2020.

Schools Building Projects Status

211. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of project works at a school (details supplied) in County Cork; and if the works are on schedule to be completed for the commencement of the 2019/2020 academic year. [29205/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Deputy will be aware that the delivery of this project has been devolved to Cork Education & Training Board (CETB).

Construction work to complete this project commenced in mid April. It remains on schedule to be completed for the start of the 2019/20 academic year.

School Accommodation Provision

212. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the delivery of two special educational needs rooms will be prioritised in view of approval for a school (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29212/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the school to which he refers received grant approval in June 2019 under the Department’s Additional Accommodation Scheme. This approval was provided for the purposes of constructing a 2 x SEN base classroom (with total area including walls and circulation of 439m²).

The project has been devolved for delivery to the school authority so it is now a matter for the Board of Management to advance the project.

School Enrolments

213. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address a matter regarding school enrolment in Ennis, County Clare (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29235/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that, following a very positive collaborative process between officials from my Department and the representatives of the local post-primary schools in question, an agreement was reached on 2nd July 2019, which guarantees that all pupils will have a school place this September.

Schools Building Projects Status

214. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 274 of 11 June 2019, if the tender report has been received; if the letter of intent has issued; the date on which the contractor is likely to be on site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29249/19]

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

KWETBs assessment of the tenders is now complete and the Tender Report is awaited from the Design Team. The Letter of Intent has not issued yet. On that basis, it is expected that the successful contractor will recommence work on site in Q3 2019 and the buildings will be available for occupation prior to September 2020.

Schools Building Projects Status

215. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 275 of 11 June 2019, the number of tenders received for the project by the closing date of 21 June 2019; if the tender report has been received; if the letter of intent has issued; the expected construction start date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29250/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy is aware this project has been devolved to Kildare and Wicklow Education & Training Board (KWETB) for delivery.

The tender process was extended until 28th June 2019 and 8 tenders were received by the closing date. The Design Team are currently preparing the Tender Report for issue to the Department. The Letter of Intent has not issued yet. It is expected that the project will commence construction in November this year so that the project will be completed before September 2021.

Schools Building Projects Status

216. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 271 of 11 June 2019, if the design team has been appointed; the timeframe for the completion of its work; and when the work will commence on the project. [29251/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The delivery of a new building for the school to which the Deputy refers has been devolved to Kildare and Wicklow Education & Training Board (KWETB).

I understand from KWETB that it has recently completed the appointment of a design team for this project. The Design Team will now take the project through the various stages of architectural planning and onwards through the statutory planning requirements and construction.

The timeframe for the construction of the project will not be known until the design stages have been completed and planning permission secured.

Schools Building Projects Status

217. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when tenders will be invited from the shortlist of contractors for a school (details supplied); the closing date for receipt of tenders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29252/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The major building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is currently at Stage 2(b) – Detailed Design.

The pre-qualification process to select a shortlist of suitable contractors has been completed and the Design Team is currently carrying out a final review of tender documentation.

Once this work is complete, my Department will be in contact with the Board of Management of the school regarding the progression of the project to the next stage of architectural planning, Stage 3 - tender stage.

Schools Building Projects Status

218. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when tenders will be invited from the shortlist of contractors for a school (details supplied); the closing date for receipt of tenders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29253/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The process of Pre-Qualification of contractors for the project in question is underway. The Pre-qualification process culminates in the compilation of shortlists of suitable candidates for each respective discipline. My Department authorised the Design Team to complete the pre-qualification process in April 2019.

The next stage of architectural planning for this project will be Stage 3 – tender stage. When this Pre-Qualification process is complete my Department will be in contact with the school regarding progression to tender stage.

Schools Building Projects Status

219. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 208 of 5 February 2019 when the phase 1 construction will be completed; when phase 2 of the project will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29256/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The school building project to

which the Deputy refers is currently on site.

The first phase, consisting of the construction of the new 8 classroom school is due for completion in Quarter 3 2019. The second phase is due for completion in Quarter 2 2020.

School Accommodation Provision

220. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if authority has been given to the school authorities to seek rental accommodation to ensure that a school (details supplied) will open in September 2019 in view of the decision by Kildare County Council to refuse planning permission on 21 June 2019 for temporary buildings for the school; if there has been success in renting accommodation for the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29257/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): With regard to the school to which the Deputy refers the local authority refused planning permission on 21st June, 2019.

My Department has been in constant contact with the relevant stakeholders including the Patron Body, An Foras Pátrúnachta, considering a number of interim arrangements to ensure the school opens for September 2019.

An Foras Pátrúnachta have made interim arrangements for the school to open in accommodation in Gaelscoil Ui Fhiaich, Maynooth and have communicated this position to parents of enrolled children.

School Transport Provision

221. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if special supports will be provided to a child (details supplied). [29263/19]

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.

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

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

Under the terms of my Department's Primary School Transport Scheme children are eligible for school transport where they reside not less than 3.2 kilometres from and are attending their nearest school as determined by my Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

Special transport arrangements on medical grounds may be considered by the Department where a pupil has a medical condition, and the condition is such that it would prevent the child from making his/her own way to the school, or the pick-up point, as appropriate.

Where such applications are made, the Department requests that the pupil's GP complete an

Application for School Transport on Medical Grounds, which outlines the nature and severity of the medical condition. The form is then forwarded to the Medical Advisor, who, on the basis of the medical evidence submitted, determines whether the above conditions apply. This form is available on my Department's website at https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Popular-forms/st_medical_grounds_application.pdf.

School Transport Eligibility

222. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding school transport for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29268/19]

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 my Department.

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

The purpose of the "School Transport Scheme for children with Special Educational Needs is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children with special educational needs arising from a diagnosed disability.

Children are eligible for transport where they have special educational needs arising from a diagnosed disability and are attending the nearest recognised mainstream school, special class/special school or a unit, that is or can be resourced, to meet their special educational needs.

Eligibility is determined following consultation with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) through its network of Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO). Decisions regarding transport eligibility are based on the prevailing circumstances at the time of first enrolment.

The child referred to by the Deputy is eligible for school transport under the terms of my Department's School Transport Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs.

Bus Éireann is currently assessing school transport arrangements for the coming school year and will liaise directly with the family in this regard.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

223. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a decision has been made on an application for a special needs assistant by a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29276/19]

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

The NCSE allocates SNA support to schools in accordance with the criteria set out in Department Circular 0030/2014, which is available on my Department's website at www.educa-

tion.ie, in order that students who have care needs can access SNA support as and when it is needed.

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

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

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

The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked by a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support because the requirements outlined in Circular 0030/2014 were not complied with. Schools may also appeal a decision, where the school considers that the NCSE, in applying Department policy, has not allocated the appropriate level of SNA support to the school to meet the special educational and/or care needs of the children concerned.

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2019/20, but wishes new enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE.

The closing date for receipt of appeals in regard to SNA allocations is Friday 27th September 2019.

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

School Transport Eligibility

224. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a student (details supplied) is being denied an exemption to the cost of the school transport scheme despite holding a medical card; the reason they are not allowed to travel on the bus under an exemption to a secondary school in Athlone in view of the fact that the bus route is close to their home; if the decision by Bus Éireann will be overruled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29322/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

There are currently over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually. The purpose of the scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school.

Under the terms of the Post-Primary School Transport Scheme, children are eligible for transport where they reside not less than 4.8 kilometres from and are attending their nearest education centre as determined by the Department of Education/Bus Éireann, having regard to

ethos and language.

Children who are eligible for school transport and who complete the application process on time are accommodated on school transport services where such services are in operation. Children who are eligible for school transport but for whom no service is available may be offered the Remote Area Grant towards the cost of making private transport arrangements.

Children who are not eligible for school transport, but who complete the application process on time, are considered for spare seats that may exist after eligible children have been facilitated; such seats are referred to as concessionary seats. Where the number of applications from ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available, tickets are allocated using an agreed selection process. Only children who are eligible for school transport and who hold valid Medical Cards are exempt from paying the annual charge.

Bus Éireann has advised that the child in question is not eligible for school transport as she is not attending her nearest school and the family should liaise with their local Bus Éireann office if they wish to enquire about the availability of school transport on a concessionary basis for the 2019/20 school year.

Changes to the school transport scheme were announced in Budget 2011, derived from recommendations in the Value for Money Review of the School Transport Scheme (published March 2011). One of the changes at post primary the cessation of the long standing catchment boundary area system to determine eligibility. Existing children at that time who were eligible for school transport, and met the distance criteria, retained their transport eligibility for the duration of their schooling, provided their circumstances did not change. Bus Éireann has confirmed that the siblings of the child referred to were eligible under the pre-2012 eligibility criteria.

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

Minor Works Scheme Payments

225. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an increased maintenance grant will be awarded to a school (details supplied). [29332/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that my Department administers a number of capital grants which together aim to improve and maintain school buildings.

The Minor Works Grant for primary schools may be used to improve the physical infrastructure and appearance of schools. The school referred to by the Deputy has received its Minor Works Grant for 2019.

The Summer Works Scheme (SWS), which is demand based, is designed to allow schools, on a devolved funding basis, to carry out necessary improvement works that will upgrade existing school facilities and which can be carried out during the summer months or at other times that avoid disrupting the operation of the school.

My Department also administers an Emergency Works Grant, and its purpose is solely for unforeseen emergencies or to provide funding to facilitate inclusion and access for special needs pupils. An emergency is deemed to be a situation which poses an immediate risk to health, life, property or the environment which is sudden, unforeseen and requires immediate action and in the case of a school if not corrected would prevent the school or part thereof from opening.

The Summer Works Scheme application form is published on my Department's website as and when each new Scheme is announced while the Emergency Works Scheme application form is permanently available on my Department's website.

Protected Disclosures

226. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a protected disclosure (details supplied) was first made to his Department; the progress made to date in examining same; when the process will be concluded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29337/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): This Protected Disclosure was initially received in the Department on 28th May 2018.

The matters raised by the protected disclosure are still under consideration by my Department.

This process has not yet fully complete, however it is anticipated that this will be concluded in the near future.

My Department will write to the Discloser when its consideration of the protective disclosure has been concluded.

Speech and Language Therapy Provision

227. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to recent closures of speech and language units in Longford and Athlone despite no decrease in demand for the services; his plans to close more speech and language units nationally; his views on the lack of services available to those that cannot avail of the already limited speech and language units; and his further plans to mitigate same. [29339/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The opening and retention of a Speech and Language class is contingent upon the Health Service Executive (HSE) being in a position to provide Speech and Language therapy to the students in the class. The availability and provision of speech and language therapy is the responsibility of the HSE.

63 Specific Speech and Language Disorder special classes in mainstream primary schools will be provided for the 2019/20 school year. This compares to 60 such special classes in 2011/12. In the period 2011 to 2019, the number of SSLD special classes has ranged from 60 - 65, depending on need.

My Department provides an extensive range of supports for pupils with Specific Speech and Language Disorder (SSLD). This includes provision for the establishment of special classes for pupils with SSLD in primary schools.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports, including applications to establish special classes for SSLD. Applications meeting the criteria for establishment are approved by the NCSE.

The NCSE continues to monitor and review the requirement for special class places in particular areas and has capacity to establish such new classes or retain current classes where

necessary, subject to the willingness of schools to open/retain classes. The NCSE welcomes expressions of interest from schools in opening special classes to meet the demand for special class provision. In deciding on the location of a special class SENOs take into account both the present and the future potential need for special class provision, and they must also be satisfied that the special class is sustainable and appropriately located. SENOs liaise with relevant professionals in their area to arrive at an informed decision.

As the Deputy's question refers to speech and Language special classes in 2 particular areas, I have arranged for the NCSE to reply directly to the Deputy on this.

School Enrolments

228. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of children in the Greystones district who have not received an offer of a secondary school place for September 2020 to date; the options available to parents of such children in order that they can be assured of a place; and if the opening of the proposed secondary school planned for Greystones for 2021 will be brought forward to 2020 to accommodate such children. [29357/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The question of enrolment in individual schools is the responsibility of the managerial authority of those schools and my Department does not seek to intervene in decisions made by schools in such matters. It is the responsibility of the managerial authorities of schools to implement an enrolment policy in accordance with the Education Act 1998 and the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018.

My Department's main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking places. Parents have the right to choose which school to apply to and where the school has places available the pupil should be admitted. However, in schools where there are more applicants than places available, a selection process may be necessary. This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants. However, this may result in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice.

As the Deputy is aware the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018, which was signed into law by the President on the 18th July 2018, is an important piece of legislation which will introduce a more parent-friendly, equitable and consistent approach to how school admissions policy operates for the almost 4,000 primary and post-primary schools in this country and a fair and balanced school admission process for all pupils.

The Deputy will also be aware, the Government announced plans in April 2018 for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including a new 800 pupil post-primary school to be established in 2021 to serve the Kilcoole and Greystones school planning areas as a regional solution.

This announcement follows nationwide, demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

A major building project for St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School in Greystones is currently at an advanced stage of architectural planning and will provide an extension and refurbishment to the existing school along with a new two-storey Physical Education Hall and ancillary accommodation to accommodate a long term projected enrolment of 750 pupils. This will provide an additional 180 post-primary places in the Greystones school planning area.

In addition, a major building project for Coláiste Craobh Abhann in Kilcoole will provide an extension and refurbishment to the existing school to accommodate a long term projected enrolment of 800 pupils, providing an additional 85 post-primary places in the Kilcoole school planning area.

It is also open to existing schools in the Greystones school planning area to apply for additional temporary accommodation should this be required.

Departmental Advertising Expenditure

229. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount spent on digital marketing in each of the past eight years; the items on which funds were spent; the criteria by which target audiences were selected; the amount of the digital spend targeted here; the amount targeted abroad; the amount that related to private companies; the amount that related to policy initiatives; and the purpose of the digital advertisements. [29390/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): For the Deputy's information, the details in relation to the expenditure from 2011-2018 inclusive in relation to digital marketing are set out below.

In the years 2011-2017 my Department had no digital marketing spend. However, in December 2018, a campaign promoting teaching as a career was developed in conjunction with the Government Information Service (€132,991) in which digital media was utilised as a platform.

In addition, during 2018, my Department worked with other bodies on a number of other high profile campaigns aimed at raising awareness among the teaching profession and learners on specific initiatives including a national STEM awareness campaign (€78,965); online safety campaign in conjunction with the Department of the Taoiseach (€21,051); awareness raising Campaign (Promotion of Foreign Languages as part of Ireland's Foreign Languages strategy) which was implemented by Post-Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI) (€350,000). Each of these campaigns had some digital marketing element. The breakdown of the specific digital marketing element is not available as the marketing and advertising campaigns were managed by the relevant organisations.

All of the spend above related to raising awareness or driving action for the relevant policy initiatives. No amount was targeted abroad. The campaigns all involved payments to private companies.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

230. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a child (details supplied) will have a SNA when school starts in September 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29414/19]

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

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

needed.

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

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

The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked by a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support because the requirements outlined in Circular 0030/2014 were not complied with. Schools may also appeal a decision, where the school considers that the NCSE, in applying Department policy, has not allocated the appropriate level of SNA support to the school to meet the special educational and/or care needs of the children concerned.

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2019/20, but wishes new enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE.

The closing date for receipt of appeals in regard to SNA allocations is Friday 27th September 2019.

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

Departmental Expenditure

231. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the costs paid to companies (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason each was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29441/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The information requested is being collated by my Department. I will forward it to the Deputy when it is ready.

School Transport Fees

232. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 247 of 8 May 2019, if the maintenance charges of Bus Éireann for school transport are charged on a per mile basis in accordance with the 1975 agreement; if there were changes made to the 1975 agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29452/19]

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.

As previously outlined to the Deputy, the 1975 Summary of Accounting Arrangements remain as the current arrangements in operation.

On an annual basis Bus Éireann provides the Department with the projected cost of school transport services together with a provisional spread of payments. These costs are broken down under the headings agreed in the 1975 arrangement which include maintenance costs.

In terms of maintenance, Bus Éireann vehicles are brought into the garage every six weeks for a full maintenance check. The maintenance charges for these vehicles are based on identified required works and are allocated on a per vehicle basis.

Bus Éireann report the maintenance costs to the Department on a monthly basis as part of the monthly operational meetings.

Technological Universities

233. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to allow technical universities to access borrowing for the provision of purpose built student specific accommodation. [29467/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Technological Universities (TUs) are considered to be General Government entities and borrowings by TUs contribute towards General Government expenditure and affect the General Government balance. Section 21 of the Technological Universities Act 2018, provides for the making of rules from time to time by the HEA, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills and the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and the Minister for Finance. The Department is considering funding issues for TUs, including in relation to borrowing arrangements and in the broader context of the provision of purpose built student accommodation (PBSA). The Department is consulting, as appropriate, with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in this regard.

In February 2019 the Department established an independently chaired high level working group, the Technological University Research Network (TURN), comprising representatives from the Department, the Technological Higher Education Association, the Higher Education Authority, TU Dublin and the 3 current TU development consortia. TURN is examining a number of key issues for the future development of TUs including integration challenges, best practice in relation to management structures, organisational work practices and the funding model for TUs, including issues such as borrowing arrangements. It is envisaged that the outcome of the TURN process will be of benefit to TU consortia and established TUs in driving their strategic development and the achievement of organisational, sectoral and national priorities for higher education and regional and national development. The work of TURN is expected to inform the consideration of areas in which investment in TUs may underpin their effectiveness and success, including issues such as borrowing arrangements for TUs. TURN is expected to report to the Minister for Education and Skills later this year.

In broader policy terms, the National Student Accommodation Strategy (NSAS) complements the initiatives being taken by the Minister for Housing to increase housing supply under Rebuilding Ireland. The strategy outlines 8 key targets and 27 actions which are designed to support the delivery of an increased level of supply of PBSA. The target as set out in the NSAS is the provision of 7,000 bed spaces by end 2019 and a total of 21,000 additional PBSA beds by 2024.

As of the end Q1 2019:

- 6,362 PBSA bed spaces had been completed since the launch of Rebuilding Ireland
- 6,007 further bed spaces were under construction
- 6,005 additional bed spaces had planning permission granted
- 2,880 were at the planning permission application stage.

In total these developments combine to 21,254 PBSA bed spaces, demonstrating strong growth in the sector and enhancing the mix of accommodation available to students during a time of accommodation shortage in the general rental sector.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

234. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated number of extra teachers that would be required at primary level to reduce the ratio to teacher to students from 24.5 to 23.9. [29490/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Budget 2019 marks the third year of a major reinvestment in the education. In 2019, the budget for the Department of Education and Skills will increase by €674 million, a 6.7% increase on last year. In total, the Education budget will have increased by €1.7 billion compared to 2016.

Budget 2019 will see numbers employed in our schools reach the highest ever level. Over 1,300 additional posts in schools will be funded, including more than 370 teaching posts to cater for growth in student population and additional special classes.

The 2018/19 school year saw an increase of over 6000 teaching posts in our schools compared to the 2015/16 school year.

It is the annual staffing schedule which determines the allocation of teachers to schools. For the current school year, it operates on a general average of 26 pupils to every 1 teacher (26:1) which is historically the lowest ever allocation ratio at primary level.

The latest figures in relation to pupil teacher ratio show an improved ratio of teachers to students from 16:1 to 15.3:1 at primary level when comparing the 2015/16 school year to the 2017/18 school year. Average class sizes at primary level improved from 24.9 to 24.5 in the same period. It is expected that the one point improvement in the staffing schedule, implemented in September 2018, will further improve the overall ratio of teacher to students.

Each 1 point adjustment to the primary staffing schedule is estimated to cost in the region of €13.5m per annum.

School Staff

235. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address a matter regarding school secretary pay (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29516/19]

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

they have raised.

I have recently relaxed the moratorium for those C&C and ETB schools with enrolments of 700 and more which allow them to employ an additional School Secretaries up to a maximum of two per school. There are 91 schools in the C&C and ETB Sector who meet this criteria, based on the information currently available to this Department. This is an initial step and has taken immediate effect.

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

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

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

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

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

Officials from my Department attended a meeting of the Joint Committee on Education and Skills on the 9th of April to discuss the status of non-teaching staff.

Officials from my Department recently had discussions with FÓRSA trade union representatives as part of a planned meeting. FÓRSA took the opportunity to formally table a pay claim.

This was tabled as a follow-on claim from the current pay agreement for this cohort of staff which lasts until December 2019. The Department will seek to establish the full current cost of the trade union's claim. This is standard practice.

FÓRSA's claim will be fully considered once the current costings have been determined on completion of a survey. The Department is fully open to having further dialogue with FÓRSA once this work has been undertaken.

Departmental Expenditure

236. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the costs paid to a company (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason it was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29550/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The information requested is being collated by my Department. I will forward it to the Deputy when it is ready.

Schools Building Projects

237. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position on the provision of a new school (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29605/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The project to which the Deputy refers has been devolved for delivery to the local Education and Training Board (ETB).

Under this arrangement, it will be a matter for the ETB to appoint a design team for the design and construction phases of the project. As the project is at an early stage in the delivery process, it is not possible at this time to give a date for completion of the works.

Schools Building Projects Data

238. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of school building projects at stage 1 of the school building or extension process; the details of the 20 projects the longest at stage 1; and when each was listed at stage 1 initially in the case of each one. [29606/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The status of large-scale projects being delivered under the school building programme was last updated on my Department's website on May 31st 2019. For the purposes of this response, the data reflects current status on each of those projects.

There are 19 projects that are currently progressing through Stage 1 of Architectural Planning. Information in relation to when each of these projects began Stage 1 is contained in the following document.

COUNTY	ROLL NUMBER	SCHOOL	STAGE	DATE PROJECT MOVED TO CURRENT STAGE
Clare	19849U	Gaelscoil Donncha Rua, Sionna	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	01/11/2018
Cork	00467B	Ballinspittle NS	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	13/07/2018
Cork	13779S	Dromahane NS, Mallow	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	01/10/2018
Cork	14116V	Kilbrittan NS	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	29/08/2017
Cork	20399W	Scoil Chroi Iosa, Blarney	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	26/09/2018
Donegal	71200I	Errigal College	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	01/01/2019
Dublin	00729F	Loreto Primary, Rathfarnham	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	20/12/2018

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COUNTY	ROLL NUMBER	SCHOOL	STAGE	DATE PROJECT MOVED TO CURRENT STAGE
Dublin	17367P/ 17912O/ 18632N	Mary Help of Christian School/Scoil Eoin Baiste BNS /Scoil Eoin Baiste JBNS, Navan Rd, D7	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	13/02/2018
Dublin	19926M	Bunscoil Coláiste Mhuire, 4 Cearnóg Pharnell, BAC 1	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	Mar-18
Laois	68068R	Coláiste Íosagain, Portarlinton	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	06/03/2014
Limerick	17937H	Monaleen NS, Castletroy	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	
Limerick	76476F	Mungret Community College	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	01/07/2018
Limerick	81014R	Crescent CS, Limerick City	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	08/03/2018
Meath	20191V	St. Peter's N.S.Dunboyne	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	01/01/2019
Meath	20444B	Trim ETNS	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	01/01/2018
Offaly	72530L	Ard Scoil Chiarain Naofa, Clara	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	01/10/2018
Sligo	65180T	Ursuline College, Sligo Town	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	01/07/2018
Wicklow	20080M	Gaelscoil an tÍnbhir Mhor, Arklow	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	01/02/2018
Wicklow	76106S	Gaelcholáiste na Mara, Arklow	Stage 1 (Preliminary Design)	01/02/2018

DEIS Eligibility

239. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to review and change the criteria for the grant of DEIS status to schools. [29608/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy is aware, my Department is currently undertaking data analysis in the context of resource allocation to match identified need, including the examination of variables known to be strong predictors of educational disadvantage. All schools at both Primary and Post Primary are being assessed using the new identification model.

This analysis is being carried out by members of the DEIS Technical Group which contains representatives of the Department's Statistics and Social Inclusion Units, the Inspectorate and the Educational Research Centre. Work is ongoing by this group, including consultation with relevant experts. I am confident that the culmination of this analysis will facilitate the ultimate aim of matching resources to identified need and will allow us to target extra resources at those schools most in need.

Until this analysis is complete, it is not intended to extend the DEIS programme to any further schools.

The DEIS advisory group (which includes school management bodies and unions) was briefed in May by officials from my Department on progress and it is intended to schedule a further meeting of the DEIS advisory group for October this year.

School Transport Eligibility

240. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a student (details supplied) in County Kerry who cannot get a place in their nearest post-primary school will be made fully eligible for school transport to the next nearest post-primary school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29621/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

There are currently over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually. The purpose of the scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school.

In general children are eligible for school transport if they meet the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school.

In cases where the Department is satisfied that the nearest school is full, eligibility for school transport will be determined based on the distance that children reside from their next nearest school having regard to ethos and language. If the family has further information in regard to the closest school being full they should contact School Transport Section of my Department. Further information in this regard is available on my Department's website www.education.ie.

Children who are eligible for school transport and who complete the application process on time are accommodated on school transport services where such services are in operation. Children who are eligible for school transport but for whom no service is available may be offered the Remote Area Grant towards the cost of making private transport arrangements.

Children who are not eligible for school transport, but who complete the application process on time, are considered for spare seats that may exist after eligible children have been facilitated; such seats are referred to as concessionary seats. Where the number of applications from ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available, tickets are allocated using an agreed selection process. Only children who are eligible for school transport and who hold valid Medical Cards are exempt from paying the annual charge.

Bus Éireann has advised that the child in question is not eligible for school transport as he is

not attending his nearest school and the family should liaise with their local Bus Éireann office if they wish to enquire about the availability of school transport on a concessionary basis for the 2019/20 school year.

The terms of the School Transport Schemes are applied equitably.

Summer Works Scheme

241. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a school project (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29636/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the school to which he refers was approved funding under my Department's Summer Works Scheme 2017 to carry out extensive roof repairs. The project has been devolved to the school authority for delivery.

Due to the competing demands on the Department's capital budget imposed by the need to prioritise available funding towards the provision of essential school classroom accommodation in areas where significant demographic needs has been established, it is not possible at this time to consider the school's application for refurbishment works.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

242. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an application by a person (details supplied) will be approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29657/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) is responsible for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports. SENOs also make recommendations to my Department where assistive technology/specialised equipment is required. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in making recommendations for support, which is set out in my Department's Circular 0010/2013.

In order to qualify for equipment under the assistive technology scheme, a student must have been diagnosed with a physical or communicative disability and must also have a recommendation in a professional assessment that the equipment is essential in order to allow the student to access the curriculum. It must also be clear that the existing I.T. equipment in the school is insufficient to meet the child's needs.

No application for assistive technology to support the student referred to by the Deputy has been received by the NCSE or my Department to date.

It is open to the school of the student concerned to make an application for support to the NCSE. All schools have the names and contact details of their local SENO. Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie.

Schools Property

243. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the person or body responsible for maintenance of the pedestrian laneway which services schools (details supplied) from the Castlelands Road, Balbriggan, County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29664/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I can confirm that the laneway referred to by the Deputy is in the ownership of the Minister for Education & Skills and forms part of the Joint Campus of the schools referred to.

Maintenance of school grounds are a matter for the school authorities. The Department has contacted a Patron of one of the schools referred to notifying them of the concerns raised and has asked them to seek to resolve the concerns raised in conjunction with the other schools on the campus.

Teacher Recruitment

244. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if incremental pay scale credits will be provided for Irish teachers teaching outside the EU which take into account their experience and which would help encourage teachers to return here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29665/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The criteria for the award of incremental credit to recognised primary and post-primary teachers, including for teaching service outside the EU, is set out in Circulars 10/2001, 29/2007 and 29/2010. These circulars were agreed under the auspices of the Teachers Conciliation Council (TCC). The Council is comprised of representatives of teachers, school management, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Department of Education & Skills and is chaired by an official of the Workplace Relations Commission.

School Accommodation

245. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a meeting will be organised between his planning officials and a group (details supplied) to discuss the planning application for a temporary school site on Main Street, Swords, County Dublin; if so, if the meeting will take place before the recess of Dáil Éireann in view of the short timeframe before the temporary school is due to open in September 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29666/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The planning application for the school to which the Deputy refers was submitted to Fingal County Council on 17 April, 2019 for development of interim accommodation within the grounds of the existing car park at 85/87 Main Street, Swords. A request for Further Information received on 10th June, 2019 from the local authority is currently being finalised and a response is expected to be submitted this week. Then a decision on the planning application is awaited.

My Department has been in contact with the school's patron body Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB) and pending the planning decision alternative arrangements have been made for the school to open in the Riasc Centre, Feltrim Road, Drinan in September 2019. DDLETB have communicated this position to parents of enrolled children.

A meeting at this stage would not serve any useful purpose.

Schools Building Projects Data

246. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of school building projects at stage 2a of the school building or extension process; and the details of the longest at stage 2a of the 20 projects and in the case of each one, when it was listed at stage 2a initially. [29695/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The status of large-scale projects being delivered under the school building programme was last updated on my Department's website on May 31st 2019. For the purposes of this response, the data attached reflects current status.

There are 34 projects that are currently progressing through Stage 2a of Architectural Planning. Information in relation to when each of these projects began Stage 2a is contained in the following table.

COUNTY	ROLL NUMBER	SCHOOL	STAGE	DATE PROJECT MOVED TO CURRENT STAGE
Clare	17583V	SN Cnoc an Ein, Ennis	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	01/12/2017
Donegal	12077E	Scoil Naomh Fiachra, Illistrin	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	20/11/2017
Donegal	20096E	GS na gCeithre Máistrí, Donegal Town	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	10/04/2019
Donegal	76084L	Moville Community College	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	01/08/2018
Dublin	18671A	St Michaels House Special School, Rathgar, D6	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	14/07/2015
Dublin	19462T & 19463V	Naomh Maolruain (Jnr), Oldbawn, Tallaght, D24	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	14/09/2016
Dublin	81002K	Mount Temple Comprehensive, D3	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	12/01/2018
Galway	18112K	Scoil Naomh Eanna, Bullan, Loughrea	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	29/04/2019
Galway	20070J	Rosedale Special School, Renmore	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	05/07/2017

COUNTY	ROLL NUMBER	SCHOOL	STAGE	DATE PROJECT MOVED TO CURRENT STAGE
Kerry	09260B	Listellick NS, Tralee	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	01/05/2019
Limerick	19931F	Gaelscoil Sheoirse Clancy	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	01/10/2018
Meath	16100Q	St Joseph's Mercy Convent NS, Navan	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	08/03/2019
Meath	91508C	Boyne Community School, Trim	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	Aug-18
Waterford	65010R	Newtown School, Waterford City	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	08/06/2017
Dublin	68305S	Sandymount Park ETSS	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	06/03/2018
Dublin	20441S	Shellybanks ETNS	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	26/06/2017
Cork	62330U	Patrician Academy, Mallow, Cork	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	29/05/2017
Dublin	20515V	Harolds Cross Primary School	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	27/06/2018
Dublin	NO ROLL NO	Harolds Cross Post Primary	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	27/06/2018
Dublin	20514T	Cherrywood	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	28/08/2018
Dublin	20445D	Malahide Portmarknock ETNS	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	03/01/2019
Dublin	20530R	Dublin Donabate Primary school	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	14/05/2019
Dublin	20519G	Dublin Donaghmede/Howth Primary School	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	14/05/2019

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COUNTY	ROLL NUMBER	SCHOOL	STAGE	DATE PROJECT MOVED TO CURRENT STAGE
Dublin	68346T	Dublin Donaghmede/Howth Post Primary School	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	14/05/2018
Dublin	20531T	Dublin Newcastle/Rathcoole Primary	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	05/03/2019
Dublin	NO ROLL NO	Dublin City-west/Saggart Post Primary School	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	05/03/2019
Dublin	NO ROLL NO	Dublin Goatstown/Stillorgan Post Primary	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	07/05/2019
Meath	NO ROLL NO	Meath Enfield/Kilcok Post Primary	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	10/05/2019
Meath	20546J	Ashbourne CNS	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	10/05/2019
Meath	20521Q	Meath Dunshaughlin Primary School	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	10/05/2019
Meath	20017F	Scoil An Spioraid Naoimh Laytown	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	08/12/2018
Dublin	20502M	Scoil Sinead, Pelletstown, D15	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	14/05/2019
Dublin	68306H	Edmund Rice College Carpenterstown/Castleknock, D15	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	14/05/2019
Limerick	68309N	Limerick ET Secondary School	Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme)	25/02/2019

Schools Building Projects Data

247. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of school building projects at stage 3 of the school building or extension process; and the details of the longest 20 projects at stage 3 and in the case of each one, when it was listed at stage 3 initially. [29696/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The status of large-scale proj-

ects being delivered under the school building programme was last updated on my Department's website on May 31st 2019. For the purposes of this response, the data reflects current status on those projects.

There are 9 projects that are currently progressing through Stage 3 of Architectural Planning. Information in relation to when each of these projects began Stage 3 is contained in the following table.

COUNTY	ROLL NUMBER	SCHOOL	STAGE	DATE PROJECT MOVED TO CURRENT STAGE
Clare	70830N	Ennis Community College, Ennis	Stage 3 (Tender Stage)	01/10/2018
Dublin	19545A/ 19636D	Corduff NS (St Patricks Jnr & Snr) Dublin 15	Stage 3 (Tender Stage)	04/03/2019
Dublin	20228S & 11776C	St. Laurence O'Toole Girls NS and St. Laurence O'Toole Junior Boys NS, D1	Stage 3 (Tender Stage)	05/06/2019
Longford	19429V	St Christopher's Special School, Battery Rd, Longford Town	Stage 3 (Tender Stage)	05/07/2018
Waterford	20116H	Glor Na Mara, Tramore	Stage 3 (Tender Stage)	16/01/2019
Kildare	70700A	Maynooth Post Primary	Stage 3 (Tender Stage)	01/04/2019
Kildare	76193Q	Maynooth Community College	Stage 3 (Tender Stage)	01/04/2019
Kildare	76194S	Naas Community College	Stage 3 (Tender Stage)	01/04/2019
Meath	76088T	Ratoath Community College	Stage 3 (Tender Stage)	01/10/2018

Note: This projects 70700A, 76193Q and 76088T are retendered where the previous contractor went into liquidation and/or receivership

School Funding

248. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of equalising school funding between voluntary, community and comprehensive secondary schools. [29699/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The funding arrangements in the Community & Comprehensive sector and the ETB sector are primarily based on budgets determined by the Department. The enrolment in the individual schools is the main driver of the level of these budgets.

The funding arrangements in the Voluntary Secondary School Sector are based on per capita grants provided by the Department. Some equalisation measures were introduced to rectify historical inconsistencies in the funding arrangements for this sector of post-primary schools. It is estimated that up to €21m has been provided in equalisation funding between 2001 and 2009.

The level of disparity in the funding arrangements between the sectors would need to be revisited to determine what remains to be done on the equalisation agenda.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

249. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of reducing the pupil-teacher ratio to 21:1 in primary schools. [29700/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Budget 2019 marks the third year of a major reinvestment in the education. In 2019, the budget for the Department of Education and Skills will increase by €674 million, a 6.7% increase on last year. In total, the Education budget will have increased by €1.7 billion compared to 2016.

Budget 2019 will see numbers employed in our schools reach the highest ever level. Over 1,300 additional posts in schools will be funded, including more than 370 teaching posts to cater for growth in student population and additional special classes.

For the current school year, the staffing schedule at Primary level operates on a general average of 26 pupils to every 1 teacher (26:1) which is historically the lowest ever allocation ratio at primary level.

The 2018/19 school year saw an increase of over 6000 teaching posts in our schools compared to the 2015/16 school year.

The Statistics Section of my Department's website contains extensive data in relation to our schools including pupil teacher ratios and teacher numbers. The latest figures in relation to pupil teacher ratios show an improved ratio of teachers to students from 16:1 to 15.3:1 at primary level when comparing the 2015/16 school year to the 2017/18 school year.

Each 1 point adjustment to the primary staffing schedule is estimated to cost in the region of €13.5m per annum.

School Staff

250. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated annual cost of fully restoring guidance counselling. [29701/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Measures announced by my Department as part of Budgets 2016, 2017 and 2018 mean that 500 of the 600 guidance posts that were withdrawn in Budget 2012, were restored to schools from September 2018.

These 500 posts are allocated separately and transparently on each school's staffing schedule. These posts have been ring-fenced so they can only be used for guidance activities and to meet the guidance needs of the school.

The cost of restoring the remaining 100 posts is in the region of €6m. This will be considered in the context of future Budgets, however there are needs across the system which have to

be balanced in the decisions made in each budget.

School Services Staff

251. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding school secretaries and caretakers being made direct employees of his Department; the latest engagement he has had with representative groups on the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29705/19]

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

I have recently relaxed the moratorium for those C&C and ETB schools with enrolments of 700 and more which allow them to employ an additional School Secretaries up to a maximum of two per school. There are 91 schools in the C&C and ETB Sector who meet this criteria, based on the information currently available to this Department. This is an initial step and has taken immediate effect.

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

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

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

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

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

Officials from my Department attended a meeting of the Joint Committee on Education and Skills on the 9th of April to discuss the status of non-teaching staff.

Officials from my Department recently had discussions with FÓRSA trade union representatives as part of a planned meeting. FÓRSA took the opportunity to formally table a pay claim.

This was tabled as a follow-on claim from the current pay agreement for this cohort of staff

which lasts until December 2019. The Department will seek to establish the full current cost of the trade union's claim. This is standard practice.

FÓRSA's claim will be fully considered once the current costings have been determined on completion of a survey. The Department is fully open to having further dialogue with FÓRSA once this work has been undertaken.

National Educational Psychological Service

252. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when an educational psychological assessment will be carried out for persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29707/19]

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

In common with many other psychological services and best international practice, NEPS has adopted a consultative model of service. The focus is on empowering teachers to intervene effectively with pupils whose needs range from mild to severe and transient to enduring. Psychologists use a problem solving and solution oriented consultative approach to maximize positive outcomes for these pupils. NEPS encourages schools to use a continuum based assessment and intervention process whereby each school takes responsibility for initial assessment, educational planning and remedial intervention for pupils with learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Teachers may consult their NEPS psychologist should they need to at this stage in the process. Only in the event of a failure to make reasonable progress, in spite of the school's best efforts in consultation with NEPS, will the psychologist become involved with an individual child for intensive intervention or assessment.

This system allows psychologists to give early attention to urgent cases and also to help many more children indirectly than could be seen individually. It also ensures that children are not referred unnecessarily for psychological intervention.

I would advise that if there are concerns in relation to the educational or social and emotional development of the pupils instanced in the Deputy's question these should be raised by the parents, in the first instance, with the Principal of the school they are attending, with a view to the Principal discussing the situation, including the appropriateness of psychological assessment, with the school's assigned NEPS psychologist or local NEPS service.

Emergency Works Scheme Appeals

253. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an emergency works appeal will be granted for a school (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29708/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The school to which the Deputy refers recently submitted an appeal to my Department requesting a review of its application

for funding under the Emergency Works Grant Scheme to address issues with the school building. This review has been carried out and I am pleased to inform the Deputy that approval has been granted for the works. The school authority has been informed of this decision and the project has been devolved to it for delivery.

School Accommodation

254. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps he will take in view of the fact that the application for the provision of a primary school on a temporary basis at a location has been rejected; his plans to avert the crisis unfolding due to the rejection of the planning application; and if temporary accommodation will be available for new students to attend a school (details supplied) in August and September 2019. [29728/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The site location for the school to which the Deputy refers was identified in consultation with the Local Authority for interim accommodation pending delivery of the schools permanent accommodation.

The planning application was submitted to Fingal County Council on 17 April, 2019 for development of interim accommodation within the grounds of the existing car park at 85/87 Main Street, Swords. A request for Further Information received on 10th June, 2019 from the local authority is currently being finalised and a response is expected to be submitted this week. Then a decision on the planning application is awaited.

My Department has been in contact with the school's patron body Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB) and pending the planning decision alternative arrangements have been made for the school to open in the Riasc Centre, Feltrim Road, Drinan in September 2019. DDLETB have communicated this position to parents of enrolled children.

Compulsory Purchase Orders

255. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the circumstances under which he would consider acquiring lands by compulsory purchase order for the purposes of delivering a new school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29732/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): My Department does not have statutory Compulsory Purchase Order powers but Local Authorities have used their powers to assist in the acquisition of land for educational use.

While the CPO process has been used previously for school site acquisitions with the assistance of local authorities, it is generally only suitable when all efforts to acquire the site by agreement and the acquisition of all other viable site options have been unsuccessful.

CPOs have also been used to overcome title issues associated with sites or access to sites.

Special Educational Needs

256. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address a matter regarding a programme (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29733/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I am fully aware of the excellent work of Down Syndrome Ireland, having met with a number of representatives from that organization last week (3 July 2019).

We had a very fruitful discussion across a range of issues affecting children with Down Syndrome in the education system, and I very much look forward to cooperating further with them into the future.

Regarding the “See and Learn” programme however, the policy of my Department is not to endorse particular educational interventions or initiatives above others in the absence of full evaluation.

My Department’s policy aims to ensure that all children with Special Needs, including children with Down Syndrome, can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in mainstream school settings.

Funding from my Department for special education provision in 2019 will amount to approximately €1.9 billion, equivalent to almost one fifth of the gross overall current allocation for education and training. The funding includes:

- Up to 15,950 Special Needs Assistant (SNA) posts in primary, post primary and special schools by the end of 2019, assisting children with special educational needs who also have additional and significant care needs arising from a disability.

- On 27th March I announced the trialling of the School Inclusion Model – a new model of support for students with special educational and additional care needs.

- The School Inclusion Model, supported by €4.75m funding allocated in Budget 2019, aims to build schools’ capacity to include children with additional needs and to provide other supports for pupils.

- The achievement of better education and life outcomes for all children including those with special needs is a key element of Government policy. In 2019, over €1.87 billion will be invested in Special Education, nearly one fifth of the overall Education budget, and up 49% since 2011.

- Seventy-five schools, both primary and post-primary, in Kildare, Wicklow and South Dublin have been invited to participate in this new package of education and health supports to be piloted and evaluated in the 2019/20 school year.

- One feature of the School Inclusion Model is the continuation of the In-school Therapy Demonstration Project which provides access to therapy supports for schools and students on a tiered basis delivered by qualified speech and language and occupational therapists.

- Another element of the pilot is an enhanced Regional Support Team for schools in the pilot, under the auspices of the National Council for Special Education, which will include speech and language and occupational therapists.

- As set out in my Department’s Circular 0030/2014, while it is appropriate for SNAs to assist students to access therapy support in school, or to assist a therapist in providing support for a child or assist the child to perform therapy tasks directed by a therapist, SNAs are not responsible for the management or provision of therapy services in view of the particular skillset required to deliver therapeutic interventions.

- Approximately 13,400 Special Education teaching posts in mainstream primary and post

primary schools. Special Education teachers support the mainstream class teacher by providing additional teaching support for pupils with special educational needs in schools.

- Approximately 1,600 special classes in mainstream schools for the 2019-20 school year. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) continues to engage with schools in relation to opening special classes where there is an identified need for special class provision.

- Included in the above special class total are 63 Specific Speech and Language Disorder special classes in mainstream primary schools

- 124 special schools providing specialist education for pupils with the most complex special needs.

- The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support.

- The NCSE Support Service provides advice and support to schools on the education and inclusion of students with special educational needs, providing in-school support for support teachers, continuing professional development for teachers, and support to schools on the management of challenging behaviour.

- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) delivers a consultative, tiered service delivery model to schools, in line with international best practice for the effective and efficient delivery of educational psychological services that best meet the needs of all pupils/students in schools. This service delivery model allows NEPS psychologists to support schools to provide an effective continuum of support to meet the needs of pupils/students.

- Assistive technology/specialised equipment where it is essential in order for students to access the curriculum, in accordance with the criteria as set out in DES Circular 0010/2013

- Enhanced capitation for special schools and special classes.

Schools Building Projects Status

257. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of planning applications in respect of each new school to open in September 2019. [29789/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The following table outlines the current position of the status of planning applications in respect of 12 new schools commencing enrolment this September where planning applications for interim accommodation was required.

School Planning Area	Interim Accommodation Location	Planning Status
Primary Schools		
Dunshaughlin	Dunshaughlin GAA	Granted
Glasheen Cork City/ Pouladuff	ETB building at Colaiste Stiofan Naoife, Tramore Road	Refused - Alternative arrangements confirmed
Kilcoole/Newtownmount-Kennedy	Newtownmount Kennedy Community Centre site	Granted

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School Planning Area	Interim Accommodation Location	Planning Status
Killester_Raheny_Clontarf	Suttonians Rugby Club, Station Road, D13	Pending
Leixlip	Leixlip United/Leixlip Amenity Centre lands	Granted
Maynooth	School campus site at Moyglare Road	Refused - Alternative arrangements confirmed
Swords South	85/87 Main Street, Swords	Pending
Donaghmede_Howth_D13	Dublin City Council Site at Belmayne Avenue	Pending
Goatstown_Stillorgan_DLR	Grafton House, Ballymoss Road, Sandyford, D18	Granted
Post-Primary Schools		
Donaghmede_Howth_D13/Belmayne/Cloncollgriffin	Dublin City Council Site at Belmayne Avenue	Pending
Laytown & Drogheda (Regional Solution)	Colpe West/Mill Road, Drogheda	Pending
Wicklow	Crinion Park, Wicklow Town	Granted

Teachers' Remuneration

258. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address a matter regarding the qualification allowance (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29798/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The information requested by the Deputy is not available in my Department.

Details of individual qualifications for teachers are assessed by the Teaching Council and once assessed and approved, the Teaching Council registers the teacher for the particular education sector e.g Primary, Post Primary and Further Education. A teacher must be registered for the appropriate sector to be eligible to be paid as a qualified teacher.

The payment of qualification allowances to teachers being appointed to teaching posts for the first time ceased from the 1st February 2012. The full details regarding the payment of allowances are outlined in Circular 08/2013 which can be accessed on my Departments' website.

DEIS Scheme

259. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the new DEIS classification process for selection of schools will be introduced; when the new schools will be included; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29799/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy is aware, my Department is currently undertaking data analysis in the context of resource allocation to match identified need, including the examination of variables known to be strong predictors of educational disadvantage. All schools at both Primary and Post Primary are being assessed using the new identification model.

This analysis is being carried out by members of the DEIS Technical Group which contains representatives of the Department's Statistics and Social Inclusion Units, the Inspectorate and the Educational Research Centre. Work is ongoing by this group, including consultation with relevant experts. I am confident that the culmination of this analysis will facilitate the ultimate aim of matching resources to identified need and will allow us to target extra resources at those schools most in need.

Until this analysis is complete, it is not intended to extend the DEIS programme to any further schools.

The DEIS advisory group (which includes school management bodies and unions) was briefed in May by officials from my Department on progress and it is intended to schedule a further meeting of the DEIS advisory group for October this year.

Schools Building Projects Status

260. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the timeline for the construction of the new permanent building following the amalgamation two schools (details supplied) in view of the fact that planning permission has been granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29800/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The major building project referred to by the Deputy is at an advanced stage of architectural planning Stage 2b (Detailed Design), which includes the application for statutory approvals and the preparation of tender documents. All statutory approvals have been secured.

The Design Team has confirmed that it is working on finalising the Stage 2b report ensuring it will be a "Near Zero Energy Building" (NZEB) in compliance with the 2017 amendment to Part L of the current Building Regulations.

Upon completion, receipt and review of the Stage 2(b) submission, my Department will be in contact with the school regarding the progression of the project at that time.

Schools Building Projects Status

261. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if delays being experienced by a school (details supplied) to progress its school building project beyond stage 2B will be reviewed; the reason for the delay; the actions that can be taken to rapidly progress the project; the timeframe for the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29815/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Deputy will appreciate that all major school building projects under the Department's Construction Programme are progressed through the various stages of architectural planning in accordance with the Department's Design Team Procedures, Building Control Regulations and Public Works Contract requirements and that as the funding is exchequer funding the process and costs associated with any major project must be fully accounted for.

Design Teams must therefore be diligent in their preparation of the Stage 2(b) tender documentation in order to satisfy all regulatory bodies and my Department's Design Team Procedures. This results in minimising delays during further stages of the project.

The delays encountered by this project since it progressed to stage 2(b) can broadly be at-

tributed to the following:

- Two Design Team Consultants (Civil & Structural Engineer and Mechanical & Electrical Engineer) have been replaced
- Changes in scope of works
- Site ownership issues
- Delays in securing statutory approvals
- Additional Design Team fee requests due to changes in scope of works
- Requirement to upgrade design details to ensure that new school building is a Near Zero Energy Building (NZEB)
- Upon review by my Department of the Stage 2(b) report, which was submitted in June 2018, it was necessary to return as documentation was found to be incomplete.
- Upon review of revised Stage 2(b) report, which was submitted to the Department in February 2019, a Brief Change Request report was deemed necessary.

It was in the context of reviewing the revised Stage 2(b) report submitted to my Department that it was noted that the estimated Stage 2(b) cost plan had increased substantially from the approved costs at Stage 2(a).

In accordance with Department Design Team Procedures, where the approved cost limits have been exceeded, a Brief Change Report is necessary.

The Design Team is currently working on the required Brief Change Report. Upon receipt, review and approval of the Brief Change Report the Design Team will commence work on necessary adjustments to the Stage 2(b) documentation and arrange for the submission of a revised report.

Upon receipt and review of the revised Stage 2(b) Report my Department will revert to the Board of Management of the school with regard to the further progression of the project at that time.

Bullying in Schools

262. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the issue of bullying is not serious enough grounds to make alternative provision in school transport cases in which same has been requested; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29818/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

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

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

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

Children who are not eligible for school transport, under the terms of the scheme, may apply to Bus Éireann for transport on a concessionary basis only. Concessionary transport is subject to a number of conditions including that routes will not be extended or altered, additional vehicles will not be introduced, nor will larger vehicles or extra trips using existing vehicles be provided to cater for children who are not eligible; no additional State cost will be incurred.

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

Departmental Expenditure

263. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the years 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by inquiry, tribunal or commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29832/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The information requested is being collated by my Department and I will forward it directly to the Deputy when this work has been completed.

Home Tuition Scheme

264. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the supports provided to assist with socialising for children with a diagnosis of autism who are being home-schooled in view of the fact that this would be an important aspect of their education and development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29851/19]

265. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of children with a diagnosis of autism being home schooled by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29854/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 264 and 265 together.

The Deputy has clarified with my office that he is referring to my Departments Home Tuition Grant Scheme.

Home Tuition is provided as an interim measure until a school placement becomes available.

The scheme also makes provision for early educational intervention for children with Autism aged from 2.5 - 5 years who meet the scheme's criteria.

In the 2017/18 school year 808 children between 2.5 - 5 years accessed Home Tuition.

All children must be enrolled in the primary school system, whether through placement in mainstream classes, in special classes or in special schools in the September prior to their sixth birthday.

In circumstances, where there is no school placement available for a child with Special Educational Needs, the Department can provide Home Tuition grant funding towards the provi-

sion of 20 hours home tuition per week as an interim measure until the NCSE confirms that a placement is available.

Applications can be made at any point of the school year, based on when the child receives a diagnosis and recommendation for a specialised placement.

In the 2017/18 school year 64 children over the age of 6 accessed Home Tuition.

It is not the case that the Home Tuition Grant Scheme mandates one-on-one provision. The Department has no preference from an educational perspective for one-on-one provision.

Subject to conditions, Parents are free to use the grant to engage tutors to deliver tuition in their home or pre-school providers to deliver tuition in a group / pre-school setting. Such arrangements are essentially between the parents and the relevant provider.

There are many reasons why parents might prefer grouped arrangements rather than home based provision. These include the social benefits that arise for children working in an environment with other children. My Department advises all parents of the option to enter into a group arrangement

Private pre-school providers or home tutors do not provide services on behalf of the Department and the Department has no contractual relationship with such providers.

The annual circular which outlines the terms and conditions of the Home Tuition Grant Scheme will shortly be available on my Department's website for the 2019/2020 school year.

Education Data

266. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of children in primary and secondary school and the number of students at third level respectively, in 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29880/19]

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

-	2017/18	2018/19
Primary (Mainstream and Special Schools)	563,459	567,772
Second-level	357,408	362,899
Third-level (Full-time Undergraduate and Postgraduate Enrolments)	183,642	n/a

Note

Primary and Second-level statistics are derived from the annual Census of all Department-aided schools.

The figure for Second-level does not include CORE VTOS or PLC enrolments.

Third-level data for the 2018/19 academic year is being finalised and will be available later this year.

Departmental Circulars

267. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a circular has been issued to schools to assist them with the phasing out of single-use plastics; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29976/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Earlier this year the Government approved a number of environmental initiatives proposed by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment. The Government decided that departments and public bodies will lead the way in reducing generation of single use plastics and waste. This decision recognises that the public sector must demonstrate its commitment to sustainable development and use its influence to persuade others of the changes required to reduce our impact on the environment.

All education bodies, including schools, agencies, higher education institutions and education and training bodies are asked to implement these actions as part of our contribution to environmental actions and sustainability.

In the case of schools the Department communicated this requirement by notifying the school management bodies.

Further communications will issue to schools in relation to alternative procurement options and reporting of compliance by schools which may be in the form of a circular, following consultation with the school partners.

Climate Change Policy

268. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics; the public bodies and agencies under his remit to which he has issued an instruction to cease the purchase and use of single-use plastics; when the instruction issued; the bodies which have confirmed that they no longer purchase and use single-use plastics, respectively; the bodies which have not provided such confirmation to date; when they will confirm; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29983/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I can confirm that my Department ceased the purchase of specific single use plastics before 1st January, 2019.

With regard to bodies under my Department's aegis, the Deputy will be aware that there is a diverse and wide range of bodies under the education sector including:

- Non-commercial agencies
- Recognised schools
- Education Training Boards (ETBs)
- Higher level institutions. (HEIs)

All education bodies, including schools, agencies, higher education institutions and education and training bodies are asked to implement these actions as part of our contribution to environmental actions and sustainability. School Management Bodies were advised of these obligations also. The notifications to cease the purchase of certain single use plastics were issued between late December 2018 and January 2019.

Education bodies are obliged as public bodies to report to myself, as Minister, by end November 2019 on waste reduction and increasing recycling measures.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

269. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason there is no eligibility for grant assistance for a course that would allow for clear career progression but that is not classed as educational progression (details supplied). [30006/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Under the terms of the Student Grant Scheme, grant assistance is awarded to students attending an approved course in an approved institution who meet the prescribed conditions of funding, including those relating to nationality, residency, progression, previous academic attainment and means.

To satisfy the terms and conditions of the student grant scheme in relation to progression, a student must be moving from year to year within a course, having successfully completed the previous year or be transferring from one course to another where the award for the subsequent course is of a higher level than the previous course.

Under the progression/previous academic attainment criteria of the scheme, a grant will not be paid to a student for a repeat period of study on the same course, or for a different course at the same level, irrespective of whether or not a grant was paid previously. The objective of this policy is to help as many students as possible to obtain one qualification at each level of study.

If the person to whom the Deputy refers is ineligible for a SUSI grant, there are some other options which could be pursued.

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

Also, tax relief at the standard rate of tax may be claimed in respect of tuition fees paid for approved courses at approved colleges of higher education, including approved postgraduate courses in EU Member States and in non-EU countries. Further information on this tax relief is available from the Revenue Commissioners on www.revenue.ie.

Schools Building Projects Data

270. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the tendered price and final build cost for each new school and school extension in counties Cork and Kerry over the past ten years; and the reason for variation in each case. [30033/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The information requested by the Deputy in relation to schools in Cork and Kerry is not readily available. However, I will arrange for this information to be forwarded directly to the Deputy shortly.

Education and Training Boards Funding

271. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when he will extend the Irish and bilingual grant as per the grants payable to non-fee-paying voluntary secondary schools, in the amount of €103 per student, to the ETB sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30043/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The purpose of the Irish and Bilingual Grant is to provide funding to schools for instruction through the Irish Language.

The funding arrangements made by the Department for voluntary secondary, comprehensive & community and ETB schools and colleges reflect the different management and ownership arrangements that apply to schools at second level.

Voluntary secondary schools, in the Free Education scheme, which are privately owned and managed, are funded by way of per capita grants. These schools receive a grant in lieu of fees that had been levied prior to 1967. An additional per capita grant is paid to secondary schools in the voluntary sector in which instruction is through the medium of Irish in full or in part. The grant is not paid in either the Community & Comprehensive or the ETB sectors.

Financial allocations to the ETB sector are made on a budget basis in respect of head office and other costs, including those relating to schools. ETBs are given a high level of autonomy in the management and appropriation of their budgets and each ETB is allowed to distribute its allocations in line with its priorities and perceptions of need. Any funding issues for an individual school have to be managed from within the relevant ETB's budget. The Department does not earmark funding allocations for individual schools in the ETB sector.

The Department's Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 aims to ensure the availability of a high quality and relevant Irish-medium educational experience for all young people living in Gaeltacht areas and in this way to support the use of Irish as the main language of families and of Gaeltacht communities. Under the terms of the Policy, additional teaching and/or other resources, including dedicated continuing professional development (CPD), will be made available to schools whose applications to participate in the Gaeltacht Schools' recognition process are approved. It is envisaged that the allocation of resources will be on a staged incremental basis over a five-year period and will take account of the resources already allocated to each newly recognised Gaeltacht school in accordance with the language criteria set out in the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022.

Education and Training Boards Administration

272. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the process of nominating members apart from local authority nominees to education and training boards; if membership of such boards varies; if so, the composition of the Cavan and Monaghan ETB, the Louth and Meath ETB, and the Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30046/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Section 30 of the Education and Training Board Act 2013 sets out the arrangements for the composition of each board of Education and Training Board, the composition of which is as follows:

- 12 members selected by the relevant local authority;
- 2 members elected by ETB staff;
- 2 members appointed by the ETB from nominees of National Parents Council(s);
- 5 members appointed by the ETB from bodies specified by the Minister which have a special interest in, or knowledge of education.

On 2nd July last, I specified a range of bodies as having the right to nominate persons for appointment to Education and Training Boards.

All boards must be constituted in accordance with Section 30 of the Education and Training Board Act 2013.

Section 31 of the Education and Training Boards Act 2013 deals with the appointment and term of office of members of education and training boards.

The Timetable around when meetings of the new ETB boards should be held post-election is as follows:

- Within 6 weeks of the Local Authority elections, each Local Authority must elect its nomination to each ETB. Following the 2019 local elections, this deadline fell on 4th July 2019;

- The date of each ETBs first meeting after the local elections shall be at least 2 months and not more than 3 months after the date of the local elections concerned (i.e. between the 24th July 2019 & 24th August 2019). This meeting is known as the “post-election meeting”;

- At the “post-election meeting”, the only members present should be the Local Authority (LA) members and the Staff members;

- The only business that should be conducted at the post-election meeting is to appoint the Parent Nominees and to set the date of the next meeting (i.e. second meeting);

- At the second meeting, the only members present should be the LA members, Staff members and Parent members;

- The only business that should be conducted at the second meeting is to appoint the 5 members from Bodies specified by the Minister which have a special interest in, or knowledge of education and to set the date of the next meeting (i.e. third meeting). At this stage the full composition of the new ETB will have been decided;

- The third Meeting will be business as usual

In relation to selecting the 5 members from Bodies specified by the Minister;

- at least one of whom shall be from a body representative of business, industry and employers,

- at least one of whom shall be a body representative of learners, and

- at least one of whom shall be a body established for the purpose of representing the interests of persons engaged in the management of, or leadership in, recognised schools,

- the remaining two representatives can be from any of the bodies on the specified list.

- In addition, the members appointed shall reside within the functional area of the education and training board and shall include at least 2 men and at least 2 women.

My Department would not be aware when the dates of when the Board Meetings of ETBs take place as it is a matter for each ETB to determine the dates of such meetings in accordance with the timeline outlined above.

The full composition of the Education and Training Boards referred to by the Deputy will not be known until after the second meeting of the new ETB boards has taken place.

As at 2 July 2019, the bodies specified by the Minister as eligible to make nominations to education and training boards are as follows.

Bodies representative of business, industry and employers:

- Accounting Technicians Ireland
- Chambers Ireland
- Freight Transport Association Ireland
- Horse Racing Ireland
- Institute of Professional Auctioneers and Valuers (IPAV)
- Irish Business and Employers' Confederation (IBEC)
- Irish Hospitality Institute in co-operation with the Restaurants Association of Ireland
- Irish Hotel Federation
- Irish Road Haulage Association
- Nursing Homes Ireland
- The Society of the Irish Motor Industry (SIMI)
- Údarás na Gaeltachta

Bodies representative of Learners:

- AONTAS (National Adult Learning Organisation)
- Conradh na Gaeilge
- Disability Federation of Ireland in co-operation with AHEAD
- Down Syndrome Ireland
- Immigrant Council of Ireland
- National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)
- National Youth Council of Ireland
- REHAB
- Technological Higher Education Association (THEA)
- Union of Students in Ireland [USI]
- Youth Work Ireland

Bodies representative of persons engaged in the management of, or leadership in, recognised schools:

- Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
- Joint Managerial Body
- National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals

Bodies which are not in the three designated categories:

- Foras na Gaeilge
- Gaeloideachas
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
- The Wheel

School Inspection Reports

273. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there is a provisional date for the publication of a report (details supplied). [30050/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): A Formal Review of the inspection referred to by the Deputy (a Whole-School Evaluation-Management, Leadership and Learning conducted in Sancta Maria College, Ballyroan, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16) was requested under the Procedure for Review of Inspections on Schools and Teachers under Section 13(9) of the Education Act 1998, September 2015. The Formal Review has not yet concluded and in line with Section 3.6 of the Guidelines on the Publication of School Inspection Reports, September 2015, the report arising from the inspection may not be published at present. It is not possible at this stage to give a date by which the review process will be concluded.

Ministerial Transport

274. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the model of the car or cars used by An Taoiseach in the performance of his official duties; and if it has a diesel, petrol or electric engine. [29121/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised that the make and model is a diesel BMW 740s. The Deputy may also be interested to know that the feasibility of the use of hybrid or electric vehicles is under consideration within An Garda Síochána. I am informed by the Garda authorities that 2 electric vehicles were purchased by An Garda Síochána in 2018, in order to evaluate the potential and limitations of electric vehicles in Garda operational environments on a pilot basis.

Departmental Funding

275. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the NGO to which allegations (details supplied) pertained; the action being taken to recover the funds; the process or procedure put in place to ensure such alleged misuse of public funds does not recur at this body and other public bodies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29150/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The background to this issue is that an anonymous letter was originally received by my Department in September 2017 alleging that in the past there had been financial mismanagement of grant funding amounting to approximately €88,000 to a non-governmental organisation. Subsequent related allegations were made in 2018.

On foot of these allegations, the Department's Internal Audit Unit conducted an audit during 2018 into the allegations. The audit found that grant funding provided from Cosc, the National

Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, based in my Department had been used to supplement funding provided to this organisation from other sources to fund other work not coming under Cosc's remit. This irregularity was found to have arisen due to lax financial controls in the organisation in question. The audit did not find any evidence of any fraudulent activity.

On foot of the audit's findings, the Department is currently engaged in a process to resolve the issues raised by the internal audit report. The process includes the engagement of suitably qualified external resources by the Department to advise on future action. Once this independent analysis has been received, which is expected during the third quarter of this year, a prompt decision will be taken by the Department on how to proceed regarding these matters. The outcome will be notified to the Public Accounts Committee.

The Public Accounts Committee was advised in April that the name of the organisation in question is not being put in the public domain. The Committee was advised that the reason for this is firstly to protect the integrity of the process currently underway, but also to protect the organisation's clients from being potentially exposed otherwise to media attention and speculation not of their making, which would detract from the ongoing sensitive work being undertaken with them and on their behalf.

I can advise the Deputy that, in its management and accountability for grants of this nature provided from exchequer funds, my Department adheres to the relevant Directive in place from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, which is applicable to all Government Departments in governing such funding. This includes service level agreements with such organisations, periodic reporting on expenditure and periodic auditing of organisations.

Furthermore, the Secretary General of my Department, in his capacity as Accounting Officer for my Department's Vote, reports formally to the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Public Accounts Committee under the standard processes which are in place for the reporting on all Government expenditure.

Direct Provision Data

276. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of children resident in direct provision centres; the length of time such persons have been in direct provision, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29786/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): In the time available it has not been possible to compile up-to-date information in the format requested by the Deputy. I will write to the Deputy as soon as it becomes available.

Closed-Circuit Television Systems Provision

277. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the CCTV applications that were submitted in respect of towns and villages in counties Cavan and Monaghan will be approved and awarded funding. [30045/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): CCTV systems installed for the purposes of crime prevention and as aids to policing in areas to which the general public routinely have access fall into two distinct but complementary categories, namely Garda CCTV systems and community-based CCTV systems.

Community CCTV is governed by section 38(3)(c) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 and the Garda Síochána (CCTV) Order 2006 (SI No 289 of 2006). This legal framework requires that any proposed community CCTV scheme must:

- be approved by the local Joint Policing Committee,
- have the prior support of the relevant local authority, which must also undertake to act as data controller and
- have the authorisation of the Garda Commissioner.

This is the legal basis for all community CCTV schemes and these key legal requirements have not changed since 2006.

A grant aid scheme is administered by my Department to support proposed CCTV schemes which meet these legal requirements. I can confirm that I have received one application from Monaghan County Council and one application from Ballyjamesduff Community, County Cavan. Both applications are currently being assessed against the criteria of the scheme and my officials will revert to the individuals concerned shortly.

The grant aid scheme remains open for applications in 2019. I am keen to ensure that all interested groups, in both rural and urban areas, have the opportunity to take advantage of the availability of the grant aid scheme. Further details are available to download from my Department's website - www.justice.ie - and support and guidance is available to help interested groups through a dedicated email address, communitycctv@justice.ie.

Judicial Council Legislation

278. **Deputy Seán Barrett** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to set up a judicial council to review levels of awards for personal injuries with a view to reforming these amounts to bring Ireland into line with international norms; if consideration will be given to setting up a dedicated central Garda resource specifically tasked with investigating fraudulent cases for potential prosecution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29101/19]

296. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will urgently establish the judicial council to review levels of awards for personal injuries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29470/19]

297. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to establish a dedicated central Garda resource specifically tasked with investigating fraudulent cases for potential prosecution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29471/19]

303. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the Judicial Council Bill 2017 will be enacted prior to the 2019 summer recess; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29774/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 278, 296, 297 and 303 together.

The matters raised by the Deputies are among those which have been considered by the Cost of Insurance Working Group which was established by the Government in July 2016 and is chaired by Minister of State Michael D'Arcy. The role of the Working Group is to analyse the high costs imposed by insurance companies to determine what actions the Government might take to address any issues that might be contributing to these costs. The Working Group, which

involves Government Departments, agencies and relevant stakeholders, has published a series of recommendations in 2017 and 2018, the majority of which have been implemented. The Working Group's Reports and regular updates on its actions are published on the web-site of the Department of Finance with the ninth such Progress Update being due for publication shortly.

A key recommendation of the Working Group was the establishment of the Personal Injuries Commission. The Commission undertook a major analysis of the claims process in Ireland and recommended, as reflected in today's Questions, that the future Judicial Council be assigned the function under its statute of compiling guidelines for appropriate general damages for various types of personal injury. In response, the Government has successfully brought forward a number of amendments to the Judicial Council Bill 2017 that will provide for the establishment of a Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee. The Committee will be tasked with the preparation of personal injuries guidelines and will have all the powers necessary for it to carry out its functions in an efficient and effective manner. The Bill passed all stages in Dáil Éireann on 4 July 2019 and is scheduled for completion before the Seanad today, Tuesday 9 July 2019, with a view to its enactment before the summer recess and the establishment of the Judicial Council before the end of the year.

As also raised, the Cost of Insurance Working Group had called for An Garda Síochána to explore the potential for further cooperation between it and the insurance sector in relation to insurance fraud investigation. An industry-funded Garda insurance fraud unit was one option considered in this regard. As I have outlined in my responses to a number of parliamentary questions during the current Dáil session, the Garda Commissioner is of the view that a divisional focus on insurance fraud is preferable to the establishment of a centralised investigation unit. This approach is aligned with the divisional-focussed Garda model. It is the intention of the Commissioner that the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau will guide divisions and provide training in the investigation of insurance fraud. As Deputies will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is solely responsible for such organisational matters, including the establishment of individual Garda units, their remits and resourcing. At the same time, there is now a broader positive engagement between An Garda Síochána and Insurance Ireland's Anti-Fraud Forum who have committed to meet on a regular basis to discuss and act upon current and on-going issues arising in the area of insurance fraud.

Asylum Applications Data

279. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out in tabular form the number of persons from non-EU countries who arrived here seeking refugee status and-or asylum in each of the years 2013 to 2018, by country of origin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29186/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Figures on applications from the five countries with the most applications for the relevant years are publicly available on the website of the International Protection Office at www.ipd.gov.ie and are reproduced in the following table for ease of reference.

Year	Nationality	Applications
2013	Nigeria	129
	Pakistan	91
	DR Congo	72
	Zimbabwe	70
	Malawi	55

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Year	Nationality	Applications
	Others	529
	Total	946
2014	Pakistan	292
	Nigeria	142
	Albania	99
	Bangladesh	99
	Zimbabwe	85
	Others	731
	Total	1448
2015	Pakistan	1352
	Bangladesh	286
	Albania	214
	Nigeria	186
	India	144
	Others	1094
	Total	3276
2016	Syria	244
	Pakistan	233
	Albania	222
	Zimbabwe	192
	Nigeria	176
	Others	1177
	Total	2244
2017	Syria	545
	Georgia	302
	Albania	282
	Zimbabwe	262
	Pakistan	200
	Others	1335
	Total	2926
2018	Albania	459
	Georgia	450
	Syria	333
	Zimbabwe	282
	Nigeria	251
	Others	1898
	Total	3673

In compiling the data, the International Protection Office takes cognisance of Section 26 of the International Protection Act, 2015 which makes it an offence to identify an international

protection applicant. To comply with its legal obligations, the data is not disaggregated beyond what is published to ensure it does not run the risk of identifying individual applicants.

Deportation Orders Data

280. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of deportation orders which have been issued to non-EEA nationals who are here without lawful permission in each of the years 2014 to 2018; the number of non-EEA nationals who have left voluntarily after receiving such an order in the same period; the number of deportations conducted by State agencies in the same period, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29221/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have been advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the numbers of Deportation Orders made during the years 2014 to 2018 are as set out in the following table.

Year	Deportation Orders made
2014	742
2015	764
2016	1,196
2017	932
2018	1,187
Total	4,821

With regard to the number of non-EEA nationals who have left voluntarily after receiving a Deportation Order, a person the subject of a Deportation Order is legally obliged to remove themselves from the state and thereafter remain outside the State. It is the case that in this jurisdiction as in others, significant numbers of people who are the subject of deportation orders leave voluntarily following receipt of the order. As exit checks from the State are not in use, it is not possible to indicate with any degree of precision the numbers who may be in this category but all the available evidence suggests that the number is likely to be considerable.

Enforced removals are only carried out as a last resort and are carried out in conjunction with the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB). The following table sets out numbers for the years requested by the Deputy.

Year	Number of persons deported
2014	114
2015	251
2016	428
2017	140
2018	163
Total	1,096

Immigration Status

281. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when stamp 4 will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); the grounds upon which a copy of private medical insurance is being requested, with particular reference to the fact that the person does not have private medical insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29245/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that a request for permission to reside in the State on Stamp 4 conditions was received on 13 August, 2018 from the person concerned. The Deputy will appreciate that applications are dealt with in chronological order. I understand that INIS wrote to the person on 2 July, 2019 seeking further information and the matter will be given detailed consideration upon receipt of a response.

I also understand that the person concerned currently has permission to reside in the State as a student. The Deputy may wish to note that all non-EEA students are required to hold private medical insurance when coming to and residing in the State for the purpose of study. Further information this requirement is available on the INIS website at <http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Private%20Medical%20Insurance%20for%20full%20time%20Non-EEA%20Students.pdf/Files/Private%20Medical%20Insurance%20for%20full%20time%20Non-EEA%20Students.pdf>

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

Immigration Status

282. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a decision will issue in respect of an application pending under the special scheme for non-EU students in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29275/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that it received an application for permission to reside in this State from the person concerned under the Special Scheme for Students 2005 to 2010 on 18 October 2018. The Deputy will appreciate that applications are dealt with in chronological order. I understand that the application is under active consideration and INIS will be in contact with the person concerned, in writing, as soon as possible.

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

Garda Deployment

283. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí stationed at both Lucan and Ronanstown Garda stations, in view of growing concerns in the Lucan area. [29299/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for managing An Garda Síochána,

including personnel, and I, as Minister, have no role in the matter.

Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am informed by the Commissioner that the Cohort Model of resource allocation is currently used for the allocation of personnel within An Garda Síochána, including newly attested probationer Gardaí from the Garda College. The allocation and transfer of Garda Personnel using the Cohort Model is determined by a number of factors, including crime and non-crime workload, minimum establishment, population, area, policing arrangements, and operational strategies. When considering the allocation of resources to a Division, comprehensive consultation is carried out with local Garda management during which all factors are taken into consideration.

The Garda strength of the DMR West Division which includes both Lucan and Ronanstown Garda stations, from 2009 to 31 May 2019, as provided by the Commissioner, is available on my Department's website through the following link:

http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/002_Garda_Numbers_by_Division_District_and_Station_2009_to_31_May_2019_c.xlsx/Files/002_Garda_Numbers_by_Division_District_and_Station_2009_to_31_May_2019_c.xlsx

More general information on Garda Facts and Figures is available at the following link: http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/An_Garda_Siochana_facts_and_figures

Working Holiday Programmes

284. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will address a matter raised in correspondence by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29301/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Working Holiday Authorisation Programme (WHA) allows non-EEA nationals from certain countries to come to Ireland to experience living and working (without the requirement of a formal work permit) for a certain period of time, normally one year. Ireland's Working Holiday bilateral agreement with Canada, which is under the remit of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, has been in place since 2003.

The formal agreement with Canada allows for Canadian nationals to live and work in Ireland for up to 2 years. Applications for the Programme are processed and approved by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. My Department is solely responsible for the granting of an immigration permission consistent with the terms and conditions set out in the WHA for that country (in this case Canada), and has no basis to extend the immigration permission.

Where an individual (such as referred by the Deputy) seeks to continue their employment with an employer after the expiry of their WHA, they cannot extend their immigration permission under the WHA in order to continue that employment. Based on the terms and conditions of the WHA application that was signed by that person, participants in the programme must leave Ireland on the expiration of their immigration permission, which cannot be extended or renewed. Should an individual who has left the State upon the expiry of their WHA and seek to re-enter the State under a working permission (Stamp 1 basis) they are required to apply for the relevant work permit through the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and have

a valid permit before registering their permission with the INIS. The criteria applying under the Employment Permits Acts and Regulations are solely a matter for that Department.

Garda Transport Data

285. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda vehicles attached to Crumlin, Ballyfermot and Sundrive Road Garda stations as of 31 December 2018 and 30 June 2019, in tabular form. [29313/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation for 2019 of €1.76 billion. Very significant capital investment is also being made in An Garda Síochána, including a total of €46 million for investment in the Garda fleet between 2016 and 2021. This continuing investment is intended to ensure that An Garda Síochána can be mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime.

The Deputy may also wish to be aware that a total of €10 million has been made available for the purchase and fit-out of Garda vehicles in 2019. I understand from the Garda authorities that this allocation will be used for purchase and fit-out of over 300 new vehicles for operational use this year.

As the Deputy will appreciate, in accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005 as amended, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. Further, the allocation of Garda resources is a matter for the Commissioner, in light of identified operational demands. This includes responsibility for the allocation of Garda vehicles among the various Garda divisions. As Minister, I have no role in these matters. I am assured, however, that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure their optimum use.

The Garda authorities advise that Crumlin and Sundrive Garda Stations are in Crumlin Garda District. Ballyfermot Garda Station is in Clondalkin Garda District. The responsibility for the efficient deployment of all official Garda vehicles in each Division lies with the Divisional Officer, who may allocate vehicles between stations as required by operational circumstances.

The Garda authorities have informed me that the following tables outline the Garda fleet in the Crumlin and Clondalkin Districts for the dates requested by the Deputy.

CRUMLIN-G DISTRICT	Cars	Vans	Bikes	4x4	Others	Total
31/12/2018	15	9	0	0	0	24
30/06/2019	19	10	0	0	0	29

CLONDALKIN-L DISTRICT	Cars	Vans	Bikes	4x4	Others	Total
31/12/2018	15	5	0	0	0	20
30/06/2019	14	5	0	0	0	19

Garda Resources

286. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the Garda divisions in which a protective services unit has been established to date; the Garda divisions

in which a protective services unit is due to be established by the end of quarter 4 of 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29333/19]

287. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the buildings, office equipment, cars, technology and trained Garda personnel are in place for each of the divisional protection services units established to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29334/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 286 and 287 together.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of resources among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

The information requested is currently being compiled and I will revert directly to the Deputy when it is to hand.

Garda Youth Diversion Projects

288. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated full-year cost of increasing the number of juvenile liaison officers by 25%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29353/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation for 2019 of €1.76 billion. Very significant capital investment is also being made in Garda ICT, the Garda fleet and the Garda estate. In total, the Garda capital allocation has increased from €61 million to €92 million in 2019, which represents a 50% increase.

In accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005, as amended, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling the administration and business of An Garda Síochána, including the training of its members and Garda staff. The Commissioner is also responsible for the effective and efficient use of the resources available to An Garda Síochána.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the estimated cost of increasing the number of Garda Juvenile Liaison Officers by 25% is approximately €1,529,800 and that the estimated cost of increasing the number of Sergeant Juvenile Liaison Officers by 25% is approximately €138,450.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that this estimate has been calculated based on 104 existing Garda JLOs and 8 existing Sergeant JLOs, correct as at 31 May 2019; and that basic salary costs have been calculated using the midpoint of the Garda salary scale and including fixed allowances which the member is entitled to. An estimate of Employer's PRSI is also included. Allowances for unsocial hours and any potential overtime payments in excess of standard briefing time are not included. The impact of pay rises is not included in this estimate.

Garda Youth Diversion Projects

289. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the esti-

mated full-year cost if the budget for Garda youth diversion projects increased by 10%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29354/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): The allocated budget for Garda Youth Diversion Projects in 2019 is approximately €15.3m and increase of 10% would bring the allocation to approximately €16.83m. This provision includes funding to support the operation of 106 Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs) currently. These projects are community-based multi-agency crime prevention initiatives which primarily seek to divert young people who have become involved in crime/anti-social behaviour.

For 2019, there is a renewed emphasis on preventative work by GYDPs, looking at the child in the context of the specific family and the specific community. This includes family support work and working with children aged 8 to 11.

In addition to local projects, the Department also supports pilot projects, to help develop better approaches in areas such as engagement with hard-to-reach or more challenging children, as well as mentoring initiatives. The operation of GYDPs is being further developed through an Action Research Project, (ARP) supported by the University of Limerick, which is currently engaging with 15 local projects. It is envisaged that the ARP will run over a number of years with a view to rolling out the learning to all GYDPs and developing the project network so that every child in the State who might require GYDP services will have access to them.

Courts Service Properties

290. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans for the vacant courthouse building in Kilcock, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29362/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998 management of the courts, including the provision of accommodation for court sittings, is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that the review of the future delivery of court services in the District Court area of Kilcock has been completed and the Courts Service Board has recently decided to permanently close Kilcock Courthouse. As the Deputy may be aware Kilcock Courthouse was closed in July 2016 on health and safety grounds and District Court sittings transferred just over 20 km away, to Naas.

The Courts Service has advised that the former courthouse building will be made available to other public sector organisations for alternative public or community use.

Departmental Advertising Expenditure

291. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount spent on digital marketing in each of the past eight years; the items on which funds were spent; the criteria by which target audiences were selected; the amount of the digital spend targeted here; the amount targeted abroad; the amount that related to private companies; the amount that related to policy initiatives; and the purpose of the digital advertisements. [29396/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department engages

in digital marketing, where appropriate, in order to draw attention to important issues in the Justice and Equality sector. The use of digital marketing allows the Department to reach audiences that might not be as likely to see or hear traditional forms of marketing such as newspapers, television, radio etc.

The work contracted has allowed valuable public attention to be drawn to important issues such as domestic violence and human trafficking. All digital spends have been primarily aimed at those living in Ireland.

The criteria by which target audiences are selected is based on identifying the group for whom the message is most relevant. For example, the annual Fireworks Awareness Campaign takes place each Halloween. The Department was concerned that the traditional method of newspaper advertisements may not be reaching those who may potentially be accessing illegal fireworks at this time of year and therefore has also begun engaging in online advertising targeted at persons under the age of 21 as they are the group for whom this information may be most relevant.

An itemised breakdown of digital marketing expenditure covering the last 8 years is set in the following table. There was no expenditure for digital marketing before 2016.

Year	Cost (€)	Description	Private company (if applicable)
2018	€1,637.02	Fireworks Halloween Campaign - Trafficking fees/Facebook self-service	PHD Media Ireland
2018	€123.00	Fireworks Halloween Campaign - Online campaign MGMT	Mediavest Ltd. T/A Spark Foundry
2018	€21,051.74	Department of Justice & Equality contribution to Government's online safety campaign "BeSafeOnline"	N/A
2018	€139,266.00	Online promotion of "What Would You Do?", the national awareness campaign on domestic violence	PHD Media Ireland
2017	€1,291.50	Article on background to and building awareness of human trafficking (Appeared in both print and online editions of Metro Éireann)	Metro Éireann
2017	€144,310.00	Online promotion of "What Would You Do?", the national awareness campaign on domestic violence	PHD Media Ireland
2016	€110,786.00	Online promotion of "What Would You Do?", the national awareness campaign on domestic violence	PHD Media Ireland

Spend in my department for marketing, media and social media may be allocated on a case-by-case basis. As such, a full projected 2019 spend is not available. It is expected that there will be significant costs in relation to the "No Excuses" campaign against sexual harassment and sexual violence which was launched by my Department in May of this year, however no costs relating to digital marketing have been incurred this year as of yet.

Visa Applications

292. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a visa will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29401/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the visa application referred to will be examined in the coming weeks. The decision will issue directly to both the applicant and the sponsor.

I am also advised that while the Policy Document on Family Reunification contains a stated business target that such visa applications should be dealt with within twelve months of receipt of application, that this is a business target and does not constitute a legal obligation.

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

In addition, applicants may themselves e-mail queries directly to INIS (visamail@justice.ie).

Immigration Status

293. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of an application for residency status pursuant to section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999, as amended, in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29406/19]

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), written representations have been submitted on behalf of the person concerned.

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

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

Asylum Applications

294. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a long-term extension of residency will be granted in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29412/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, if an application for asylum or subsidiary protection has been made in the State, for confidentiality reasons it is not the practice to comment on such applications and the applicant or his legal representative should contact either the International Protection Office (IPO) or the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) directly, as appropriate.

The IPO may be contacted either by email to info@ipo.gov.ie, by telephone to the IPO Customer Service Centre at 01 6028008 or in writing to Customer Service Centre, International Protection Office, 79-83 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2. The International Protection Appeals Tribunal may be contacted either by email to info@protectionappeals.ie, by telephone at 01-4748400 (or Lo-Call 1890 201 458), or in writing to Corporate Services Division, The International Protection Appeals Tribunal, 6-7 Hanover Street East, Dublin D02 W320.

Following the commencement of the International Protection Act 2015 on 31 December 2016, new arrangements for the investigation and determination of applications for international protection (refugee status and subsidiary protection) and cases involving permission to remain in the State have been introduced. Such applications are now processed, as part of a single application procedure, by the International Protection Office (IPO) which has replaced the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) from that date. The staff of that Office (the Chief International Protection Officer and International Protection Officers) are independent in the performance of their protection functions.

For your information, on 27 February 2017, the Chief International Protection Officer, following consultation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), published a statement on the Prioritisation of Applications under the International Protection Act 2015 which is available on the website of the International Protection Office (www.ipo.gov.ie).

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.

Departmental Expenditure

295. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the costs paid to companies (details supplied) for projects on which each was engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason each was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29447/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The following table outlines the costs paid to Mazars for projects for which they were engaged by my Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019. The Department did not engage the other companies listed for projects in the period covered by the question.

Year	Cost €	Reason Company was engaged
2016	€27,373.65	Review of Case Management system in Insolvency Service Ireland
2018	€69,372	ICT Risk Assessment in Statutory Bodies under the aegis of the Justice Vote

Year	Cost €	Reason Company was engaged
2019	€18,450	ICT Risk Assessment in the Department of Justice and Equality
2019	€7,995	External review of Protected Disclosure
2019	€3,444	ICT Risk Assessment in the Irish Prison Service

Questions Nos. 296 and 297 answered with Question No. 278.

Immigration Status

298. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of a stamp 4 application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29497/19]

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 request from the person concerned for permission to reside in the State on Stamp 4 conditions. I also understand that it would appear the person's presence in the State may be unlawful as their most recent permission to remain in the State expired in April, 2017.

The Deputy will appreciate that, under the relevant provisions of the Immigration Act, 2004, a non-national may not be in the State other than within the terms of a permission from the Minister for Justice and Equality. In order to allow for a full examination of the person's circumstances, the person concerned should write to Unit 2, Domestic Residence and Permissions Division, INIS, 13/14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2 and provide a detailed account and documentary evidence of their personal circumstances since the expiration of their permission to reside in this State.

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.

Departmental Expenditure

299. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the costs paid to a company (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason it was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29556/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The following table outlines the costs paid to Deloitte for projects for which that company was engaged by my Department in each of the years in question.

Year	Cost €	Reason Company was engaged
2015	€151,237.82	Ongoing support and maintenance of the Asylum and Immigration Strategic Integration Programme (AISIP) system
2016	€132,978.36	Ongoing support and maintenance of the AISIP system
2016	€87,883.50	Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) website development
2017	€18,942	INIS website development
2017	€292,470.03	Ongoing support and maintenance of the AISIP system
2017	€43,080.73	Development of the online forms platform for INIS
2017	€8,117.99	Backend maintenance and adjustments to the INIS Appointments System
2017	€35,473	Development work on Online System for Anti-Money Laundering Compliance Unit
2018	€40,129	Development of suite of software facilities for Criminal Justice Operational Hub
2018	€254,893.51	Ongoing support and maintenance of the AISIP system
2018	€48,868	ICT - Microsoft SharePoint development
2018	€19,262	ICT - Moving to a Microsoft-based environment from Domino
2018	€51,123.11	Backend maintenance and adjustments to the INIS Appointments System
2018	€66,333.28	Development of the online forms platform for INIS
2018	€23,431.50	AISIP Review in advance of upgrade
2018	€172,217.83	First upgrade of AISIP since installation in 2011 to bring application software up to a supportable level
2019	€128,055	ICT - Microsoft SharePoint development
2019	€54,218	Migration of our website hosting out of the Local Government Management Agency
2019	€44,786	ICT consultancy in respect of Department's Transformation Programme
2019	€62,407.12	Ongoing support and maintenance of the AISIP system
2019	€31,265.37	Backend maintenance and adjustments to the INIS Appointments System
2019	€102,130.59	Development of the online forms platform for INIS

Deportation Orders Re-examination

300. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a decision will be reviewed to deport a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29611/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 21 July 2009. This Order requires the person to remove themselves from the State and remain outside the State. The enforcement of the Deportation Order is a matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

Representations were received from the person concerned, pursuant to the provisions of

Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), requesting that the Deportation Order be revoked. Following the detailed consideration of the information submitted in support of the request, the Deportation Order was affirmed and notified to the person concerned by letter dated 12 October 2018.

It is open to the person concerned to submit further representations requesting that the Deportation Order be revoked, pursuant to Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). However, I wish to make clear that such an application would require substantial grounds to be successful.

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

Citizenship Applications

301. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost for a pensioner to apply for citizenship. [29662/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the fees to be paid by an applicant for a certificate of naturalisation are governed by the provisions of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 569 of 2011).

An application fee of €175 is payable on application for a certificate of naturalisation and a certification fee is payable on the issue of a certificate of naturalisation. The standard certification fee is set at €950, while a reduced fee of €200 applies in the case of an application made on behalf of a minor or in certain cases where the application is made by a widow, widower or surviving civil partner of an Irish citizen. In the case of recognised refugees and stateless persons the certification fee is nil.

There is no provision in the Regulations for the discretionary waiver or reduction of fees, or for differing fees to apply to different nationalities, duration of residency or age. The current rate of fees are comparable with other jurisdictions.

The standard fees payable by an applicant are designed to reflect the effort and cost involved in processing applications for a certificate of naturalisation. In respect of non-EEA nationals, the requirement to register immigration permissions which requires payment of a fee of €300 - usually per annum - no longer applies once citizenship is granted. The Deputy will be aware that formal citizenship ceremonies have been introduced at no extra cost to applicants. These have been universally well received by participants as the ceremonies provide a sense of dignity and occasion that serves to underscore the importance to both the State and the applicant of the granting of Irish citizenship.

Garda Resources

302. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the Garda divisions that have and have not respectively a specialised unit to deal with cases of sexual vio-

lence. [29724/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of resources among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that to date, Divisional Protective Services Units have been established in DMR South Central, Waterford, Kerry, Kilkenny, Carlow, Limerick and Galway Garda Divisions. These Units are in addition to those previously established in DMR West, Cork City and Louth Divisions in the initial phase of this initiative.

The Commissioner has assured me that the remaining Division Protective Service Units will be rolled-out to the remaining 19 Garda Divisions, on a phased basis, before the end of Q4 2019, in accordance with the targets set out in 'A Policing Service for the Future', the implementation plan giving effect to the recommendations of the Commission for the Future of Policing in Ireland.

Question No. 303 answered with Question No. 278.

Naturalisation Eligibility

304. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29795/19]

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 an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy, who currently has permission to reside in the State until 22 February 2022.

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

Full details of the eligibility criteria and extensive guidelines are available on the INIS website at www.inis.gov.ie

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.

Road Traffic Offences

305. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress made to date to tackle the illegal use of scrambler and quad bikes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29813/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): In responding to parliamentary question 203 of 14 May 2019, I noted that legal advice received from the Office of the Attorney General indicated that, in the main, current road traffic and public order legislation appear to provide sufficient means to police this issue. This view was shared by representatives from Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and An Garda Síochána who attended the last sitting of the cross-agency group on 15 March.

While it was agreed by that, in the main, road current legislative provisions appear to be sufficient, it was also agreed that the group would remain open to considering workable legislative solutions in the event that specific legislative gaps are identified by An Garda Síochána.

Separately, on 5 February, my officials wrote to the Garda Commissioner to seek his formal views on the legal advice, in the hope of addressing the legislative matter in as much detail as possible. A response to the aforementioned request to the Garda Commissioner was subsequently received on 28 June. This response is now being considered by my officials, and will be discussed in detail with the relevant stakeholders within the cross-agency group.

Departmental Expenditure

306. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the years 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by inquiry, tribunal or commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29837/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to confirm to the Deputy that the information sought cannot be provided in the time allowed. As soon as the information has been collated I will write to the Deputy on the matter.

Legislative Reviews

307. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the legislative review relating to hate crime and incitement to hatred in the context of integration policy and the EU Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law has been completed; if the review will be made public; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29873/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, my Department is currently reviewing the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989. The review is examining the efficacy of the legislation and what amendments might be required in order to ensure it is effective and fit for purpose in a modern democracy. A public consultation on the Act is due to commence shortly and will be published on the Department's website.

Separately, the Department is undertaking research into hate crime (offences under the general criminal law, such as assault or criminal damage, that are committed with a hate or bias motivation), to learn from the approaches taken in other jurisdictions and collect important information about the effectiveness or otherwise of current practice in Irish law. This research will be completed in Q4 of this year and the results will help develop new approaches to ensure

hate crime is addressed effectively in this jurisdiction.

Taken together, this work will significantly advance our understanding of what is needed to ensure that legislation in this important area protects and supports those who are vulnerable to expressions and acts of hatred. I will carefully consider the outcome with a view to bringing forward any necessary proposals for change.

Immigration Data

308. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of children that received deportation orders in each of the past five years in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29874/19]

309. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of children successful in receiving humanitarian leave to remain in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29875/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 308 and 309 together.

The information requested by the Deputy in respect of the last five years is set out in the following table:

Year	Numbers of children granted *humanitarian leave to remain	Numbers of children in respect of whom a Deportation Order was made
2014	336	44
2015	638	52
2016	278	109
2017	83	88
2018	152	92

* humanitarian leave to remain is a term sometimes used to describe the nature of permission granted where a decision is taken to not make a Deportation Order under section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended).

In deciding whether to make a deportation process or not, family units are examined together and full consideration is given to all aspects of the case, including rights under the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR).

Garda Equipment

310. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of marked and unmarked Garda cars and vans attached to each Garda district in the Kilkenny-Carlow Garda division as of 30 June 2018 and 25 June 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29891/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation for 2019 of €1.76 billion. Very significant capital investment is also being made in An Garda Síochána, including a total of €46 million for investment in the Garda fleet between 2016 and 2021. This continuing investment is intended to ensure that An Garda Síochána can be mobile,

visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime.

The Deputy may also wish to be aware that a total of €10 million has been made available for the purchase and fit-out of Garda vehicles in 2019. I understand from the Garda authorities that this allocation will be used for purchase and fit-out of over 300 new vehicles for operational use this year.

As the Deputy will appreciate, in accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005 as amended, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. Further, the allocation of Garda resources is a matter for the Commissioner, in light of identified operational demands. This includes responsibility for the allocation of Garda vehicles among the various Garda divisions. As Minister, I have no role in these matters. I am assured, however, that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure their optimum use.

The Garda authorities advise that the following table outlines the number of vehicles assigned to Kilkenny/Carlow Division Fleet for the dates requested by the Deputy. For operational reasons, a breakdown of marked and unmarked vehicles is not included in the table.

Kilkenny/Carlow Division Fleet as of 30 June 2019	Cars	Vans	Total
KILKENNY/CARLOW DIVISION	52	18	70
CARLOW DISTRICT	11	5	16
KILKENNY DISTRICT	26	8	34
THOMASTOWN DISTRICT	15	5	20

Kilkenny/Carlow Division Fleet as of 30 June 2018	Cars	Vans	Total
KILKENNY/CARLOW DIVISION	56	16	72
CARLOW DISTRICT	13	4	17
KILKENNY DISTRICT	29	7	36
THOMASTOWN DISTRICT	14	5	19

Legal Aid Service Expenditure

311. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of legal aid nationally in each of the years 2015 to 2018, by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29969/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware there are two categories of legal aid. These are civil legal aid and criminal legal aid. In answer to the Deputy's question I can provide the following information in respect of each of these categories of legal aid:

Firstly, the provision of civil legal aid in the State is delivered by the Legal Aid Board pursuant to the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 and the Civil Legal Aid Regulations 1996 to 2017. The Board operates 30 full time law centres and a number of part time law centres in Ireland. The Board also provides mediation services to help separating couples to negotiate their own agreement.

The majority of the Board's income consists of a grant received from my Department. This funding is used to provide the Board's services in all its offices across the country, as well as the

support services provided to law centres centrally from the Board's head office.

It is not possible to extract and isolate the total cost of civil legal aid in any one office/county in a given year as it would be necessary to devise a basis on which to attribute, to each county, all expenditure incurred by the Board centrally. Complexities may also arise at local level with regard to the delivery of civil legal aid, for example a client living in County Limerick may choose to apply to Ennis Law Centre. Also, in a case where two parties to a dispute seek the services of the Legal Aid Board at one law centre, one party will be required to engage with a different law centre, which may be in a neighbouring county.

Funding provided to the Legal Aid Board by my Department for the years 2015-2018 is provided in the following table:

Year	Budget Allocation €m
2015	32.471
2016	34.838
2017	38.988
2018	40.275

In the case of criminal legal aid, the Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Act 1962, which is the primary legislation covering the operation of the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme, provides that free legal aid may be granted, in certain circumstances, for the defence of persons of insufficient means in criminal proceedings. Under the 1962 Act, the courts, through the judiciary, are responsible for the granting of legal aid. Under the Constitution, the State is obliged to provide an accused person with the means to obtain appropriate legal representation.

As in the situation with civil legal aid, statistics for criminal legal aid are not compiled in such a manner as to readily identify expenditure on a county by county basis.

Expenditure on criminal legal aid in each of the years 2015 to 2018 is set out in the following table.

Year	Expenditure €m
2015	€50.879
2016	€52.998
2017	€58.139
2018	€64.806

Climate Change Policy

312. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics; the public bodies and agencies under his remit to which he has issued an instruction to cease the purchase and use of single-use plastics; when the instruction issued; the bodies which have confirmed that they no longer purchase and use single-use plastics, respectively; the bodies which have not provided such confirmation to date; when they will confirm; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29989/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department's staff and key suppliers were informed directly upon receipt of the Government Decision of 3 January to cease purchase, directly or indirectly, of certain single-use plastics, namely beverage cups, cutlery and drinking straws. The purchase of new stocks of those items was ceased immedi-

ately.

On 9 January, the Justice Sector's Energy Performance Officer wrote to the bodies operating under my Department's aegis (listed below), advising them of the Decision.

Bodies were asked to provide me with details, by end-November 2019, on the measures being taken to minimise waste generation and to maximise recycling.

My own Department recently launched a Green Team, which will be working to raise awareness among staff on environmental and sustainability issues generally, including the need to minimise waste and energy use and to maximise recycling.

I have contacted the listed bodies to request that they provide a direct reply to the Deputy on their progress to date in implementing the Government Decision.

The relevant bodies are:

An Garda Síochána

Courts Service

Garda Síochána Inspectorate

Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission

Insolvency Service of Ireland

Inspector of Prisons

Irish Film Classification Office

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

Irish Prison Service

Legal Aid Board

Legal Services Regulatory Authority

National Disability Authority

Office of the Data Protection Commissioner

Policing Authority

Private Security Authority

Probation and Welfare Service

Property Services Regulatory Authority

Direct Provision System

313. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the person or body responsible for inspecting direct provision centres; the regularity with which these inspections occur; the parameters for the inspections; if the reports have provoked action from his Department; if so, the details in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[30029/19]

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

All accommodation centres providing services to persons seeking international protection are subject to an inspection programme. Each centre is programmed to receive three inspections annually. Two of these inspections are carried out by staff of the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) and the third is carried out by an independent company (QTS Limited). All inspections are unannounced.

The inspections look at a wide range of issues such as fire safety issues, food hygiene, food quality, information provision, general security and emergency details, child protection issues, provision of TV and Wi-Fi services, staff rosters and the upkeep of all communal areas and bedrooms.

Any issue identified is communicated in writing to the contractor and the contractor is required to address any issue identified immediately. Staff from RIA follow up to ensure that relevant issues have been addressed.

A historical record of inspections and subsequent communications with contractors up to 2018 is available on www.ria-inspections.gov.ie. This website is currently being upgraded and up to date inspections and correspondence will be available shortly.

My Department is also reviewing the inspection regime with a view to the new standards which will come into operation in January 2021 to ensure that the inspection programme appropriately examines the delivery of accommodation and ancillary services in line with the standards.

Ticket Touting

314. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of complaints and queries submitted to the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission relating to the resale of tickets and ticket touting in 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29195/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) is the statutory body responsible for the enforcement of competition and consumer law in the State. Section 9(5) of the Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2014 provides that the CCPC is independent in the performance of its functions. As these functions include the day-to-day operational work arising from contacts by consumers to the Commission, I, as Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, have no direct function in such matters.

Notwithstanding this, the CCPC have informed me that the number of consumer and competition-related contacts regarding ticketing logged on its consumer contact line in 2018 and up to end-June 2019 is as follows.

Year	No. of contacts
2018	350
To end-June 2019	182

As these figures cover all contacts to the Commission regarding ticketing, it is not possible to identify how many relate specifically to ticket resale and touting.

Working Holiday Programmes

315. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she will address a matter raised in correspondence by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29260/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Working Holiday Authorisation (WHA) is an agreement with other governments which allows young people of both countries to fund an extended holiday through temporary work. My colleague, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade has responsibility for the Working Holiday Authorisation scheme on the basis of the reciprocal arrangements agreed for Irish citizens travelling and working in these other States.

A person who holds a WHA is required to obtain permission from my colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality to enter, reside and work (under the terms of the WHA) in the State. This permission allows the foreign national to work as per the terms of the WHA. It is a condition of the WHA that the foreign national leave the State on expiration of their permission. Questions relating to immigration permission fall under the remit of the Department of Justice and Equality.

Upon expiration of the WHA, and after they have left the State, a foreign national may submit an application for an employment permit, on foot of an eligible job offer, which will be considered subject to the usual criteria applying under the Employment Permits Acts and Regulations.

As the economy improves and we approach full employment, the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) has experienced a high volume of employment permit applications which has led to some delays in processing applications.

The Employment Permits Section in my Department is working to reduce the current waiting times of four weeks for applications from Trusted Partners, who are regular users of the service and account for 71% of total permits issued, and thirteen weeks for Standard applications, which account for 29% of permits issued. Applicants continue to be advised to apply for the employment permit 12 weeks in advance of the expected start date to minimize the impact of the current extended processing timelines on recruitment timeframes.

Labour Court Recommendations

316. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her attention has been drawn to the fact that a company (details supplied) has not replied to a Labour Court recommendation issued on 5 April 2019 in relation to pay increases to long-term staff; if assistance can be offered in the dispute; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29269/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen): I am aware that the Labour Court issued a recommendation on the 5th April 2019 in relation to a claim before it.

Ireland's system of industrial relations is based in voluntarism and it has been the consistent policy of successive Irish Governments to support the development of an institutional framework supportive of this voluntary system through which good industrial relations can prosper. In line with the voluntary nature of industrial relations in Ireland, recommendations of the La-

bour Court made under industrial relations legislation are not binding on the parties although it is expected that the parties involved give serious consideration to the Court's Recommendation. Given this voluntarist approach there is no requirement under the legislation for any party to make a response to a Labour Court Recommendation.

The Labour Court is an independent statutory body which discharges its functions independently of the Minister. This being the case, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on this matter.

I would urge both sides to continue to engage constructively with each other and to remain engaged with the State's industrial relations machinery in order to resolve the issues in dispute.

Retail Sector

317. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she has consulted with the Department of Finance regarding aspects of e-commerce and its potential impact on high street retailers; her plans to establish a working group on e-commerce and high street retail in the context of impacts of one on the other; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29271/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department has responsibility for the E-Commerce Directive (2000/31/EC) and the Statutory Instrument that transposed the Directive – European Communities (Directive 2000/31/EC) Regulations 2003 (SI No 68 of 2003). The E-Commerce Act 2000 is dealt with by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

The Digital Single Market (DSM) agenda, led by my Department, is a whole of government approach coordinated across Government. The Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) on the Digital Single Market, is chaired by my colleague Pat Breen TD, Minister of State for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection. The key focus of the IDC is on ensuring effective whole-of-Government engagement with the EU DSM agenda. The Department of Finance/Public Expenditure and Reform is represented on the IDC.

The Department of Finance has responsibility for the Modernisation of VAT regimes for eCommerce. In January 2021 new changes will come into effect on the existing VAT regime which will have a significant impact for E-commerce and high street retailers in general. The main change will be the removal of the existing VAT exemption for goods from outside the EU with a value less than €22. This will mean that vendors (or online platforms facilitating the vendor) must charge the rate of VAT applicable in the country they are selling into. This should address the cost advantages that non-EU vendors currently benefit from.

Additionally, the one-stop shop for VAT registration of distance sales will be extended. This will mean that online traders will no longer have to register for VAT for business-to-consumer transactions in each of the member states in which they sell, thereby reducing costs. This will be a significant simplification and easing of the administrative processes involved in selling across the EU. Together these changes should level the playing field for Irish companies and help them better compete both online and in the High Street.

As set out in Future Jobs Ireland 2019, all businesses, regardless of size or sector, in today's digital environment need to focus on building competitive online capability. It is clear that the retail sector is undergoing an exciting but also challenging transformation as the digital economy provides a different retail experience for consumers across Ireland and beyond. Digitalisation has increased the scope for competition in the retail sector, as reflected in the growth

in online shopping and changing consumer preferences in terms of how people are shopping in town centres. Sustaining physical retail outlets requires adaptation: many retailers now offer multiple sales channels to sell their goods, from physical stores, to social media, mobile apps and websites.

The Retail Consultation Forum (RCF), which I chair, was established in 2014 to provide a platform for engagement between retail representative bodies, retailers and the public sector on key concerns for the retail sector. The Department of Finance is represented on the RCF.

As part of the Forum's work, the 'Framework for Town Centre Renewal' was launched in April 2017. The Framework supports towns and villages through their Local Authorities to address the challenges of creating a vibrant and viable town centre. It sets out the key characteristics of a successful town centre and identifies existing supports and best practice examples from around the country. The Framework also serves as a support document for towns and villages applying for funding streams under Project 2040 including; the €2 billion Urban Regeneration and Development Fund and the €1 billion Rural Regeneration and Development Fund which can be leveraged to support the regeneration and viability of town centres.

As Chair of the RCF, I have prioritised supporting the retail sector to develop their online capability and enhance their competitiveness. In support of this, and through the Forum, I have introduced a new Online Retail Scheme administered by Enterprise Ireland. The Online Retail Scheme supports retail businesses of 10 employees or more who are ready to strategically grow their online capability, with grants of between €10,000 and €25,000 on a 50 percent match fund basis. The second call for the Online Retail Scheme opened on 19th June and will close on 31st July this year.

A sub-group of the RCF focusing on skills has worked to identify the key skills challenges facing retailers today and to identify practical proposals to address those challenges. Digital skills were identified as a critical requirement along with marketing and logistics. Forum member, Retail Ireland Skillnet, has since developed a retail specific digital course and will also, in September 2019, launch the first Apprenticeship in Retail Supervision.

The agencies of my Department offer a range of supports to assist businesses with aspects of e-commerce. Of particular relevance to the retail sector, the LEOs nationwide actively promote the Trading Online Voucher Scheme (TOVS) on behalf of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. The TOVS offers matched financial assistance of up to €2,500, along with training and advice, to micro companies (10 or less employees) who want to establish an online presence for the first time, or who wish to expand a basic existing website to incorporate a more substantive online trading capacity. The LEOs also offer a wide range of short training programmes which are available to high street retailers to support their clients in building their online presence and to compete in the online marketplace.

In light of the continuing work of the Retail Consultation Forum and its focus on the current and future developmental needs of the retail sector, the ongoing whole of Government engagement on the DSM agenda, as well as the 2019 commitment under Future Jobs Ireland for my Department to commence a study to understand the full extent and impact of digital transformation on retail business models, I have no plans at present to establish a working group on e-commerce and high-street retail.

Trade Agreements

318. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innova-

tion her views on the EU-Mercosur trade deal agreed in principle on 28 June 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29274/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): It is important, first and foremost, to acknowledge how vital international trade deals are for Ireland. As a small, open, export-led economy, we very much support balanced international Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) as they help to open up greater market access at reduced costs.

The EU-Mercosur deal was agreed in principle on 28th June after nearly 20 years of negotiations. Irish exporters have been subject to trade tariffs, barriers and restrictions when exporting to Mercosur. This Agreement will see a significant reduction, or elimination of tariffs and barriers to trade that will allow a cross flow of trading and investment between Ireland and the rest of the EU, and the Mercosur region. The EU-Mercosur Agreement will make exports from Ireland more attractive and potentially increase the demand for Irish products.

Trade with the Mercosur region has grown by 19% in the period 2010 to 2016. The EU-Mercosur Agreement will, we anticipate, allow Irish exporters to expand faster, and will open opportunities across a wide range of sectors – in business services, chemicals, machinery, medical devices and processed food and dairy. In this regard, analysis by my Department has estimated that a potential doubling of annual goods and services exports from Ireland is possible over the period to 2030.

However, I and my Government colleagues recognise and appreciate the very genuine concerns expressed by the farming community in relation to aspects of the EU-Mercosur deal, most notably the beef tariff rate quota.

The agreement reached on beef access is more than we had wished. In that regard, I raised our concerns on our agricultural sensitivities at every opportunity at European Trade Council meetings. I also raised it directly with the Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström, including as recently as 31st May when I wrote to the Commissioner, once again, highlighting our serious concerns, particularly given the current challenges and uncertainty facing the Irish beef sector in light of Brexit. Additionally, there has been a sustained effort right across Government in relation to this aspect, with both Minister Creed and the Taoiseach also raising this element at the highest levels, including joining Belgium, France and Poland in writing to the Commission President on the matter.

The agreement that has been reached on this sensitive area is, however, far less than Mercosur had been looking for - some 300,000 tonnes – due to the Government’s active campaign, with some other Member States, to secure the viability of the Irish and EU beef sector. While the 99,000 tonnes that is in the deal is still higher than we want it to be, it is less than one third of what they originally sought. It is also important to state that the 99,000 tonnes will be split into 45% frozen and 55% fresh and is “Carcass Weight Equivalent”.

Importantly, the Agreement also ensures that there will be equivalent food safety standards. The EU’s sanitary and phytosanitary standards will not be relaxed in any way, and they remain non-negotiable. The highest EU standards will be applied to all imported goods – especially food. The EU will maintain its strict approach on GMOs and hormone beef, and its right to set maximum allowed levels for pesticide residues.

It is also important to acknowledge that there are positives for Ireland’s food & drink sector in this deal. One of Ireland’s key offensive interests in the Mercosur deal is dairy, and the Agreement sees the removal of tariffs on 30,000 tonnes of cheese, 10,000 tonnes of milk powder, and 5,000 tonnes of infant formula on a reciprocal basis. Furthermore, the Agreement provides for the protection of 335 Geographical Indicators (GIs) of EU origin – including Irish

Whiskey and Irish Cream. The acceptance of EU GIs will significantly improve protection of these products from false or misleading branding in Mercosur markets.

The EU-Mercosur Agreement also sees the opening up of Mercosur's public procurement market - a market that was not previously available to EU firms. It will make it easier for Irish firms to bid for, and win, valuable Government contracts in the four Mercosur countries, and the EU and Mercosur have agreed to apply modern disciplines based on the principles of non-discrimination, transparency, and fairness.

There will also be special provisions for SMEs in the Agreement. SMEs will benefit most from the simplification of exporting and customs procedures – as the savings are proportionately greater for them. A dedicated website will provide information on the Agreement for SMEs, practical guidance to importing and exporting will be published, and a dedicated data base of tariff reductions will be made available. The simplification of regulations on standards will help with trade barriers encountered by SMEs.

In relation to climate change, Mercosur including Brazil, will have to fully implement the Paris Climate Agreement as part of this deal, as well as meet specific commitments on reforestation.

The Agreement also places particular emphasis on the development of trade between our two regions in a way that is conducive to decent work for all, including women and young people, with each party recognising the importance of core labour standards as defined by ILO Conventions.

In light of the conclusion of the negotiations on 28th June, my Department, in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine is now ensuring that a comprehensive, independent economic assessment is carried out specifically on the finalised EU-Mercosur Trade Agreement. This assessment will consider the impact the Agreement will have on the Irish economy and on jobs, as well as the environmental implications of the deal. It will also consider how the EU-Mercosur Agreement might exacerbate/mitigate the likely impact of Brexit for our economy. This assessment will help to inform our future actions in relation to the EU-Mercosur Agreement.

Departmental Advertising Expenditure

319. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount spent on digital marketing in each of the past eight years; the items on which funds were spent; the criteria by which target audiences were selected; the amount of the digital spend targeted here; the amount targeted abroad; the amount that related to private companies; the amount that related to policy initiatives; and the purpose of the digital advertisements. [29385/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Details of expenditure incurred by my Department and its Offices on digital marketing are available at the following link:

[https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-07-10_pq319-9-07-2019_en.docx] Expenses incurred by Dept

Work Permits Applications

320. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the status of a work visa for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29410/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My officials inform me that an application for a General Employment Permit in respect of the named individual was submitted to my Department on 20th May 2019. The Employment Permits Section is currently processing Standard employment permit applications submitted on 1st April 2019. This application for an employment permit should be reached for processing in approximately seven weeks.

Departmental Expenditure

321. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the consultancy work companies (details supplied) carried out for the ODCE and the IAASA since October 2008. [29433/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Section 949(3) of the Companies Act 2014 provides that the Director of Corporate Enforcement shall be independent in the performance of his statutory functions.

I, as Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation have no direct function in such matters.

The ODCE's yearly spend on consultancy work is set out in its Annual Reports.

Consultancy work by the bodies referred to by the Deputy since 2008 for the ODCE is outlined in the following table:

Year	Name of external Consultant/Company	Details of consultancy service	Amount received by company
2019	n/a	-	-
2018	n/a	-	-
2017	n/a	-	-
2016	Deloitte	Forensic Accountancy related to casework	€8,260.68
2015	Deloitte	Forensic Accountancy related to casework	€23,249.46
2014	n/a	-	-
2013	n/a	-	-
2012	PwC	Forensic Accountancy related to casework	€40,646.58
2011	n/a	-	-
2010	n/a	-	-
2009	PwC	Forensic Accountancy related to casework	€73,641.83

Year	Name of external Consultant/Company	Details of consultancy service	Amount received by company
2008	PwC	Forensic Accountancy related to casework	€64,433.00

The Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA) is independent in the exercise of its statutory functions and details of its activities can be found in the Authority's Annual Reports which are published on its website: www.iaasa.ie/Publications/General.

IAASA complies with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies ('the Code'), as published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in August 2016. As required by the Code, IAASA provides an analysis of consultancy expenditure as part of the Authority's Annual Financial Statements.

Information in respect of IAASA is available from 1 January 2013. Since that date, IAASA has not received any consultancy services from KPMG, EY or PwC.

Following a public tender in 2009, Deloitte was added to a Panel of statutory financial reporting experts. Members of this Panel assist IAASA's Financial Reporting Supervision Unit in its reviews of issuers' financial statements under Article 24(4)(h) of the EU Transparency Directive. Deloitte carried out one such engagement throughout its period on the Panel, being a review of a listed issuer in 2013, at a fixed cost of €9,840.

Departmental Expenditure

322. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the costs paid to companies (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by her Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason each was engaged; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29436/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Details of contracts between my Department and the companies in question in the years 2015 to 2019 are set out in the tables below.

2019 Contracts

Company	Purpose of Contract	Value of Contract
KPMG	Provision of Brexit-related advisory content	TBC

2018 Contracts

Company	Purpose of Contract	Value of Contract
PWC	Developed an information guide for SME's on currency risk	€9,270
KPMG	Benchmarking of Personal Injury Awards	€43,050
Mazars	Financial and Governance Analysis of certain Credit Co-operatives	€44,280
Arthur Cox	Legal fees	€1,899

2017 Contracts

Company	Purpose of Contract	Value of Contract
KPMG	Ireland and Scaling SMEs - An assessment of Ireland's tax environment for scaling SMEs and new entrepreneurial businesses.	€61,500. Costs shared with Enterprise Ireland and IDA
Mazars LLP	Forensic Accountancy related to casework in the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement .	€189,014
Arthur Cox	Legal fees	€27,525

2016 Contracts

Company	Purpose of Contract	Value of Contract
Mazars LLP	Advice on taxation of payments	€11,047
Arthur Cox	Legal advice	€4,449

2015 Contracts

Company	Purpose of Contract	Value of Contract
Mazars LLP	Forensic Accountancy related to casework in the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement	€178,733
Arthur Cox	Prosecution fees	€844

Departmental Expenditure

323. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the costs paid to a company (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by her Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason it was engaged; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29545/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Details of contracts between my Department and the company in question in the years 2015 to 2019 are set out in the following table.

Year	Purpose of Contract	Value of Contract
2016	Forensic Accountancy	€8,260.68
2015	Forensic Accountancy	€23,249.46

IDA Ireland

324. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on criticism of the IDA policy relating to Drogheda published in the media (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29674/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As the Deputy will be aware, regional development remains an absolute priority of mine. I am focused on supporting and sustaining existing regional employment while also working to create new economic opportunities and jobs in every county of Ireland. There are now nearly 230,000 people working in IDA client firms. Last year saw more IDA-supported jobs added in regional Ireland than at any time over the past 17 years, with 58% of total such employment now located

outside of Dublin.

I can assure the Deputy that when it comes to foreign direct investment (FDI), Drogheda is not being overlooked by the IDA. Drogheda continues to maintain a strong contingent of overseas firms in the International Business Services, Pharmaceutical and Technology sectors. Last year saw PCI Pharma announce that 70 new jobs will be created at their facility in Drogheda. In November 2017, Yapstone announced plans to create 200 new jobs over the next five years at their international headquarters in Drogheda. These announcements represent a vote of confidence in what Drogheda and the broader North-East region has to offer to multinationals who are looking to locate outside of Dublin.

The IDA, for its part, continues to promote Drogheda to investors. The Agency operates a Business and Technology Park in Drogheda with available land that is being actively marketed to existing and prospective clients through its network of offices in Ireland and overseas.

More broadly, County Louth has seen an almost 4% increase in FDI-driven employment in the last year. There are now 28 IDA-supported client companies in the County employing 3,903 people and these firms are continuing to grow and develop. While progress has been made in helping to generate new economic opportunities in Drogheda and County Louth, the Government remains determined to achieve more. That is why work is continuing to unlock further the economic potential of the County. The IDA remains pivotal to this and the Agency is engaging with its clients and with other enterprise agencies to create jobs and source new investment there.

Departmental Expenditure

325. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the years 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by inquiry, tribunal or commission; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29827/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department has not had any expenditure on tribunals, commissions of investigation or statutory inquiries during the period in question.

Departmental Staff Data

326. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the estimated cost of recruiting one additional accountant grade 3 and one extra solicitor at APO level for the Office of Director of Corporate Enforcement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29894/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Pay allocations for employees of my Department are set out in the Department of Public expenditure and Reform Circular – 16/2018 – *Application of 1 October 2018 pay adjustments under the Public Service and Pensions Act 2017*.

The following table sets out the estimated cost of recruiting one additional Accountant Grade 3 and one extra Solicitor at APO Level. The estimate is based on Point 1 of the Pay Scale.

Position	Starting point on Pay Scale	Total estimated cost – inc employers PRSI.
Accountant Grade 3	€30,987k	€34,085k
Solicitor (APO Level)	€66,495k	€73,144k

The Director of the Office, along with myself and my officials, keeps the resourcing of the Office under regular review to ensure the Office is adequately resourced.

Climate Change Policy

327. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics; the public bodies and agencies under her remit to which she has issued an instruction to cease the purchase and use of single-use plastics; when the instruction issued; the bodies which have confirmed that they no longer purchase and use single-use plastics, respectively; the bodies which have not provided such confirmation to date; when they will confirm; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29978/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In line with the memorandum brought forward by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action & Environment in January 2019, my Department, its Offices and Agencies have ceased to purchase single use plastics (SUP). My Department wholeheartedly supports this initiative which will aid in our collective response to mitigate environmental waste and climate change.

In January, the purchasing section within my Department immediately implemented the memorandum. My Department through its Green Team informed all staff of the Department including its Offices on 28 February and outlined sustainable and recyclable alternatives to SUPs.

All State agencies under my aegis have also confirmed that they have ceased purchasing SUPs and are actively involved in seeking and implementing viable alternatives such as glasses in meeting rooms, reusable and sustainable keep cups; water bottles and compostable cups.

In accordance with the terms of the memorandum my Department will be providing regular update reports to the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment on the level of progress being made within my Department and on the measures we are taking to minimise waste generation and maximise recycling.

Services for People with Disabilities

328. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health if the decision not to grant funding to a school (details supplied) will be reconsidered in view of the importance of such equipment to a number of pupils at the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29180/19]

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.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

329. **Deputy Seán Barrett** asked the Minister for Health if consideration will be given to a report submitted by an organisation (details supplied) with survey findings and views of persons currently self-funding flash glucose monitoring technology when considering lifting the age restriction to make the FreeStyle Libre device available to all sufferers of type 1 diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29073/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Medicinal Products Expenditure

330. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the level of drug expenditure in the health budget in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and the percentage of the health budget spent on drugs in each of the years in tabular form. [29076/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive has responsibility for medicines expenditure, thus the matter has been referred to the HSE for their attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Medicinal Products Expenditure

331. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the level of hi-tech and orphan drugs expenditure in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and the percentage of the drugs budget spent on such drugs in each of the years in tabular form. [29077/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive has responsibility for medicines expenditure, thus the matter has been referred to the HSE for their attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Medicinal Products Expenditure

332. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the way in which the expenditure here on hi-tech and orphan drugs in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019 compares to the EU average on a per capita basis and in terms of a proportion of both health spending and drugs expenditure respectively in tabular form. [29078/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive has responsibility for medicines expenditure, thus the matter has been referred to the HSE for their attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Medicinal Products Data

333. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the medicines that have been approved as cost effective by the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics over each of the past five years but that have yet to be reimbursed by the HSE, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29079/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drug schemes, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Status

334. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29080/19]

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.

Tobacco Control Measures

335. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of initial tobacco sales to minors test purchase inspections carried out at the end of June 2019 or the latest date available. [29082/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this matter is an operational issue I have sent the question to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Tobacco Control Measures

336. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of test purchases carried out under the Public Health (Sunbeds) Act 2014 at the end of June 2019 or the latest date available. [29083/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): This is a matter for the HSE so I have referred the question to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

Sunbeds Regulation

337. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of mystery shopper inspections carried out under the Public Health (Sunbeds) Act 2014 at the end of June 2019 or the latest date available. [29084/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): This is a matter for the HSE so I have referred the question to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

Sunbeds Regulation

338. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of establishments receiving a planned inspection under the Public Health (Sunbeds) Act 2014 at the end of June 2019 or the latest date available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29085/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): This is a matter for the HSE so I have referred the question to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

Food Safety Standards Inspections

339. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of official food control planned inspections and surveillance of food businesses at the end of June 2019 or the latest date available. [29086/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Official control inspections in food businesses are carried out by a range of State bodies ('official agencies') under service contracts with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI). Therefore, I have asked the FSAI to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Tobacco Control Measures

340. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of inspections of e-cigarette and refill container manufacturers, importers, distributors and retailers under SI No. 271 of 2016 - European Union (Manufacture, Presentation and Sale of Tobacco and Related Products) Regulations 2016 at the end of June 2019 or the latest date available. [29087/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Electronic Cigarettes and related products are regulated by the European Union (Manufacture, Presentation and Sale of Tobacco and Related Products) Regulations 2016. The Regulations provide that e-cigarette manufacturers must notify the Health Service Executive (HSE) of all products that are placed on the market. The HSE is responsible for the enforcement of the provisions relating to e-cigarettes and for ensuring compliance with the Regulations.

I have therefore, referred your question to the HSE for direct reply.

Diabetes Strategy

341. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who completed a structured patient education programme for diabetes at the end of June 2019 or the

latest date available. [29088/19]

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

Maternity Services

342. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of babies breastfed exclusively and not exclusively at the first public health nurse visit at the end of June 2019 or the latest date available. [29089/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As the question relates to service matters it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Maternity Services

343. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of babies breastfed exclusively at first public health nurse visit at the end of June 2019 or the latest date available. [29090/19]

344. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of babies breastfed exclusively and not exclusively at the three-month public health nurse visit at the end of June 2019 or the latest date available. [29091/19]

345. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of babies breastfed exclusively at the three-month public health nurse visit at the end of June 2019 or the latest date available. [29092/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 343 to 345, inclusive, together.

As these are service matters I have referred the Deputy's questions to the HSE for direct reply.

Home Care Packages Data

346. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in receipt of an intensive homecare package; and the percentage of same with a key worker assigned. [29093/19]

347. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of home support hours provided from intensive homecare packages to date in 2019. [29094/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 346 and 347 together.

As these are service matters I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Appointments Status

348. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will receive an appointment to see a consultant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29096/19]

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.

Respite Care Services Provision

349. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health if additional respite nights will be provided for a person (details supplied). [29098/19]

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

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

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

HSE Staff Remuneration

350. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the cost of the new payroll system in the HSE; the number of workers now paid through the system; the reason the system cannot process bank holiday and Sunday payments, overtime premium pay and subsistence; and if this issue affects all grades on the system. [29100/19]

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

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

351. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health his plans to make the FreeStyle Libre device available to all patients with type 1 diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29123/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Home Help Service Provision

352. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health if home help services will be provided for a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [29125/19]

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

Hospitals Building Programme

353. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the status of plans regarding a community hospital (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29131/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

Services for People with Disabilities

354. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the outcome of a meeting in relation to the care of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29151/19]

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

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

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

355. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of the FreeStyle Libre device to those with type 1 diabetes; and if the HSE will be instructed to take

into account survey results carried out by an organisation (details supplied) as part of the HSE review when making the final decision. [29156/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

HSE Expenditure

356. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will reconcile the statement by the new CEO of the HSE to the Oireachtas Committee of Public Accounts on 27 June 2019 that the HSE had an overrun of €103 million in the first three months of 2019 with the figures reported in the Exchequer returns for the same period which show an underspend of €5 million in health; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29160/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE accounts record items of current expenditure and exclude items of a capital nature and are prepared on an Accruals basis. This is a method of recording accounting transactions for revenue when earned and expenses when incurred, so a financial transaction for a period is recognised regardless of when the cash settlement occurs. During the first three months of 2019 the HSE incurred a deficit of €82.7m as actual costs of €3,938.5m were greater than profiled costs of €3,855.7m. Adjusting for the effects of the 2018 1st Charge increases the overall March deficit by €20.5m to €103.2m.

The Exchequer returns include both current and capital items of expenditure are prepared on a Vote (cash) basis. This means receipts are recorded during the period they are received, and expenses are recorded in the period in which they are paid. The Health Vote includes Department of Health, Agencies under its Aegis, and HSE expenditure. During the first three months of 2019 the Health Vote recorded a surplus of €4.4m as net expenditure of €4,176.2m was less than profiled expenditure of €4,180.5m.

Therefore, different methods of accounting and the inclusion of additional categories of expenditure explain the difference between the deficit recorded by the HSE and the surplus by the Health Vote.

Health Care Infrastructure Provision

357. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the status of the replacement and refurbishment of 90 community nursing units announced on 26 January 2016; the funding allocated to each project in 2019; and the date on which each of the projects will be complete and operational. [29164/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of public healthcare services and infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

Prescriptions Charges

358. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if persons (details supplied) will be allowed to avail of maximum prescription charges even though they attend different phar-

macists. [29167/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Civil Registration Service

359. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health the reason the deaths, births and marriages registration office in Listowel, County Kerry was centralised; and when it was centralised. [29175/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Civil Registration Service is operated by the Health Service Executive (HSE) on behalf of the General Register Office under the aegis of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

As this is a service matter I have referred your question to the HSE for direct response.

Hospital Appointments Status

360. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29176/19]

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

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

361. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health his plans to recognise pertuzumab; his plans to ensure it is made available to all cancer patients regardless of their health insurer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29183/19]

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

bursement of medicines.

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

Reimbursement is for licenced indications which have been granted market authorisation by the European Medicines Agency or the Health Products Regulatory Authority.

Pertuzumab (Perjeta) has been granted marketing authorisation for a number of indications and is included on the HSE reimbursement list for one of those indications. In addition, a number of other indications are currently being assessed for reimbursement.

The HSE has approved reimbursement for the following licensed indication:

- Pertuzumab is indicated for use in combination with trastuzumab and docetaxel in adult patients with HER2-positive metastatic or locally recurrent unresectable breast cancer, who have not received previous anti-HER2 therapy or chemotherapy for their metastatic disease.

The HSE has received pricing and reimbursement applications in relation to this medicine for the treatment of early breast cancer in combination with trastuzumab and chemotherapy (both neoadjuvant treatment of adult patients with HER2-positive, locally advanced, inflammatory, or early stage breast cancer at high risk of recurrence and adjuvant treatment of adult patients with HER2-positive early breast cancer at high risk of recurrence).

These applications are under consideration are currently being processed by the HSE and the statutory assessment process is ongoing.

I am aware that in March 2019, the Vhi sent a circular to Oncologists advising them that it was extending cover to a number of new cancer medicines. The decision by the Vhi applies only to private care to private Vhi patients in private hospitals. It will have no impact on the availability and use of medicines in public hospitals, where there is no distinction between public and private patients.

The effect of the Vhi decision will be that Vhi private patients in private hospitals may have access to a medicine that is not yet available in the public hospital system. However, a number of the medicines, or indications, which the Vhi has now decided to cover, are at various stages of the HSE assessment and reimbursement process with a view to making them available in the public hospital system.

Health Services Staff

362. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if an offer of employment will be honoured to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29187/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly, as soon as possible.

Primary Care Centres Data

363. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the primary care centres to be

provided over the next ten years in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29190/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the HSE has responsibility for the provision, along with the maintenance and operation of Primary Care Centres and other Primary Care facilities, the Executive has been asked to reply directly to the Deputy.

Hospital Waiting Lists

364. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called for a surgical procedure; and if the procedure will be expedited. [29191/19]

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

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

Disabilities Assessments

365. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the number of children waiting at stage 2 of the assessment of needs process in counties Cork and Kerry; and the number waiting 0 to 12, 12 to 26, 26 to 52 and more than 52 weeks, respectively. [29193/19]

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

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

Hospital Appointments Status

366. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an urgent prosthetic appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29197/19]

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

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

367. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the new consultant posts sought by University Hospital Waterford and the South/South West hospital group for the hospital by posts agreed and posts still outstanding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29222/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Emergency Departments Data

368. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of times the full capacity protocol has been deployed at University Hospital Waterford in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29223/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Hospital Staff Data

369. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultants attached to the dermatology department at University Hospital Waterford in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29224/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Hospital Staff Data

370. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultants attached to the urology department at University Hospital Waterford in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29225/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Health Services Reports

371. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health when a report from the national review into cardiac services will be received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29230/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The aim of the National Review of Specialised Cardiac Services is to achieve optimal patient outcomes at population level with par-

ticular emphasis on the safety, quality and sustainability of the services that patients receive through establishing the requirements for an appropriate configuration of specialist cardiac services throughout Ireland.

While much work has been completed in relation to informing the optimal configuration of adult cardiac services, some significant and important work remains outstanding. In order to allow this work to be completed, the work of the Steering Group will continue through the summer months. I am advised by the Steering Group that it will be in a position to confirm a completion date in September 2019.

Departmental Reviews

372. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health if the national review panel examining cardiac services met with hospital consultants in the south east; if it met with the management of University Hospital Waterford and the South-South West hospital group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29231/19]

373. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health if the South-South West hospital group has made a formal submission to the National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29232/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 372 and 373 together.

The Chairperson of the National Review of Cardiac Services has conducted site visits and met with medical consultants, management and the wider multidisciplinary team in each of the Primary Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (PCI) centres in Ireland. It is important to note that acute hospital care is just one element of cardiac service provision and as such meetings and consultations with other non-PCI centres and other relevant stakeholders continues.

All stakeholders were also given an opportunity to contribute you to the National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services via a web-based public consultation which was undertaken last year.

Departmental Reviews

374. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the cost to date of conducting the national review of cardiac care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29233/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services is ongoing and therefore no final cost for undertaking the review to date is available.

The most significant cost that has been incurred so far by the Review process relates to the conduct by the Health Research Board - Collaboration in Ireland for Clinical Effectiveness Reviews (HRB-CICER) of an evidence synthesis review for submission to the Steering Group of the National Review. Payment of €130,000 has been made in respect of this evidence synthesis review.

Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists

375. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the number of children waiting on orthodontic treatment by grade and length of waiting time at Letterkenny University Hospital in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29241/19]

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

Air Ambulance Service

376. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the status of the proposed extension of the flying hours for the air ambulance based in Custume Barracks, Athlone, County Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29244/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Programme for a Partnership Government committed to a feasibility study on the expansion of the Emergency Aeromedical Service (EAS), which also included a possible extension to night time flying.

My Department engaged with the Department of Defence on the feasibility of extending the EAS to night time hours; however, it was concluded that night time flying carries additional risks. All the risks associated with landing and departures are magnified at night including low visibility and crew fatigue. There are also restrictions on helicopters landing at night time in Ireland, and landings can only take place on either a lit helipad or at an airport. These restrictions would significantly reduce the number of emergency incidents that the service could respond to, and in fact, it is possible that most night-time calls would, in view of the risks involved, be better served by a land vehicle.

The Deputy may wish to note that the HSE/ National Ambulance Service has recently agreed a Service Level Agreement with the Irish Community Rapid Response for a charitably funded Helicopter Emergency Medical Service in the South. It is anticipated that service provision will commence later this month.

Services for People with Disabilities

377. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will be transferred to a different care home; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29246/19]

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

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

National Carers Strategy Implementation

378. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the efforts made and steps taken during 2018 and to date in 2019 to assess the health, mental health and needs of caregivers of children with medical needs; the relevant research undertaken or commissioned by his Department or the HSE; the pilot initiatives under way or completed; and if evaluation reports from same will be provided. [29248/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Family carers offer a valuable support to their loved ones, allowing them to remain living in their own homes and communities. While there are many positive and rewarding aspects of caring, it is evident that caring is a significant challenge, affecting all aspects of a family carer's life. The needs of the cared for person can place great demands on the energy and time of the family carer, with many providing full time care, which can have a significant impact on their relationships with other people, their professional lives and their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

The 2012 National Carers' Strategy represents a whole of Government response to the challenges faced by family carers and sets out the strategic direction for future policies, services and supports provided by Government departments and agencies for carers. The Strategy is designed around a core vision which recognises and respects carers as key care partners who are supported to maintain their own health and well-being, care with confidence and empowered to participate as fully as possible in economic and social life. Oversight of the Strategy is led by the Department of Health, while the HSE's Multi Divisional Carer Strategy group continues to support the process across the service divisions to progress the actions in the Strategy.

Funding has been secured through the Dormant Accounts fund for information and training supports for family carers. This is allowing family carers provide the best care possible to the care recipient, reduce the risk of injury to the carer and care recipient and helping family carers cope with the emotional and psychological aspects of their role. Funding is also being made available to provide for the dissemination of resource information for family carers, the development of support networks and support groups to assist with the transition back into social and economic life at the end of the caring role and measures that assist in promoting carer self-identification.

Identifying carers and their needs as early as possible, is of critical importance to ensure they are supported in their caring role. The introduction of the Carers' Needs Assessment Tool will be a key step in helping to identify carers at all stages and will also play a role in identifying the supports required. The Department of Health secured Dormant Accounts funding to pilot the Carers' Needs Assessment Tool in a HSE Community Health Care Organisation this year. This pilot study will greatly benefit the development of a comprehensive, standardised Family Carer Needs Assessment for identifying family carer's needs by providing an opportunity to refine and improve the needs assessment.

The Government is committed to the development of a new statutory scheme for home-support services to enable people with care needs to live at home for as long as possible. Family carers were invited to participate in the public consultation carried out by the Department of Health in 2017, to which approximately 2,600 submissions were received. A report on the findings of the consultation was published in June 2018 and is available on the Department's website. This will also inform the development of the new scheme.

As part of the question relates to service matters, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Waiting Lists

379. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Carlow will be seen in the ophthalmology department of University Hospital Waterford following a report by a doctor. [29280/19]

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.

Drug Rehabilitation Clinics

380. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for a person waiting to access a methadone clinic in each county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29294/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Drug Rehabilitation Clinics

381. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health when a methadone clinic will be built in Newbridge, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29295/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Drug Rehabilitation Clinics

382. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health when a methadone clinic will be built in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29296/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Status

383. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29297/19]

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.

Transport Support Scheme

384. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of the new scheme to replace the mobility allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29298/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Deputy will be familiar with the background to the closure of both the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant schemes in 2013.

With regard to the proposals for a new Health (Transport Support) Bill, the Deputy may be aware that my colleague, the Minister for Health and I, brought a Memorandum to Government on proposals for a new Transport Support Payment Scheme. Following consideration of the matter, it was decided to withdraw the Memorandum from the Cabinet Agenda at that time. I intend to revert to Government in due course with revised proposals to reflect the discussions at that Cabinet meeting and further discussions between myself and Minister Harris, on the best way to progress the Transport Scheme.

It is important to note that the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers scheme, operated by the Revenue Commissioners, remains in place. This scheme provides VRT and VAT relief, an exemption from road tax and a fuel grant to drivers and passengers with a disability, who qualify under the relevant criteria set out in governing regulations made by the Minister for Finance. Specifically adapted vehicles driven by persons with a disability are also exempt from payment of tolls on national roads and toll bridges. Transport Infrastructure Ireland has responsibility for this particular scheme.

There are improvements in access to a range of transport support schemes available to persons with disabilities in the State and on-going work is being carried out by Government Departments, agencies and transport providers to further improve access to public transport services. Under the National Disability Inclusion Strategy, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport has responsibility for the continued development of accessibility and availability of public transport for people with a disability.

Data Protection

385. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the progress being made in relation to an investigation by the Data Protection Commissioner of a data breach involving the five pages of medical records pertaining to ten patients at a hospital (details supplied) in late April 2019; when the data protection audit at the hospital will be completed; if the findings of the investigation will be made public; the steps the hospital has taken to improve the management of sensitive patient information since this breach occurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29300/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Medicinal Products Supply

386. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the reason the HSE limits the amount of medication that can be given to a patient with cystic fibrosis to a three-month supply in view of the fact it restricts their ability to travel; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29307/19]

397. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health the reason for limiting the supply of cystic fibrosis medication for a person to a three-month supply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29368/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 386 and 397 together.

In 2017, Orkambi was approved for reimbursement by the HSE. Given the scope of this significant investment by the State in Cystic Fibrosis treatment, a strong management and oversight programme was introduced.

A robust reimbursement protocol was introduced for this expensive medicine, which was agreed with the Cystic Fibrosis programme, and was circulated to all designated specialists and prescribing consultants.

This protocol clearly states that patients must be ordinarily resident in Ireland to qualify for reimbursement of this medicine. In Ireland, medicines are available to persons who are ordinarily resident under the Community Health Care Schemes including GMS, DPS and LTI.

In addition the protocol states that persons will be required to attend their specialist Cystic Fibrosis centre at least every 3 months to ensure that care is managed optimally.

My Department has previously directed that a maximum of 3 months medicines can be supplied to patients to facilitate travel, however, arrangements do not extend to persons who no longer reside in the State.

Hospital Appointments Status

387. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will have an operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29309/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Ser-

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

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

Hospital Appointments Administration

388. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an outpatient appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [29319/19]

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

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

Hospital Charges

389. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health if assistance in relation to hospital bills will be offered to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29323/19]

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

Medicinal Products Supply

390. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of Duodopa for peritoneal dialysis patients in view of the fact that the health technology assessment process has been completed by the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics, NCPE;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29328/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement decisions, under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. The Act specifies criteria for decisions on the reimbursement of medicines. As Minister, I have no role in this statutory process.

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

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

I wish to advise you that the NCPE completed a health technology assessment on 14 June 2019 on levodopa and carbidopa intestinal gel (Duodopa) for patients with Parkinson's disease.

The NCPE recommendation was that levodopa and carbidopa intestinal gel (Duodopa) not be considered for reimbursement unless cost-effectiveness can be improved relative to existing treatments.

The HSE's final decision on reimbursement will take into consideration the statutory criteria contained in the 2013 Health Act.

The NCPE recommendation is available on the NCPE website at <http://www.ncpe.ie/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Duodopa-Website-Summary-final.pdf>

Cross-Border Health Services Provision

391. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if a cross-border scheme refund will be expedited for a person (details supplied). [29335/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE operates the Cross Border Directive (CBD) in Ireland. As this question refers to a service matter I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy.

Public Health Policy

392. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his views on the serious public health concerns raised in an email (details supplied); if an immediate public inquiry will be conducted into the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29344/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I wish to advise the Deputy that I have been fully briefed on this issue.

I am satisfied that these matters have been investigated and that a public inquiry is not warranted.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

393. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the nature of the out-of-hours service provided by north Dublin Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, CAMHS, for children and families in crisis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29350/19]

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.

Psychological Services Waiting Lists

394. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in CHO9 awaiting a primary care psychology appointment as of 1 July 2019; the length of time they have been waiting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29351/19]

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

395. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if longer hours will be provided at a facility for a person (details supplied). [29356/19]

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.

Healthcare Policy

396. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the status of the model of care for lymphoedema and lipoedema services further to a representation (details supplied); when these recommendations will be considered and implemented; if he has met with an organisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29359/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The working group report detailing the proposed model of care for lymphoedema and lipoedema treatment in Ireland was published on the HSE website in April 2019.

The HSE has advised that a 12-month ‘proof of concept’ programme will commence in September this year. The programme will consist of:

- an early detection service in the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital, Dublin;
- a community demonstration site in Community Healthcare Organisation 8 (Laois/Offaly);
- the introduction of lymphoedema education into undergraduate programmes; and,
- eLearning modules in lymphoedema awareness for health care practitioners.

The broader implementation of the Model of Care will be addressed by the HSE in the coming months in the context of the budget process for 2020.

Officials from my Department have met with Lymphoedema Ireland on a number of occasions to discuss progress regarding the development of the Model of Care and the plan for its implementation. The most recent meeting with the organisation took place in April this year.

Question No. 397 answered with Question No. 386.

Hospital Appointments Status

398. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29370/19]

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.

Departmental Advertising Expenditure

399. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent on digital marketing in each of the past eight years; the items on which funds were spent; the criteria by which target audiences were selected; the amount of the digital spend targeted here; the amount targeted abroad; the amount that related to private companies; the amount that related to policy initiatives; and the purpose of the digital advertisements [29394/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Department of Health did not pay for any digital marketing or advertising before 2018.

Please see the following table for details of monies spent by the Department on digital marketing from 2018 to date.

Healthy Ireland

2018 - €70, 761.34

2019 - €45, 488,35

Items - Advertising on facebook, twitter, youtube, google and RTE

Target audience - Adult population in Ireland

Criteria - Research findings that 92% of the population want to improve health and well-being.

Purpose - Healthy Ireland is a Government priority

Policy - Healthy Ireland Framework 2013-2025.

Drugs Policy Unit

2019 - €5,923.07

Items - Digital Media campaign in Ireland

Target audience - 25-50 year olds

Criteria - Age group with highest prevalence of drug use and most affected by policy change

Purpose - On-line questionnaire, part of public consultation to seek input from stakeholders and general public on policy change.

Policy - Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery, a health led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland.

Sláintecare Programme

2019 - €49.20

Items - Two facebook advertisements

Target audience - General Public Irish Market

Criteria - Users of Social Media

Purpose - Promotion of Sláintecare Vision

Policy - Integrated healthcare service provision.

Press and Communications Office

2019 - €35

Items - Facebook post for Skin Cancer Prevention Plan

Target audience - General population

Purpose - Raise awareness of skin cancer prevention during periods of hot weather and high UV index rating.

Policy - Healthy Ireland.

Home Help Service Expenditure

400. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Health the average cost per hour for home helps employed directly by the HSE; and the average cost per hour for home helps provided to the HSE by agencies. [29400/19]

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

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

401. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the status of the review into making the FreeStyle Libre device available to all persons with type 1 diabetes; if the findings of the survey submitted by an organisation (details supplied) will form part of the review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29402/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Disability Support Services Provision

402. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health when 15 additional posts for a service (details supplied) will become operational; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29403/19]

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

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

Hospital Appointments Status

403. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect to receive an appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29404/19]

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.

Respite Care Services Provision

404. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive respite hours approved for them. [29405/19]

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

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

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

Hospital Appointments Status

405. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect to receive an appointment at Cork University Hospital. [29417/19]

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.

HSE Staff Recruitment

406. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the recent announcement by the HSE of a recruitment embargo in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29422/19]

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

Palliative Care Services

407. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of fully resourcing a clear timetable and process for the implementation of the Palliative Care Services Three Year Development Framework 2017-2019 and the ring-fenced development funding outlined in the Sláintecare report [29434/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The HSE's Palliative Care Services Three Year Development Framework 2017-2019 aims to inform and direct the development of adult palliative care services, both generalist and specialist, in Ireland. This is against the backdrop of an aging population in Ireland, coupled with increasing numbers of deaths from cancer, dementia, and neurodegenerative disease, with an associated palliative care need.

The Steering Group which produced the Framework estimated that a total of €41.06 million would be required to properly implement the Framework's recommendations, including €25 million for the associated revenue costs of new Inpatient Units and hospices, with the remainder for eliminating existing staffing deficits and to enable 50% statutory funding of Night Nursing Services, currently provided through charitable funding.

The Sláintecare Report recommends an investment of €50million to cover the above, of which €8.8m was identified for the development of palliative care services for children.

Departmental Expenditure

408. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the costs paid for projects to companies (details supplied) engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason each was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29445/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The information requested by the Deputy is as set out in the following tables.

KPMG

Date	Company	Amount
12/07/16	Working Better Together Consultation	€14,145.00

Mazars

Date	Company	Amount
17/04/19	Protected Disclosure Investigation	2,398.50
17/04/19	GDPR Compliance Services	37,914.75
10/04/19	Protected Disclosure Investigation	€9,274.20

20/02/19	GDPR Compliance Services	€30,688.50
12/12/18	GDPR Compliance Services	€41,820.00
12/12/18	Protected Disclosure Investigation	€13,990.70
09/10/18	Review of All Ireland Congenital Heart Disease Network	€9,908.01
03/10/17	Revised Tobacco Products Directive	€14,406.01
24/05/17	Consulting Services New Tobacco Directive	€24,563.79
07/10/15	Activity and Resource Review HSE Home Care	€20,000.00

Arthur Cox

Date	Company	Amount
21/09/16	Tribunal Costs	61,012.02

No payments were made to PWC, A & L Goodbody or Davy Group during the timeframe specified by the Deputy.

Stroke Care

409. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health the reason there is no stroke rehabilitation services in counties Carlow and Kilkenny; if this service was in place; if so, the skill sets of the staff involved; his plans in relation to the provision of such a service; if there is a waiting list; the nearest location to counties Carlow and Kilkenny for such a service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29453/19]

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

HSE Agency Staff Expenditure

410. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the spend on agency staff in the health service to date in 2019, by occupation, hospital and community healthcare organisation, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29463/19]

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

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

411. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the decisions taken by the senior leadership team of the HSE at its monthly sittings relating to drugs reimbursement and the recommendations issued by the drugs group of the HSE to the team on same, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29464/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drug schemes, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

Home Help Service Data

412. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in counties Laois and Offaly on waiting lists for home help hours, homecare packages and respite by category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29475/19]

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

Mental Health Services Data

413. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the status of each recommendation made in the Roscommon mental health services review, in tabular form; the implementation measures taken prior to its publication; the steps taken since its publication in September 2017; the recommendations fully implemented; the reason a specific recommendation has not been completed; the reason for the failure to implement the recommendation in full; the timeline for its completion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29501/19]

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

Mental Health Services

414. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken by the psychiatric department at University Hospital Waterford to address concerns raised by the Mental Health Commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29502/19]

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

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Staff

415. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff assigned to CAMHS at University Hospital Waterford in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by whole-time equivalent staff and staff speciality, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29503/19]

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

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Staff

416. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of child consultant psychiatrists attached to CAMHS at University Hospital Waterford in each of the years 2014

to 2018 and to date in 2019, by whole-time equivalent positions in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29504/19]

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

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Data

417. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of children admitted or kept in the adult psychiatric unit at University Hospital Waterford in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29505/19]

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

418. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 195 of 26 February 2019, when funding will be made available to enable a facility (details supplied) to reopen; if his attention has been drawn to the effect the closure of the facility is having on persons that avail of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29506/19]

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.

Healthcare Infrastructure Provision

419. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the status of the planned rehabilitation unit at Roscommon University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29511/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

Gender Recognition

420. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Health if there will be provision in the

health service for transgender surgery services in view of a recent retirement (details supplied); if so, if the services will be available on the treatment abroad scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29533/19]

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

Departmental Expenditure

421. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the costs paid to a company (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason it was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29554/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The information is in the following table.

Date	Company	Amount
05/06/19	Actuarial Work Private Health Insurance	€4,276.71
20/03/19	Actuarial Work Private Health Insurance	€6,487.02
20/03/19	Actuarial Work Private Health Insurance	€17,544.72
26/02/19	Slaintecare PMO Support	€21,106.80
29/01/19	Slaintecare PMO Support	€11,771.10
17/12/18	Slaintecare PMO Support	€13,800.00
04/12/18	Slaintecare PMO Support	€13,800.00
21/11/18	Actuarial Work Private Health Insurance	€32,342.85
03/10/18	Risk Equalisation Review	€33,185.40
03/10/18	Disentanglement of Private Practice	€3,493.20
07/03/18	Work undertaken for EMA bid	€25,000.00

Cross-Border Health Services Provision

422. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an application for a cross border scheme refund will be expedited for a person (details supplied). [29588/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE operates the Cross Border Directive (CBD) in Ireland. As this question refers to a service matter I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy.

Abortion Services Provision

423. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the payments made under the primary care reimbursement service for consultations, terminations and aftercare services since January 2019 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29590/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Funding of €12 million was provided in 2019 for the implementation of a termination-of-pregnancy service. Of this funding, €4.5 million was identified for the provision of the service in the community. This funding includes the

cost of service provider fees, the provision of scans in the community, medication costs and pregnancy tests.

Under Section 20(3) of the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018, the Minister for Health is required to prepare a report on the notifications of terminations of pregnancy received during the immediately preceding year. Therefore, the first such report will be prepared before end-June 2020. I believe that in the light of this statutory requirement, it would not be appropriate to pre-empt the annual report by publishing data, the effect of which would be to place in the public domain information of a type intended by the Oireachtas to be addressed in the annual report.

Nursing Home Services

424. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the level of service being provided at a nursing home (details supplied) in County Mayo; the number of days it should be open; and if day services and respite are available each day. [29592/19]

425. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff employed at a nursing home (details supplied) in County Mayo; the number of vacancies; and the length of time each vacancy has remained unfilled. [29593/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 424 and 425 together.

As these are service matters I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Provision

426. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address matters in relation to support and services for persons with dementia (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29595/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The National Dementia Strategy recommends that the HSE considers the provision of dementia advisors, based on the experience of demonstrator sites, with an appropriate number of such advisors to be dedicated to the needs of those with early onset dementia. In this context, an evaluation of the Dementia Adviser Service, which was published in September 2018, recommends the continuation and expansion of the service to ensure equity of access countrywide.

There are currently 9 dementia advisors working across 12 counties in the Dementia Adviser Service established by the Alzheimer Society of Ireland in 2014, with 7 of these posts funded by the HSE since 2016. €400,000 in funding has been allocated by the HSE in each of the last 3 years towards the cost of the service, and the HSE has agreed to continue to provide this level of funding for the service in 2019 and future years.

The HSE provides approximately €7.9 million for Dementia-Specific Intensive Homecare Packages, which facilitate people with dementia who have complex needs to remain living at home. Since the introduction of these packages at the end of 2014, 443 dementia-specific intensive homecare packages have been delivered, with 201 active at the end of March 2019.

People with dementia can also avail of standard Home Support Services for Older People,

on the basis of need and within the resources available. A total of €426 million has been provided for home support services this year, delivering over 17.9 million home support hours to over 53,000 people.

In addition to the above services, the HSE granted €12.68 million in 2018 to Section 39 organisations who deliver dementia-specific respite, home care, day care, cognitive stimulation therapy, social clubs and supports for family carers.

The Department of Health has also secured €6.26 million in Dormant Accounts funding for a range of additional projects being implemented by the National Dementia Office projects including a post-diagnostic support pathway project, a dementia diagnostic project and a national network of memory technology resource rooms.

The level of funding available for the Department of Health in 2020 and the quantum of services to be provided by the HSE, including for measures under the National Dementia Strategy, will be considered as part of the national Estimates and budgetary process and National Service Planning.

Mental Health Services Provision

427. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of mental health services at a location (details supplied); the changes that have occurred to the provision of services there in recent months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29596/19]

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.

Orthodontic Services Data

428. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the number of the 18,043 persons on the orthodontic waiting list at the end of quarter one that went on the waiting list in 2018 and each year prior to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29597/19]

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

HSE Properties

429. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Health the plans of the HSE in relation to the old health clinic and surrounding lands in Tinahely, County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29601/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the management of the public healthcare property estate, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to you in relation to this matter.

Autism Support Services

430. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health if the reason a person (details supplied) cannot receive an appointment for an up-to-date diagnosis for autism will be investigated with the autism CAMHS in CHO 1; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29602/19]

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.

Cross-Border Health Services Provision

431. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health if the necessary legislation has been put in place here and in the United Kingdom to guarantee cross-Border health arrangements such as patients accessing healthcare in Northern Ireland under the cross border directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29624/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE operates the EU Cross Border Directive (CBD) in Ireland. Patients in Ireland can seek to be referred to another EU/EEA member state, including Northern Ireland, for medical treatment that is available in the public health service in Ireland. The patient may access the overseas service in either the public or private health sector of the EU/EEA member state they choose to receive the service in. The patient pays for the treatment and claims reimbursement from the HSE at the cost of that treatment in Ireland or the cost of it abroad, whichever is the lesser.

It is important to emphasise that at present there are no changes to patient care in the UK and Northern Ireland under the CBD, as the UK continues to be a full member of the EU. Indeed, until the UK formally withdraws from the European Union, it remains a full Member with all its existing rights and obligations.

Nevertheless, as part of a whole of Government response to Brexit, my Department is working intensively to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated set of preparations to ensure continuity of health services post-Brexit. This includes the enactment of the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2019. This legislation contains provisions which, if required, allows me to make Orders and Regulations to enable necessary healthcare arrangements to be maintained between Ireland and the UK in a Brexit no-deal scenario.

Organ Transplant Services

432. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health if the two flow cytometers used by the National Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics Service for Solid Organ Transplantation in Beaumont Hospital have been replaced to date in 2019 as promised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29625/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has confirmed that €0.1m has been allocated from the HSE Equipment Replacement Programme to replace a flow cytometer at Beaumont Hospital.

The HSE also advises that the replacement of the second flow cytometer is a high priority and will be considered in the context of the Estimates process.

National Children's Hospital

433. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health the rationale for the building of a private clinic in the new national children's hospital. [29626/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The vast majority of services in the new children's hospital will be public services. However, as part of the National Contract for Consultants negotiated in 2008, some consultants holding specific contracts are entitled to engage in private outpatient practice outside of their public commitment and this commitment must be conducted on site, that is, in the hospital they are contracted with. As a result, private outpatient clinics may be held on the public hospital campus but these clinics must be held outside contracted hours. The new children's hospital is obliged to provide such facilities for consultants holding such contracts.

There are a total of 8 clinics off the main concourse of the new children's hospital. There are a suite of rooms within each clinic. Each of these clinics are identical in fit out.

It is proposed that private care may be provided in one of these 8 clinics. The proposal is for consultants to pay a fee for use of the rooms and other operational costs.

Services for People with Disabilities

434. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29627/19]

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

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

HSE Staff

435. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health if new entrant management employees in the HSE have an induction period on joining; if so, if the period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29628/19]

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

HSE Staff Recruitment

436. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that new medical entrants to the HSE are required to work unpaid induction

periods; his views on whether this is a barrier to the recruitment and retention of essential medical staff here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29629/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Government is committed to addressing factors that impact negatively on the recruitment and retention of medical staff. The issue of unpaid induction periods for medical interns raised by the Deputy had been highlighted in consultation meetings the MacCraith Implementation Monitoring Group holds with the IMO and Forum Trainees. I am pleased to say that agreement has now been reached that interns, including those commencing employment this month, are to receive five days additional pay in respect of attendance for induction.

Health Services Provision

437. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding persons who have been diagnosed with a disease (details supplied); the arrangements in place in relation to a post mortem; the arrangements to deal with the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29635/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Asbestosis is a chronic lung condition caused by prolonged exposure to asbestos and patients with this condition have access to the same range of diagnostic and treatment services provided in the public health system as other patients with chronic lung conditions.

In relation to the arrangements in place for post-mortem, this is a matter for the HSE and, accordingly, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Data

438. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of referrals accepted by the community CAMHS teams during the first six months of 2019, by local health office area; and the equivalent figures for 2018, in tabular form. [29640/19]

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

Mental Health Services Provision

439. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the expansion of rehabilitation services to respond to the needs of those with enduring mental illness and challenging behaviour; the location of the additional services; the number of additional staff employed in whole-time equivalent terms; the number of service users in receipt of such services; and the way in which this compares to 2018. [29641/19]

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

Mental Health Services

440. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the implementation of the model of care for specialist perinatal mental health services; and the number of additional staff in whole-time equivalent terms appointed to date in 2019. [29642/19]

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

Mental Health Services Provision

441. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the way in which he has provided increased access to talk therapies to date in 2019; the number of additional service users availing of the therapies; and the number of persons availing of talk therapies in each CHO area. [29643/19]

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

HSE Staff Data

442. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional enhanced peer support workers delivered to date in 2019 in line with A Vision for Change recommendations. [29644/19]

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

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

443. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the status of efforts to develop a seven-day-per-week service for CAMHS; the number of CAMHS teams now operating on such a basis; the CHOs in which they are based; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29645/19]

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

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Data

444. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional CAMHS clinical staff in whole-time equivalent terms recruited to date in 2019, by CHO; the number of CAMHS staff in whole-time equivalent terms who left the service over the same period, by CHO. [29646/19]

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.

possible.

HSE Staff Recruitment

445. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of positions in whole-time equivalent terms for children's mental health intellectual disability teams being advertised for recruitment, by CHO. [29647/19]

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

Mental Health Services Data

446. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the new or enhanced services for those who are deaf and mentally ill that commenced to date in 2019; if additional staff have been recruited to date in 2019; the number of staff in whole-time equivalent terms now employed in such services at the end of June 2019; and the equivalent figures at the end of June 2018. [29648/19]

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

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Administration

447. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the implementation of the CAMHS advocacy model; and the CHOs in which it is available and utilised. [29649/19]

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

Hospital Services

448. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the status of a new central sterile services department at Roscommon University Hospital; the funding allocated to progress the project to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29655/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to reply to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

449. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on

the matter. [29656/19]

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

Diabetes Strategy

450. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health the status of the development of adequate pump therapy for adults with type 1 diabetes in Sligo University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29660/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to reply to the Deputy directly.

Medical Products Supply

451. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29661/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Mental Health Services Provision

452. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Health the status of the construction of the national forensic mental health service facility in Portrane, County Dublin; the completion date for same; if the project will be delivered on time and within budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29667/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of public healthcare services and infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

Stroke Care

453. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health the steps he has taken to ensure adequate step-down and rehabilitation services for those who suffer from stroke upon discharge from inpatient hospital care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29677/19]

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

Mental Health Services Funding

454. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the roll-out of the agreed minor capital fund to enhance mental health facilities and infrastructure; the

projects undertaken in 2019, by location; and the funding allocated to each in 2019. [29678/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the management of the public healthcare facilities and infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to you in relation to this matter.

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

455. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a second consultant for a service (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29697/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to reply to the Deputy directly.

Outreach Clinics

456. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health when an outreach clinic for patients in County Donegal will be reinstated; the reason this has not taken place to date; the efforts being made to resume the service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29698/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to reply to the Deputy directly.

Services for People with Disabilities

457. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application for a place in a care home by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29709/19]

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

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

Hospital Waiting Lists

458. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Leitrim will have cataract surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29727/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Ser-

vice 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.

Respite Care Services

459. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if the closing of 27 medical step-down respite beds at St. Mary's Hospital, Phoenix Park, Dublin 20, is in line with the principles and aims of Sláintecare. [29729/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): St Mary's Hospital in the Phoenix Park provides 150 long term residential beds, located across two modern purpose-built units. The hospital also provides 75 sub-acute or short stay beds, located separately in the main hospital building which dates back to the 18th century.

A recent Health and Safety Assessment identified significant patient and staff safety risk issues in the main building and in particular on Elms Ward. The risks identified relate to safety, fire safety management, layout, size, age, fixtures, fittings and lighting. Environmental risks were identified in relation to safe evacuation of patients. Elms Ward was found to have significant risk to patients and staff due to its uneven floor.

To comply with legislative requirements, and in the best interests of patients and staff, the HSE needs to close the ward on a phased basis with effect from 1st July 2019, to be completed by August. This decision was based solely on health and safety concerns, and not as a cost saving measure. There will be some reduction in access to transitional care beds from acute settings, however, all patients will remain in the Hospital until their current care is completed. The Department has been assured that all commitments for booked respite care will be honoured and plans are being put in place to that effect.

Staff were advised of this decision through consultation with their line management and they will be reassigned within the Hospital. The HSE has advised the Department that significant capital is required to address the health and safety issues and part of the project development process will be to examine all options available to provide safe services.

The primary focus must be on patients. Engagement with them, their families, staff, union representatives and any other relevant stakeholders is on-going to ensure minimal impact for all concerned during the closure of the ward.

Health Services Provision

460. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Ques-

tion No. 102 of 29 May 2019, the recommended medical, infrastructural and accessibility designation criteria for a major trauma centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29730/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Hospitals Data

461. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who presented to emergency departments with influenza during the influenza seasons in 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19, in tabular form. [29734/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive collects and collates influenza statistics, I have asked them to reply directly to the Deputy.

HSE Expenditure

462. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the costs or estimated costs to the health service in providing prevention measures and treatment of influenza in each of the years from 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and the costs associated with vaccinations, prescriptions, treatment in primary care settings and treatment in acute care settings. [29735/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive collects and collates influenza statistics, I have asked them to reply directly to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

463. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the measures or diagnostic tools being used in hospital settings to diagnose influenza. [29736/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a matter for the Health Service Executive, I have asked them to reply directly to the Deputy.

Hospital Beds Data

464. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the average cost to the health service of a patient staying in an acute hospital bed overnight; and the average cost per bed night for an inpatient stay in an intensive care unit. [29737/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy.

Hospital Beds Data

465. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the average cost to the health service of a patient requiring isolation in a hospital. [29738/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have referred the Deputy's question to the HSE for direct reply.

Hospital Acquired Infections

466. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients who contracted influenza while in a public hospital during the influenza seasons 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. [29739/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive collects and collates influenza statistics, I have asked them to reply directly to the Deputy.

Vaccination Programme Data

467. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the figures relating to the uptake of influenza vaccinations during the 2018-2019 influenza season; the percentage of the population that received the vaccination; the percentage of the HSE identified vulnerable groups that received the vaccination; and the percentage of non-vulnerable groups that received the vaccination. [29740/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive collects and collates influenza statistics, I have asked them to reply directly to the Deputy.

Primary Care Reimbursement Service Payments

468. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the spend on antibiotics under the primary care reimbursement service in each of years 2016 to 2018, in tabular form. [29741/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive has responsibility for medicines expenditure, thus the matter has been referred to the HSE for their attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Antimicrobial Resistance

469. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to invest in antimicrobial resistance measures, particularly developing and supporting the development of new diagnostics tools. [29742/19]

470. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking in relation to implementing the HIQA assessment on C-reactive protein point-of-care testing, namely the recommendation for a managed and monitored pilot programme in primary care settings. [29743/19]

471. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the diagnostic tools, such as the proposed C-reactive protein point-of-care testing, being considered by HIQA and his Department to reduce antibiotic overprescribing. [29744/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 469 to 471,

inclusive, together.

The prevention and control of healthcare associated infections (HCAIs) and Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) has been a significant patient safety and public health priority for my Department for numerous years.

In October 2017, with Minister Creed, I published Ireland's first National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance, 2017-2020 (iNAP) and since publication, my Department, the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine and other organisations have been engaged in an intensive programme of work to implement the strategic objectives of the iNAP Plan.

In line with iNAP, in 2018 I dedicated additional funding of €2m for HCAIs/AMR measures within the health service and a further €5 million has been allocated in 2019. This additional funding supports a number of initiatives and capacity building across the public health system.

With regard to the use of diagnostic tools to tackle the growing problem of antimicrobial resistance, Strategic Objective 5 of iNAP specifically identifies as an action, the need for assessment of the cost and clinical effectiveness of rapid diagnostic tools.

In line with iNAP, HIQA was requested to undertake a health technology assessment (HTA) of near-patient testing to guide antimicrobial prescribing. In considering the scope of the HTA, antibiotic prescribing in community settings was identified as an area where there was potential to influence prescribing patterns using results of diagnostic testing.

Following a scoping review, HIQA identified that CRP point-of-care testing was the only test with evidence applicable to this scope and hence, was the subject of the HTA. The HTA focused on C-reactive protein (CRP) point-of-care testing for patients with symptoms of respiratory tract infection in the primary care setting. The HTA review and its findings relate to the clinical use of CRP point-of-care testing, the cost effectiveness, budgetary impact and the organisational issues associated with implementation.

In line with the advice of the HTA, I have now asked my Department to engage with the HSE regarding the establishment of a pilot project. This would allow for: evaluation of the CRP point-of-care testing in primary care settings; consideration of the sustainability of the benefits of testing; collection of data on costs; and examination of the organisational issues involved in implementing such a pilot project, specifically in the Irish healthcare context.

Care of the Elderly

472. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of places being provided to older persons across 300 day care centres per week. [29766/19]

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.

Care of the Elderly

473. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of long stay and short stay public residential care beds in use. [29767/19]

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.

Care of the Elderly

474. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons supported through transitional care funding in their discharge from acute hospitals during the first six months of 2019. [29768/19]

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

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Data

475. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons supported by the nursing homes support scheme at the end of June 2019. [29769/19]

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

Hospitals Discharges

476. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the development and implementation of a discharge-to-assess protocol for persons who require home support to leave hospital. [29770/19]

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.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Administration

477. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the reconfiguration of nursing home support offices. [29771/19]

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.

Palliative Care Services

478. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional specialist palliative care inpatient beds provided to date in 2019; and the location of same. [29772/19]

479. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if the new palliative care inpatient units in counties Waterford, Mayo and Wicklow will be opened in 2019. [29773/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 478 and 479 together.

Between 2011 and 2018, the number of specialist inpatient palliative care beds increased from 157 to 214, an increase of 36.3%. This is exclusive of the approximately 150 palliative care support beds provided in over 60 locations, specialist palliative care provided in 38 acute hospitals, and the community specialist palliative home care teams which provide palliative care in the homes of those requiring care.

No additional specialist palliative care have opened so far in 2019. However, the HSE's 2019 National Service Plan commits to the full extension of service at St. Brigid's Hospice, Kildare this year and to opening three new inpatient units in Mayo, Waterford and Wicklow in quarter 4, with the latter three units expected to reach full capacity of 49 additional beds in 2020.

A further three units are planned for development in the coming years, serving people with specialist palliative care needs in the Midlands and Border regions. Once these inpatient units are opened, there will be at least one hospice in every CHO region.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

480. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health if the FreeStyle Libre flash glucose monitoring technology will be made available to all persons with type 1 diabetes; if a finding from an organisation (details supplied) will be included as part of the decision making process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29775/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities

481. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has still not moved into the residential care unit; the reason deadlines have been repeatedly missed; if he will raise the matter with the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29778/19]

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.

Medical Card Expenditure

482. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost of the 10% increase across general practitioner visit card weekly income thresholds which took effect from April 2019; and the number of additional persons now covered by free general practitioner access as a result of the change. [29790/19]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

483. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when a hospital bed will be provided for a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29792/19]

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

General Practitioner Services

484. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost of providing free general practitioner care to children aged seven and eight years. [29793/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Government intends to extend GP care without fees to all children aged between 6 and 12 years on a phased basis, starting in 2020. Legislative changes will be required to give effect to this extension.

It is not possible at this time to give an estimate of the cost of extending GP care without fees to this cohort of the population. The fees payable to GPs for this service will be determined following consultations with GP representatives on the scope and content of the general practitioner service to be provided.

As part of the recent agreement reached on GP contractual reforms and service developments, the IMO has agreed that it will engage with the Department of Health and the HSE in relation to the contractual aspects of this service in advance of implementation.

Following these consultations, an appropriate fee for the provision of the service by GPs will be set under the Public Services Pay and Pensions Act 2017.

Medicinal Products

485. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to review the process in regard to the governance of the drugs approval and procurement process with particular reference to facilitating more stakeholder engagement from industry and patients; his plans to extend the timeline for the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29796/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Department recently completed a tender process for a review of the HSE reimbursement and pricing decision-making process. Mazars has been appointed as the consultancy firm to complete this review.

The review will make recommendations, as considered appropriate, in respect of any required improvements to the HSE's systems, structures, processes, governance arrangements or

use of specialist resources in respect of the review.

In making its recommendations, the review will have regard to best practice regarding the procurement of medicines, the conduct of high-value commercial negotiations, governance, organisational structures, skill-mix and oversight.

The agreement signed with Mazars, sets out the relevant stakeholders to be consulted, including patient representatives.

The review is expected to be completed within three months of commencement and consideration will be given, in due course, to publication of a final report.

Palliative Care Services

486. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the reason he has not met the commitment to fund 50% of a service (details supplied); when the commitment will be met; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29814/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Irish Cancer Society operates the Night Nursing Service, an end-of-life nursing care programme which can be used by people with a cancer or a non-malignant diagnosis. The Irish Cancer Society funds care for people with a cancer diagnosis, while the Irish Hospice Foundation funds care for those with a non-cancer diagnosis. The Service can be accessed through referral from the Specialist Community Palliative Care Team, Public Health Nurse, GP or hospital-based Specialist Palliative Care Team. The HSE began co-funding of the service in 2016.

The HSE's Palliative Care Services Three Year Development Framework, 2017-2019, recommends that steps be taken to progress towards the provision of 50% statutory funding of the service on a phased basis.

Against this background, the level of statutory funding for the service increased from €88,000 in 2016 to €250,000 in 2018 as set out in the following table.

Details of Irish Cancer Society expenditure on the service last year will be available on the publication of its annual report for 2018.

Year	HSE funding	Irish Cancer Society expenditure	Irish Hospice Foundation expenditure
2016	€88,000	€3,184,000	€649,000
2017	€250,000	€2,969,000	€646,500
2018	€250,000	Not available	€659,000

The HSE has allocated €250,000 towards the cost of the service in 2019.

The level of funding available for the Department of Health in 2020 and the quantum of services to be provided by the HSE, including support for the Night Nursing Service, will be considered as part of the national Estimates and budgetary process and National Service Planning.

Departmental Expenditure

487. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the years 2009 to 2018 and to

date in 2019, by inquiry, tribunal or commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29835/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The amount spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the years 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by inquiry, tribunal or commission is as follows:

Tribunals, Commissions of Investigation, Statutory Inquiries

-	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Leas Cross	574,169.07	288,414.17	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Farrelly Commission of Investigation	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
-	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	TOTAL
Leas Cross	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	862,583.24
Farrelly Commission of Investigation	0.00	0.00	521,867.04	1,568,217.36	994,560.15	3,084,644.55

Health Services Staff Remuneration

488. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the difficulties of an organisation (details supplied) with regard to retrospective payments to its staff due to FEMPI; the position regarding reimbursing same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29843/19]

489. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that an organisation (details supplied) was included in the initial pilot of 50 section 39 agencies to be considered for pay restoration to staff and that the report was submitted to the HSE in December 2018; the status of the report; if there is an update planned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29845/19]

491. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that an organisation (details supplied) is no longer reimbursed to allow it to pay increments to staff who care for clients and that this is leading to staff shortages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29849/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 488, 489 and 491 together.

The Deputy will be aware that in February 2018, an agreement was reached at the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) between my Department, the HSE and health sector Trade Unions in relation to a process aimed at resolving the pay restoration issue for staff employed by section 39 bodies in 50 pilot organisations. The 50 organisations included were agreed at the WRC by all parties.

I asked the HSE to engage with the Section 39 organisations to establish the facts around what cuts were applied and how and when they were implemented. This exercise showed that

of the agencies who returned data, a majority did apply pay reductions of some form. It also showed that some agencies made some form of pay restoration between 2016 and 2018.

Following constructive engagement with the assistance of the Workplace Relations Commission, an agreement was reached on 2 October between the parties. Pay restoration is now being processed and is commencing with an annual pay increase of up to €1,000 in April 2019 for those employed by the 50 organisations involved in the pilot. Any outstanding balance will be paid in two equal amounts in 2020 and 2021.

Voluntary Sector Funding

490. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that an organisation (details supplied) was informed recently that there is no obligation from the HSE to contribute towards staff pension payments, that is, the 7% obligation through the pension scheme of an organisation; if this decision is finalised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29847/19]

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

Question No. 491 answered with Question No. 488.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

492. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if the FreeStyle Libre device will be made available to each person with type 1 diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29852/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Disability Services Provision

493. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Health if a residential placement will be provided for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29855/19]

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.

Cancer Screening Programmes

494. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a full list of all travel, locations, cost and purpose of travel undertaken by a person (details supplied) or any member of their team as part of their review into the CervicalCheck scandal by chronological order and in tabular form. [29858/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Dr Scally's Scoping Inquiry into Cervical-Check was conducted on an independent basis. As was previously advised to the Deputy, my Department does not hold records of the travel arrangements of Dr Scally or other members of the Scoping Inquiry team.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

495. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health when a wheelchair will be provided to a child (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29862/19]

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

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

496. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health when necessary orthotics will be provided to a child (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29863/19]

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

HSE Staff

497. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 201 of 19 June 2018 and 345 of 5 February 2019, if the HSE will consider using the draft HSE staff breastfeeding in the workplace policy as an interim measure for staff with immediate effect; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29867/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As the question relates to service matters it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy

Dental Services

498. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if the Dental Council refers complaints of illegal practice involving a risk to public safety to An Garda Síochána for investigation and prosecution; if this is the normal practice in all such situations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29868/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am informed that the Dental Council has on occasion referred matters to An Garda Síochána for investigation.

The Dental Council decides, based on the facts of each case, whether to refer the matter to An Garda Síochána or to deal with the matter under the Dentists Act, 1985.

I am informed that the Dental Council takes allegations of illegal practice seriously and that it takes the appropriate steps whenever necessary.

Hospital Waiting Lists

499. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Health his views on the waiting lists for pain, MRI, rheumatology and neurology clinics; and the way in which he plans to address the waiting times. [29870/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Government is committed to improving waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures. The number of patients waiting for an Inpatient or Day case procedure fell by 18% from July 2017 to the end of December 2018 while the number of patients waiting more than 3 months fell by more than 17,700, or 31% in the same period .

The Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 sets out measures to improve care for patients waiting for scheduled care in 2019 by reducing waiting times for inpatient/day case treatment and outpatient appointments.

As a result of on-going investment and successive waiting list initiatives, a reduction across a wide range of specialties has been recorded, including for pain relief, neurology and rheumatology. More specifically in June 2019 compared to July 2017, there has been a 4% reduction in the number of patients on the IPDC waiting list for rheumatology, an 11% reduction in the number of patients on the neurology waiting list, and a 15% reduction in the number of patients on the pain relief waiting list.

The NTPF advise that over recent months they have placed a particular focus on engaging with hospital groups and individual hospitals to identify outpatient waiting list proposals. The NTPF continues to welcome proposals from all acute hospitals for initiatives to improve access for patients awaiting outpatient appointments.

In terms of MRI waiting lists, the HSE advise that a pilot project was commenced in 2016 by the HSE Acute Hospitals Division to progress the collection of national radiology waiting list data. The project has been supported by the Radiology Clinical Care Programme and has involved key stakeholders across the system including the National NIMIS Team, Hospital Groups, and the support of the NTPF for data collection and data management expertise. At present, data is collected quarterly for MRI, CT and Ultrasound.

The Sláintecare Action Plan 2019 which was published by my Department, includes a specific work stream on Access and Waiting Lists. Sláintecare emphasises the need to invest in increased capacity while also shifting the balance of care from hospitals to community services for better health outcomes and a more sustainable health service. In addition, many of the other service reforms and enhancements included in Sláintecare will support timely access to care for patients in the coming years.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

500. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for children seeking access to CAMHS; and if he will make a statement

on the matter. [29871/19]

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

Medicinal Products

501. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to concerns regarding the prescription of synthetic T4 drugs in response to a diagnosis of hypothyroidism; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29872/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am informed that there have been concerns raised in several Member States regarding the reformulation of a particular brand of medicine containing the synthetic T4 hormone levothyroxine sodium. The brand of levothyroxine in question does not have a marketing authorisation in Ireland.

Levothyroxine is a medicine used to treat a variety of different thyroid conditions. It is a medicine with a narrow therapeutic index, which means that small differences in dose or blood concentration may lead to changes in therapeutic outcomes or side effects.

In this case, the manufacturer of the particular brand of levothyroxine made changes to the inactive ingredients, also known as excipients, to increase the stability of the medicine and reduce potential variability in dosing. However, there have been reports of increased incidents of adverse drug reactions among patients who were changed to this new formulation in the Member States concerned.

None of the levothyroxine containing medicinal products granted a marketing authorisation in Ireland, and which are actively marketed here, have been subject to reformulation in recent years.

The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) is responsible for monitoring the safety, quality and effectiveness of medicines in Ireland, including reports of adverse drug reactions. This involves the operation of a national reporting system and inspection programme. Patients and healthcare professionals are encouraged to report suspected side effects, quality problems and other related issues through the HPRA website- <http://www.hpra.ie//homepage/medicines/safety-information/reporting-suspected-side-effects>

When new safety or quality information emerges the HPRA ensure that healthcare professionals are informed and when necessary new prescribing and dispensing advice is issued.

Patients taking levothyroxine-containing products should not stop taking their medicines. It is important that they continue to take their medicine as per their doctor's instructions. If any patient has any questions or concerns about any medicine that they are taking they are encouraged to speak with their doctor or pharmacist.

Hospital Appointments Administration

502. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be expedited for a person (details supplied). [29879/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Ser-

vice 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.

Charitable and Voluntary Organisations

503. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health if the 20% funding cut imposed on an organisation (details supplied) will be reconsidered in view of its record in fighting for the rights of persons with intellectual disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29889/19]

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.

Respite Care Services Data

504. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adults with an intellectual disability in County Galway in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [29918/19]

505. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for children with an intellectual disability in County Galway in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [29919/19]

506. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adolescents with an intellectual disability in County Galway in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [29920/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 504 to 506, inclusive, together.

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 ac-

cessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

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

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

Disability Services Data

507. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for residential care for adults with an intellectual disability in County Galway in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [29921/19]

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.

Disability Services Data

508. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of adults with intellectual disabilities in residential care in County Galway. [29922/19]

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.

Respite Care Services Availability

509. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the lack of respite facilities and opportunities for persons with disabilities nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29923/19]

510. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health if he has access to the information collated at local area level for parents of children and adults requesting respite for each CHO; if there is information on requests granted and refused in each of the years 2011 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29924/19]

511. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health if he has received correspondence from disability service providers regarding their concerns in relation to providing respite for adults with disabilities within CHO 2; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29925/19]

513. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the criteria used for respite care for persons with disabilities; if the age of the carer is taken into consideration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29927/19]

514. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons with disabilities between 30 and 40 years of age still being cared for by their parents; his plans for respite for such persons in view of the fact that their carers are older; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29928/19]

515. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the funding allocation for providing respite care in 2019; the amount drawn down to date in 2019; if funding will be utilised for providing respite care in CHO 2; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29929/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 509 to 511, inclusive, and 513 to 515, inclusive, together.

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

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

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

Respite Care Services Data

512. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite weeks provided in each of the past three years for CHO 2; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29926/19]

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

Questions Nos. 513 to 515, inclusive, answered with Question No. 509.

Home Help Service

516. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health if he has met with the Ministers of State with special responsibility for disability and with special responsibility for mental health to discuss the impact of the lack of home help hours being allocated and the impact on persons with disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29930/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I meet regularly with the Ministers of State for Disability and Mental Health to discuss all aspects of their areas of responsibility.

The HSE is committed to providing and protecting the level of Personal Assistant services and Home Support services to persons with disabilities, to support them to maximise their capacity to live full and independent lives.

Individual's needs are evaluated against the criteria for prioritisation for the particular services and then decisions are made in relation to the allocation of resources. Resource allocation is determined by the needs of the individual, compliance with prioritisation criteria, and the level of resources available.

While substantial resources are available to fund the provision of home support services, they are finite, as is the position with all other services.

Hospital Beds Closures

517. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the way in which he is addressing the implications for patients and families due to the closure of 27 beds at a hospital (details supplied); and the reason the 27 beds were not relocated to other areas on the campus. [29938/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): St Mary's Hospital in the Phoenix Park provides 150 long term residential beds, located across two modern purpose-built units. The hospital also provides 75 sub-acute or short stay beds, located separately in the main hospital building which dates back to the 18th century.

A recent Health and Safety Assessment identified significant patient and staff safety risk issues in the main building and in particular on Elms Ward. The risks identified relate to safety, fire safety management, layout, size, age, fixtures, fittings and lighting. Environmental risks were identified in relation to safe evacuation of patients. Elms Ward was found to have significant risk to patients and staff due to its uneven floor.

To comply with legislative requirements, and in the best interests of patients and staff, the HSE needs to close the ward on a phased basis with effect from 1st July 2019, to be completed by August. This decision was based solely on health and safety concerns, and not as a cost saving measure. There will be some reduction in access to transitional care beds from acute settings, however, all patients will remain in the Hospital until their current care is completed. The Department has been assured that all commitments for booked respite care will be honoured and plans are being put in place to that effect.

Staff were advised of this decision through consultation with their line management and they will be reassigned within the Hospital. The HSE has advised the Department that significant capital is required to address the health and safety issues and part of the project development process will be to examine all options available to provide safe services.

The primary focus must be on patients. Engagement with them, their families, staff, union representatives and any other relevant stakeholders is on-going to ensure minimal impact for all

concerned during the closure of the ward.

Hospitals Funding

518. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of funding to supply a MRI machine for St. Luke's Hospital further to his personal commitment given on a visit to Kilkenny in July 2019 to supplement the €250,000 raised by a local organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29882/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

Physiotherapy Provision

519. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when physiotherapy services will be available again in health centres (details supplied); the reason physiotherapy services were ceased in the health centres in April 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29947/19]

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.

National Dementia Strategy

520. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health the reason persons people with dementia and their carers are still waiting for equitable and fair access to the supports and services they need; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29964/19]

521. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health his views on the perceived acute inequality of dementia services between counties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29965/19]

522. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health the reason there is a lack of dementia advisers by county despite increased demand; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29966/19]

523. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health the funding allocated to dementia care in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29967/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 520 to 523, inclusive, together.

The aim of the National Dementia Strategy, which was published in December 2014, is to improve dementia care so that people with dementia can live well for as long as possible, can ultimately die with comfort and dignity, and can have services and supports delivered in the best way possible.

Under the National Dementia Strategy Implementation Programme, funding has been pro-

vided for measures to raise public awareness, address stigma, and promote the inclusion and involvement in society of people with dementia. The Programme has also provided for the rollout of dementia-specific intensive home care packages, training in diagnosing and management of dementia for GPs and primary care teams and the establishment of a National Dementia Office within the HSE.

The HSE provides approximately €7.9 million per annum for dementia-specific intensive home care packages, which facilitate people with dementia who have complex needs to remain living at home. Since the introduction of these packages at the end of 2014, 443 dementia-specific intensive home care packages have been delivered, with 201 active at the end of March 2019.

People with dementia can also avail of standard Home Support Services for Older People, on the basis of need and within the resources available. A total of €426 million has been allocated for home support services this year, delivering over 17.9 million home support hours to over 53,000 people.

In relation to the Dementia Adviser Service established by the Alzheimer Society of Ireland in 2014, there are currently 9 dementia advisors working across 12 counties, with 7 of these posts funded by the HSE since 2016. €400,000 has been allocated by the HSE in each of the last 3 years towards the cost of the service and the HSE has agreed to continue this level of support in 2019 and future years.

The HSE also provides €12.68 million to Section 39 organisations who deliver dementia-specific respite, home care, day care, cognitive stimulation therapy, social clubs and supports for family carers on behalf of the HSE.

The level of funding available for the Department of Health in 2020 and the quantum of services to be provided by the HSE will be considered as part of the national Estimates and budgetary process and National Service Planning.

With regard to the level of funding by county between 2015 and 2019, as this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy.

National Dementia Strategy

524. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to ensure that each person diagnosed with dementia has access to a dementia adviser; the counties which do not have a dementia advisor to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29975/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The National Dementia Strategy requires the HSE to consider the provision of dementia advisers, based on the experience of demonstrator sites. In this context, an evaluation of the Dementia Adviser Service, which was published in September 2018, recommends the continuation and expansion of the service to ensure equity of access countrywide.

There are nine Dementia Advisers working in the Dementia Adviser Service established by the Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI) in mid-2014. The service covers 12 counties: Cork, Kerry, Tipperary, Limerick, parts of Clare, Galway, Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Dublin.

Seven of the 9 posts have been funded by the HSE since 2016, while the Mayo post is

funded by Community Action on Dementia Mayo. €400,000 has been allocated by the HSE in each of the last 3 years towards the cost of the service and a commitment has been made to continue this funding in 2019 and in future years.

The network of Dementia Advisers is one of a number of dementia-related initiatives supported by the HSE. In 2018, the HSE granted €12.68 million to Section 39 organisations who deliver respite, home care, day care, cognitive stimulation therapy, social clubs and supports for family carers.

In addition, 443 dementia-specific intensive homecare packages have been delivered to enable older people with dementia to remain in their own homes, since the introduction of these packages at the end of 2014.

People with dementia are also able to avail of standard Home Support Services for Older People, on the basis of need and within the resources available. A total of €426 million has been allocated for home support services this year, delivering over 17.9 million home support hours to over 53,000 people.

In 2016 and 2017, the National Dementia Office partnered with the Alzheimer Society of Ireland on a project to map dementia-specific community-based services and supports. It provides a useful snapshot and baseline study into what, where and when dementia services are being offered, including in those counties that currently do not have access to a dementia adviser. The study has also been used to inform a service finder hosted on the National Dementia Office's website at <https://www.understandtogether.ie/get-support/service-finder/>. This allows people to search for dementia-specific community services in their area.

The level of funding available for the Department of Health in 2020 and the quantum of services to be provided by the HSE, including any plans to expand the Dementia Adviser service, will be considered as part of the national Estimates and budgetary process and National Service Planning.

Climate Change Policy

525. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health if his Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics; the public bodies and agencies under his remit to which he has issued an instruction to cease the purchase and use of single-use plastics; when the instruction issued; the bodies which have confirmed that they no longer purchase and use single-use plastics, respectively; the bodies which have not provided such confirmation to date; when they will confirm; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29987/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department is working closely with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment identifying specific actions aimed at promoting public sector behaviours which are consistent with the Government's environmental policy.

As a Department we are well advanced in these areas and have initiated multiple internal initiatives, including the elimination of use and purchase of bottled water and single-use plastic cups in Q3 2018.

My Department has further extended its commitment to leadership in this area by ensuring that our recently appointed canteen service provider is committed to the same behaviours while also embracing the Department's healthy options policy. From its inception in January 2019, I am delighted to report that all single-use plastic cups, packaging and even cutlery have been

eliminated from the food service and replaced with either recyclable or compostable alternatives. In addition, our canteen service provider is the first catering company to achieve a 3-star rating from the Sustainable Restaurant Association for on-site food service.

In March of 2019, I wrote to all of the non HSE bodies under the aegis of my Department requesting status on progress towards the implementation of these initiatives which are required to be fully implemented by November 2019.

To date the following bodies have confirmed the cessation of purchase and use of single use plastics:

The HSE

The Mental Health Commission (MHC)

VHI Group DAC (VHI)

The Dental Council

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI)

The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA)

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI)

My Department continues to work with the following bodies to ensure full compliance by the November deadline:

An Bord Altranais

Council & Registration Board (CORU)

Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS)

National Cancer Registry Board (NCRB)

National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF)

Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council

Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI)

Safefood

The Health Research Board (HRB)

The Health Insurance Authority (HIA)

Hospital Waiting Lists

526. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) is waiting for an operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30037/19]

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

individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

Hospital Waiting Lists

527. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30039/19]

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

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

Hospital Car Parks

528. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether it is fair that a patient on radium treatment for a period of seven and a half weeks necessitating daily attendance at St James Hospital, Dublin that is also a pensioner, must pay the significant car parking fees for attendance for duration of the treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30044/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly, as soon as possible.

Services for People with Disabilities

529. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the system of assessment in place that assigns a woman with disabilities 0.7 personal assistance hours until 31 December 2019;; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30047/19]

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

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

Disability Services Data

530. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the number of children under a service (details supplied) on a waiting list to access occupational therapy services; the measures he is taking to address the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30065/19]

531. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the number of children under a service (details supplied) on a waiting list to access speech and language services; the measures he is taking to address the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30066/19]

532. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the number of children under a service (details supplied) on a waiting list to access physiotherapy services; the measures he is taking to address the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30067/19]

533. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the number of children under a service (details supplied) in County Galway on a waiting list to access occupational services; the measures he is taking to address the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30068/19]

534. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the number of children on a waiting list to access speech and language services under a service (details supplied); the measures he is taking to address the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30069/19]

535. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the number of children on a waiting list to access physiotherapy services under a service (details supplied); the measures he is taking to address the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30070/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 530 to 535, inclusive, together.

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.

Forestry Sector

536. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on correspondence from an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29140/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I note the contents of the correspondence from a group of young people from ‘The Children’s Tree Campaign’. I very much welcome their active engagement on the important issue of forestry and the environment and it is always encouraging when our young people show deep interest in these issues.

In the first instance, it should be noted that the national forest estate now covers some 11% of the national land area of Ireland and is at its highest level in over 350 years. The many benefits which forests provide are widely known and appreciated, including clean air and biodiversity as mentioned in the correspondence. The recent Climate Action Plan also highlights the role of forestry in terms of carbon sequestration and climate change mitigation. The Government has consistently encouraged the planting of new forests through the provision of generous grants and premiums under successive Forestry Programmes.

I wish to reassure the correspondents that forestry in Ireland operates within a strict legal and regulatory framework to protect forests and also to ensure that forestry operations and activities are carried out in compliance with the principles of sustainable forest management. There is an obligation under the Forestry Act, 2014 to obtain a felling licence from my Department when removing trees from forests and to replant felled trees.

There are certain instances where the felling of a tree is exempt from the need to obtain a tree felling licence, for example, trees near buildings or in an urban area. Certain bodies, such as local authorities and Waterways Ireland, are also exempt from the requirement to have a felling licence for reasons such as the removal of trees in the performance of statutory functions. If a person or organisation has concerns regarding incidents of tree felling by these bodies then they may consider contacting them directly.

As regards the removal of hedgerows by farmers, all beneficiaries under the Basic Payment Scheme and other area based schemes, operated by my Department, must comply with the Statutory Management Requirements and Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) standards set out in the relevant EU regulations. There is a stipulation that hedgerows and trees in a line are designated as landscape features, and under GAEC 7, beneficiaries are obliged to retain and maintain such designated landscape features. Hedgerows must be maintained and not allowed to become invasive. Where, in exceptional circumstances, it is necessary to remove a hedgerow, remove a line of trees or fill in a drain for good reasons such as farmyard expansion, the farmers may do so provided the hedgerow, the line of trees or drain is replaced on a like-for-like basis.

Control of Horses

537. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason unregistered stray horses have been allowed to remain on lands in Hollyhill, Cork city which have been reported to Cork City Council over the past six months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29619/19]

553. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Ma-

rine the reason unregistered stray horses have been allowed to remain on lands in Hollyhill, Cork city which have been reported to his Department over the past six months while they are being traumatised and neglected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29620/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 537 and 553 together.

The Control of Horses Act 1996 provides powers to Local Authorities to deal with stray and abandoned horses and for the designation, by each Local Authority, of control areas in which horses cannot be kept without a licence. Members of An Garda Síochána have also been assigned powers commensurate with those of Authorised Officers under the Act.

Land owners have responsibility to ensure appropriate fencing, boundaries, notices and signage are in place to control movement of stray equines.

In the area of welfare, officials of my Department may intervene under the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013. In addition, local authorities are empowered to appoint officers of the Authority as authorised officers to enforce the Animal Health and Welfare Act within the Authority's functional area.

My Department officials are aware of the situation in Holyhill to which the Deputy refers and, following inspection by a Department Veterinary Inspector, it has been confirmed there are no current welfare issues with the horses concerned. Additionally, the situation is being monitored by the ISPCA who remain in contact with the local Department office.

My Department has also taken a proactive approach in tackling challenges that arise in the case of horses by developing facilities for both urban and traveller horse populations and in educating young people among these communities in the care and welfare of horses. Again, this work is done in close collaboration with the local authorities involved.

My Department will continue to work closely with Cork City Council with regard to the matter raised.

Horse Racing Ireland Funding

538. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the funding provided for the redevelopment of the Curragh racecourse; the areas this funding was drawn from; the budgeted amount at the beginning of the redevelopment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29102/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Horse Racing Ireland (HRI) is a commercial state body established under the Horse and Greyhound Racing Act, 2001, and is responsible for the overall administration, promotion and development of the horse racing industry.

The Curragh Racecourse is the premier flat racing venue in Ireland and is recognised globally as one of the great international courses. There was a need to complete a redevelopment as the previous facilities were not of the standard now expected of a sporting venue of such national importance and international status.

In October 2015, my predecessor and the then Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, granted permission for Horse Racing Ireland (HRI) to participate in a new Curragh company (CRL Ltd) which would undertake the development and operation of the racecourse. It should

be noted that HRI, the Turf Club and a group of 6 founding investors each hold one third of the voting shares of the company as per the Shareholders Agreement.

The initial proposed cost of the project was circa €65m, prior to the project being put to tender. The contracted cost was €72.3m and the final cost is €81.5 million. HRI provided €36.5m of the final cost which was drawn from the Horse and Greyhound Fund; no additional funding was provided by the exchequer for this project. A further €40.3 million was provided by private investors and the balance was funded from bank loans obtained by Curragh Racecourse Ltd.

The final cost overrun was greater than originally estimated due to construction inflation, environmental requirements, reconfiguration of the parade ring, and design complications with certain aspects of the building, including the roof.

Knackery Industry

539. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of licences for knackeries revoked historically; the number of licences granted in the past 25 years; the number of inspections of same in the past ten years; the outcome of same in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29216/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Category 2 Intermediate Plants (Knackereries) and Collection Centres are approved and supervised by my Department in accordance with the EU Animal By-Products Regulations (EC) No 1069 of 2009 and its implementing Regulation (EU) No 142 of 2011 which lay down the health rules as regards animal by products and derived products not intended for human consumption.

Since electronic records began in 2007, forty licences have been granted to knackeries and two licences have been revoked at the request of the knackery. There are currently thirty eight knackery licences approved by my Department.

Official controls are carried out in the knackeries by veterinary personnel of my Department to ensure compliance with the EU and national Animal-By-Product Regulations and also compliance with the specific operational conditions laid down for Category 2 intermediate plants. The Department carries out, on an ongoing basis, audits, routine and/or unannounced inspections at the Category 2 intermediate plants. In addition, Department inspectors take samples from dead cattle and sheep at knackeries for the purpose of disease surveillance under EU Regulation 999/2001.

Seven hundred and seventy one knackery inspections have been carried out since electronic recording of inspections began. Up until and including 2016, two inspections were carried out annually at each of the 36 knackeries. This increased to four inspections from 2017 onwards. Non-compliances detected during inspections were dealt with in accordance with the enforcement protocol. In most cases, the non-compliances identified were considered minor, and either verbal or written directions were given to the knackery operator by the Veterinary Inspector. Follow-up visits ensured non-compliances were rectified. My Department issues legal compliance notices for serious non-compliances.

Electric Vehicles

540. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if consideration will be given to providing subvention for the purchase of battery powered tractors for

suitable farm enterprises as per the electric car market in the context of climate change commitments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29238/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): New technologies are changing the shape of the agricultural industry across the globe, with Ireland at the forefront of this change. The lack of skilled labour within the agricultural sector is driving the need to find new and innovative ways to make our work practices easier and less time consuming.

Under the current Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS), we have recognised the need to encourage the uptake of these innovations by providing funding across a number of new technologies. Funding for items such as GPS precision application systems for grassland and tillage crops, grant aided grass measuring equipment and financial support for the replacement of old technologies with new energy efficient equipment have all been included in the latest round of TAMS funding. Proto-type electric tractors remain under development and are not commercially available at present.

The recently published All-of-Government Climate Action Plan to tackle climate breakdown also includes a series of measures to lower greenhouse gas emissions from transport. I am fully supportive of this plan and the actions within it. I will continue to work with my colleagues across Government to ensure successful implementation of the plan. I am also confident that the agriculture sector as a whole will contribute significantly to Ireland's transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society with collaboration, co-operation and collective responsibility being key in achieving this ambition and realising the potential of pro-active engagement.

Forestry Sector

541. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the decision not to grant an exemption to a group (details supplied) will be reconsidered. [29273/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Forestry in Ireland operates within a legal and regulatory framework. This is necessary in order to protect forests and also to ensure that forestry operations and activities are carried out in compliance with the principles of sustainable forest management. Reforestation after felling is essential to prevent deforestation, which would otherwise counteract the benefits of the initial afforestation. The obligation to replant felled trees is required under the Forestry Acts and associated regulations.

In this case referred to by the Deputy, a licence to fell 3.4 hectares, valid for 2 years with a further year for replanting, was issued in September 2013. A replanting order issued in September, 2018 as the site had not been replanted. My Department has considered the request for an exemption and has advised the owners that replanting must take place in line with the statutory requirements.

Brexit Supports

542. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if members of a group (details supplied) will be invited to discussions on the €100 million Brexit beef aid fund; when stakeholder meetings will take place; and if he will make a statement

on the matter. [29320/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I will be consulting with stakeholders later this week in relation to the measures proposed by my Department to provide temporary exceptional aid to Irish beef farmers. These measures must be submitted to the European Commission before the end of this month, and are also the subject of consultation with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

I am satisfied that the stakeholder groups involved are broadly representative of the interests of Irish beef farmers.

Meat Processing Plants

543. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of cattle slaughtered in approved meat processing plants here which originated from Department defined restricted feedlots in 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29321/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The following table is published on my Department's website at: www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/animalhealthwelfare/animalidentificationandmovement/cattlemovementmonitoringsystem/bovinebirthandmovementsmonthlyreports/6KillNumbers170619.xlsx

The table below shows the most up to date figures for the number of animals slaughtered at EU approved slaughter plants, which originated in Controlled Finishing Units, previously known as feedlots.

-	2017	2018	2019
January	20,000	24,000	28,000
February	20,000	24,500	26,000
March	21,500	24,500	27,000
April	19,500	26,000	29,000
May	25,000	29,000	31,000
June	24,500	27,500	
July	19,500	24,500	
August	20,000	21,500	
September	18,500	18,500	
October	20,500	23,500	
November	28,500	26,500	
December	25,500	25,000	
Total	263,000	295,000	141,000

Forestry Grants

544. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the supports available to support non-commercial planters of native woodland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29348/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I fully support the planting of native woodland and this is reflected in the generous financial incentives avail-

able in the current Forestry Programme 2014-2020, which contains two grant and premium categories specifically targeted at Native Woodland Establishment. These planting categories attract the highest grant and premium rates of all categories under my Department's afforestation scheme. The mid-term review of the Forestry Programme, completed early last year increased these rates even further in order to encourage more landowners to plant native trees. The premium is paid each year for fifteen years at a rate of €665 per hectare.

Other supports include two Woodland Improvement Scheme grants of €750/ha and €500/ha to thin forests at different stages of the forest development to ensure a healthy and sustainable forest and a very successful Forest Knowledge Transfer Scheme to promote a forestry culture and improve the forest management skills of private forestry owners in Ireland. Participants on the Forest Knowledge Transfer scheme are paid €70 for attending each of the seven training modules.

Furthermore, the Native Woodland Conservation Scheme funds the protection and enhancement of existing native woodlands and, where appropriate, the conversion of conifer forests to native woodlands.

The Deputy may be interested to know that we also have in place a Woodland Environmental Fund which provides an opportunity for businesses to partner with the Government and Irish landowners to support the national effort to plant an additional 5 million native trees between now and 2020. This will result in an additional once-off top up payment of €1,000 per hectare to participating landowners.

I would encourage all landowners to consider forestry and in particular native woodlands as a land use option as these forests will become a long-lasting feature of our landscape, providing environmental benefits on an ongoing basis and adding colour and diversity to an area that can be enjoyed by local people and visitors alike.

Bord na gCon

545. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he or his officials have met the CEO and-or chairperson of the Irish Greyhound Board recently to discuss an investigation (details supplied) into the greyhound sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29355/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Bord na gCon is a commercial state body, established under the Greyhound Industry Act, 1958 chiefly to control greyhound racing and to improve and develop the greyhound industry. Bord na gCon is a body corporate and a separate legal entity to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

I can confirm that my officials met with officials from Bord na gCon, including the CEO, on the 21st June 2019, after my Department received correspondence from RTÉ on their investigation.

Minister of State Doyle and Departmental officials also met with the members of the Board of Bord na gCon, including the Chairman, on the 4th July to discuss their response to the Programme and their proposed Action Plan.

Departmental Advertising Expenditure

546. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount spent on digital marketing in each of the past eight years; the items on which funds were spent; the criteria by which target audiences were selected; the amount of the digital spend targeted here; the amount targeted abroad; the amount that related to private companies; the amount that related to policy initiatives; and the purpose of the digital advertisements. [29384/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The bulk of my Department's digital marketing is in respect of notices in the specialised farming media. Decisions on the placement of notices are made on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature of the advertisement and the target audience. All target audiences were domestic.

Spark Foundry (formerly Mediavest) hold the central Governmental contract for the provision of the majority of advertising needs.

The expenditure for the period in question is set out in the following table.

Digital/online marketing

2019

Event/Campaign	Total €
Getting Brexit Ready - Digital Ad - Irish Times online	1,476
Irish Language Scheme (online) – Tuairisc.ie	429.27
Total paid in 2019 to date: €1,905.27	

2018

Event/Campaign	Total €
Clean Livestock Policy for Sheep (online advert) – AgriLand	1,230
CAP 2020 Consultation Process (online advert) – AgriLand	2,460
Nitrates deadline (online advert) – AgriLand	4,305
Forestry Awareness (online advert) – DoneDeal.ie	6,089
Total paid in 2018: €14,084	

2017

Event/Campaign	Total €
Advice Note for Backyard Flock Owners (online advert)	922.50
Engineers Ireland online ad (Engineer grade III (Civil)) (online advert)	184.50
BPS online applications clinics advert (Online Advert)- AgriLand	2,460
Invitation to become an organic demonstration farm (Online Advert)- AgriLand	1,230
FAS training on CAP and GLAS (Online Advert) – AgriLand	2,460
Total paid in 2017: €7,257	

2016

Event/Campaign	Total €
NONE	NIL

2015

Event/Campaign	Total €
NONE	NIL

2014

Event/Campaign	Total €
Our Ocean Wealth 1st annual conference (Online notice)	307.50
Consultation on marine research/low carbon road map (Online advert)	123

2013

Event/Campaign	Total €
NONE	NIL

2012

Event/Campaign	Total €
NONE	NIL

Young Farmer Capital Investment Scheme Applications

547. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the systems in place to expedite applications for TAMS II in circumstances in which essential work needs to be completed without delay and are awaiting receipt of confirmation from his Department, as in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29407/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted an application under the Young Farmers Capital Investment Scheme of TAMS II on 4 April 2019. Approvals are issued after each tranche closes subject to factors such as budget availability etc. are finalised.

Following the ranking and selection process for the most recent tranche, the application was not selected for approval and the person named has been advised that the application has been rolled over to the next tranche which closed on Friday 5 July 2019. Once all applications in this tranche have been assessed, a further ranking and selection process will take place, following which successful applicants will go forward for further technical checks.

TAMS II is a demand-led scheme and all applications received in the latest tranche will be processed as quickly as possible.

Harness Racing Industry

548. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if funding will be made available to an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29416/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I am aware of the request for funding referred to and the proposal is being examined by officials of my Department. In addition, I have noted the funding proposal prepared in conjunction with the Five Year Strategic Plan for the Irish Harness Racing Association (IHRA), and their “addendum to Seed funding request” which outlines discussions with a Local Authority to examine the possibility for a site for a National Harness Racing stadium and training centre.

I am also aware that discussions with the aforementioned Local Authority on the matter of a racing venue are on going, and I have requested the IHRA to revert to me with details of an agreement before I make any decision on future funding for the industry. I understand that my officials attended a meeting on this matter in recent weeks.

Departmental Expenditure

549. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the costs paid to companies (details supplied) for projects which were engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason each was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29435/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table

2016

Name of Company	Fees Paid	Project Undertaken	Reason for Project
Mazars	€61,593.83	4 IT Audits	Provision of IT Audit Technical Support to the Internal Audit Unit.

2017

Name of Company	Fees Paid	Project Undertaken	Reason for Project
Mazars	€62,637.77	4 IT Audits	Provision of IT Audit Technical Support to the Internal Audit Unit.

2018

Name of Company	Fees Paid	Project Undertaken	Reason for Project
Mazars	€62,637.80	4 IT Audits	Provision of IT Audit Technical Support to the Internal Audit Unit.

2019 TO DATE

Name of Company	Fees Paid	Project Undertaken	Reason for Project
Mazars	€12,392.25	1 IT Audit	Provision of IT Audit Technical Support to the Internal Audit Unit.

Brexit Supports

550. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to seek to remove the conditions attached to the receipt of funding under the Brexit beef plan of the European Commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29476/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I have had ongoing discussions with Commissioner Hogan regarding the potential impact of a disorderly Brexit. I have stressed the need for the Commission to be ready to deploy a range of measures to mitigate the potential impacts on the agri-food and fisheries sector. Avoiding a no-deal Brexit continues to be the Government's overriding policy priority.

I am also keenly aware that the past few months have been very difficult for beef farmers in particular, following a difficult year for farm incomes in 2018 due to weather conditions. There has been a prolonged and exceptional period of depressed prices since last autumn, with the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the outcome of Brexit, among other factors, contributing to this market disturbance.

The recent announcement by Commissioner Hogan of EU exceptional aid for the Irish beef sector is very welcome in this context. I have been making the case for some time for an exceptional aid package from the EU Commission for Irish beef farmers, at EU Council of Agriculture Minister meetings, and in direct consultation with the Commission. The announcement by the Commissioner is another example of the importance of EU solidarity when it comes to facing significant economic challenges.

This exceptional aid provision will be given effect through a Commission Implementing Regulation. While Member States were invited to give an opinion on the draft Regulation through the Commission's Common Market Organisation (CMO) Management Committee, the Regulation is within the Commission's own legal competence, and was not for negotiation with Ireland or indeed other Member States, in terms of its content. The regulation was passed by the CMO committee last month and will now be enacted. Ireland must now notify the Commission, no later than 31 July 2019, of the measures to be taken in accordance with the Regulation.

Further details on the aid package will be announced in due course following the appropriate stakeholder consultation.

Felling Licences

551. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the removal of mature trees by developers on a building site during the nesting season; if an exemption is in place in this regard; if written permission must be in place before the trees are felled; the fines in place in circumstances in which trees are felled illegally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29495/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The felling of trees is governed by the Forestry Act 2014, which provides the regulatory basis for the licensing of felling. There are certain situations, pursuant to the Act, where the felling of a tree is exempted from the need to obtain a felling licence (e.g. within 30 metres of a building but excluding any building built after the trees were planted). While it may be considered that some trees are exempted from the need to obtain a felling licence, my Department must still be notified that felling is to take place, and it will decide if the trees in question are exempted. There are also certain common scenarios whereby the felling of trees is exempted and my Department does not need to be notified. Other legislation, such as the Electricity Regulation Act 1999, may include provisions to fell trees without the need to obtain a felling licence, so it is important

to know the details of a situation before it can be determined if trees in a particular case are exempted or not.

It is, however, important to note an exemption from the requirement to obtain a Tree Felling Licence under the Forestry Act 2014 (as amended) and Forestry Regulations 2017 (as amended) does not absolve an applicant or developer from any requirement in law to obtain such other approvals, consents, licences, permissions and/or authorisations that may be necessary (e.g. under the Wildlife Acts). It is the responsibility of the land owner or the person felling the tree to ensure that they are acting within the law.

Departmental Expenditure

552. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the costs paid to a company (details supplied) for projects which was engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason it was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29544/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

This expenditure relates to the annual certification of the Department's EAGF and EAFRD accounts.

2015

Name of Company	Fees Paid	Project Undertaken	Reason for Project
DELOITTE	137,111.14	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine – EAGF AND EAFRD Annual Accounts Certification	Independent Certification, as required by EU Regulations, of the Department's FEOGA Guarantee payments.
DELOITTE *	€889,854.87	IT FISHERIES	ICT Development on IT Fisheries System
DELOITTE *	€1,434,471.01	IT Generic Claims Processing System (GCPS)	Development and maintenance of software to support Rural Development Plan 2014-2020 schemes.
DELOITTE *	€421,653.26	IT Animal Identification & Movement System (AIM)	ICT Development on Animal Identification Movement System
DELOITTE *	€116,755.30	IT Small Systems	ICT Development on Small Systems
DELOITTE *	€61,105.17	IT Fisheries Technical Review	Initial Payment of Technical Review of Integrated Fisheries Information System

* Deloitte formerly System Dynamics Ltd in 2015

2016

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Name of Company	Fees Paid	Project Undertaken	Reason for Project
DELOITTE	€981,846.29	IT Animal Identification & Movement System (AIM)	ICT Development on Animal Identification Movement System
DELOITTE	€3,300,640.65	IT Generic Claims Processing System (GCPS)	Development and maintenance of software to support Rural Development Plan 2014-2020 schemes.
DELOITTE	€2,068,507.88	IT Fisheries /EMFF	ICT Development on IT Fisheries System
DELOITTE	€162,323.11	IT Small Systems	ICT Development on Small Systems
DELOITTE	18,721.83	IT Fisheries Technical Review	Final Payment of Technical Review of Integrated Fisheries Information System

2017

Name of Company	Fees Paid	Project Undertaken	Reason for Project
DELOITTE	€1,852,291.75	IT Fisheries/ EMFF	ICT Development on IT Fisheries System
DELOITTE	€913,886.35	IT Animal Identification & Movement System (AIM)	ICT Development on Animal Identification Movement System
DELOITTE	€1,066,430.51	IT Generic Claims Processing System (GCPS)	Development and maintenance of software to support Rural Development Plan 2014-2020 schemes.
DELOITTE	€784,528.10	IT Fisheries/ EMFF	ICT Development on IT Fisheries System
DELOITTE	€270,006.67	IT Small Systems	ICT Development on Small Systems

2018

Name of Company	Fees Paid	Project Undertaken	Reason for Project
DELOITTE	€25,805.40	Scoping exercise for creation of Jobs Portal	Scoping exercise for creation of Jobs Portal
DELOITTE	€3,748,464.63	IT Fisheries/ EMFF	ICT Development on IT Fisheries System

2019 TO DATE

Name of Company	Fees Paid	Project Undertaken	Reason for Project
DELOITTE	€1,691,977.67	IT Fisheries/ EMFF	ICT Development on IT Fisheries System

DELOITTE	€46,002.00	IT Security	Security Testing of ICT Infrastructure
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Question No. 553 answered with Question No. 537.

GLAS Data

554. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of GLAS payments in respect of low-emission slurry spreading in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 that were based solely on invoices from contractors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29776/19]

555. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of GLAS payments in respect of low-emission slurry spreading paid on the basis of contractor invoices; the reason his Department does not keep a register of contractors that received such payments to ensure they are tax compliant and VAT registered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29777/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 554 and 555 together.

GLAS participants who undertake the Low Emission Slurry Spreading (LESS) action have the option of carrying out the spreading themselves or employing a contractor. The Department does not keep a register of contractors who provide this service to GLAS participants. GLAS payments for this action are made in full to the farmer as required by the governing regulations and where a contractor is used, the contract is a private matter between the farmer and contractor.

Participants must submit an annual declaration form and declare the spreading method used and volumes spread on the holding on an annual basis. No payments are calculated on the basis of invoices received from service providers.

Fur Farming

556. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to introduce a compensation package for fur farmers further to the decision in principle to ban fur farming over a phased period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29791/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As the Deputy will be aware, the Government recently agreed to the phased dis-establishment of fur farming in Ireland.

The Government will now proceed to bring forward a Bill which will be drafted in conjunction with the Attorney General's Office. This Bill will make it illegal for any new fur farms to be established and phase out arrangements will be put in place for the small number of current operators to allow for an orderly wind down of the sector.

Departmental Expenditure

557. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the

years 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by inquiry, tribunal or commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29826/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): No money has been spent by my Department on Tribunals, Commission of Investigations or Statutory Inquiries for each of the years 2009 to 2018, or to date in 2019.

Trade Sanctions

558. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the confirmation that the Office of the United States Trade Representative is considering including dairy products on a final list of items to be subject to increased duties from the EU as set out in a document (details supplied); the steps being taken at EU level in response to this; and if there have been discussions with other member states, the European Commission and the US administration regarding this development. [29860/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The US and EU have been in a long-running dispute regarding subsidies to their respective major Aircraft manufacturers, Airbus (EU) and Boeing (US).

Both the EU and US had submitted cases to the WTO for adjudication. On 15 May 2018, the WTO Appellate Body found in favour of the US. The EU challenged the awarded estimate and a WTO arbitrator is currently evaluating this claim and is due to report this summer.

Separately, on 29 March 2019, the WTO's Appellate Body confirmed the European Union's position that the United States had failed to remove trade distorting subsidies in favour of Boeing.

On 8 April 2019, the United States Trade Representative (USTR) released a list of European goods worth \$11 billion that could be targeted with additional tariffs. The targeted items include cheeses, wine, and other food products as well as helicopters and aircraft. In response, on 12 April, the EU published a list of potential countermeasures, with the amount of permitted EU countermeasures to be determined by a WTO-appointed arbitrator.

On 7 July 2019, the USTR issued for public comment, a supplemental list of products to the original list of 8 April 2019 that could potentially be subject to additional duties. While USTR have stated that they are specifically targeting EU countries directly supporting Airbus in these measures, when the lists are reviewed, there are products that are exported from Ireland to the US, including dairy and beverages. This is most unwelcome and it is in Ireland's interest to find a solution to this issue.

The European Commission, having competence in relation to trade matters, negotiates on behalf of Member States, including in relation to trade disputes. Ireland has highlighted the potential impact on the Irish agri-food sector of the proposed tariffs published by the USTR, at the EU Trade Policy Committee (TPC), and has ensured that those negotiating on behalf of the EU are fully aware of Irish concerns in this matter.

The Irish Embassy in Washington is fully abreast of Irish concerns in this dispute and has made these concerns, and, indeed, the importance of the USA market for the dairy & spirits industries, known to USTR officials.

Greyhound Industry

559. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the funding allocated to the greyhound sector to date in 2019; the amount allocated to animal welfare; the administrative process for issuing and revoking certificates by his Department on exporting greyhounds out of this jurisdiction; the number of certificates issued annually to EU countries and non-EU countries for such exports in each of the years 2014 to 2018, in tabular form; and the EU regulations that apply to such exports including animal welfare provisions. [29861/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Bord na gCon is a commercial state body, established under the Greyhound Industry Act, 1958 chiefly to control greyhound racing and to improve and develop the greyhound industry. Bord na gCon is a body corporate and a separate legal entity to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The funding paid to Bord na gCon to date this year is €14.7m.

My Department has a close working relationship with animal welfare charities and provides financial support to a number of animal welfare organisations through its ex-gratia animal welfare funding. My Department provided funding of €2,751,000 to animal welfare groups in 2018. The process of awarding funding to animal welfare charities for this year is underway.

The Department’s animal welfare funding is in addition to the €100,000 that Bord na gCon makes directly to the Irish Retired Greyhound Trust. This funding is matched by a 2% contribution of winning owner’s prizemoney, which in itself derives from the Horse & Greyhound Fund. In 2018, the total income of the Irish Retired Greyhound Trust was €242,000. Bord na gCon’s overall spend on regulation and welfare matters will be just short of €2 million in 2019.

With regards to the export of greyhounds, under Council Directive 92/65/EEC (the “Balai” Directive), dogs moved commercially to another EU country from Ireland must be accompanied by an EU pet passport, be microchipped and have a valid rabies vaccination. Also, under the Balai Directive, premises exporting dogs must be registered with the Department in advance of the export. Before travel, dogs must undergo a clinical examination by an authorised veterinarian, who must verify that the dogs show no obvious signs of disease and are fit to be transported. Dogs must also have a health certificate issued by a Department veterinarian. These procedures, including vaccination, ensure that only healthy dogs, over the age of 15 weeks, are allowed to be exported.

Exporters are also required to comply with the provisions of the Council Regulation (EC) No 1 of 2005 on the protection of animals during transport.

My Department only issues health certs for export once all the criteria outlined above have been met. For this reason, in general health certificates are not revoked, as they would not have been issued if all requirements were not fulfilled.

It is not possible to establish exact figures for greyhound exports to other EU countries, as TRACES, the European Commission’s online management tool for all sanitary requirements on intra-EU trade and importation of animals, does not distinguish between breeds of dogs moved commercially. The figures for commercial movements of dogs from Ireland to other European Member States for the years 2014 to date are in the table below.

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019: YTD
3,316	10,847	12,103	12,898	10,322	5,193

Information received from my Department’s Regional Veterinary Offices indicate the following commercial movements of greyhound to third countries from 2016-2019.

2016	2017	2018	2019: YTD
China - 9	Chile - 1	Argentina - 1	Australia - 1
Argentina - 11	South Africa - 2		South Africa - 1

Sheepmeat Sector

560. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the imports of sheep meat from Australia to Ireland to date in 2019; the volume in tonnes and the type of cuts involved; and if additional information (details supplied) will be provided. [29883/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The import of products of animal origin from third countries is governed by a comprehensive and robust legislative framework laid down at EU level, controlled by Member States in the first instance, and audited by the European Commission's Directorate General for Health and Food Safety to ensure compliance with all of the relevant food safety standards. The legislation imposes health and supervisory requirements designed to ensure that imported products meet standards equivalent to those required for production and trade between Member States.

Veterinary checks are carried out on all consignments of foods of animal origin imported into the European Union from third countries, at approved facilities called Border Inspection Posts (BIPs). All consignments must comply with EU rules for the importation of such products, including requirements for the approval of establishments, for consignments to be accompanied by a veterinary health certificate, and for advance notification of arrival. Upon arrival, all consignments must undergo documentary and identity checks in accordance with European regulations. Physical checks, including sampling of products, are carried at frequencies laid down in EU legislation. Import control procedures on products of animal and fish origin are highly prescriptive and are audited by the European Commission (DG SANTE) to ensure compliance. Inspection finding reports are published on the Directorate General for Health and Food Safety's website.

To date in 2019, there have been 16 consignments of frozen sheepmeat with bone in for human consumption imported into Ireland from Australia, all of which came through Dublin Port. The total volume of these consignments was 240 tonnes.

Beef Imports

561. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of bovine animals imported for slaughter from 1 January 2018 and to date in 2019, by category, that is, steer, heifer, young bull or cow; the destinations of the animals in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29884/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In 2018, 8,329 cattle were imported into the country for immediate slaughter. Information on sub-divisional categories of these animals such as steer, heifer, young bull and cow is not recorded on the Animal Identification and Movement system.

Data for 2019 is not available in a definitive form yet, but will be available later in the year.

Beef Imports

562. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of tonnes of imported beef since 1 Jan 2018 and in 2019 to date by category, that is, steers, heifers, young bulls or cows; the age of same; the origin of same; the checks undertaken on the imports in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29885/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The import of products of animal origin from third countries is governed by a comprehensive and robust legislative framework laid down at EU level, controlled by Member States in the first instance, and audited by the European Commission's Directorate General for Health and Food Safety to ensure compliance with all of the relevant food safety standards. The legislation imposes health and supervisory requirements designed to ensure that imported products meet standards equivalent to those required for production and trade between Member States.

Veterinary checks are carried out on all consignments of foods of animal origin imported into the European Union from third countries, at designated facilities called Border Inspection Posts (BIPs). Currently, there are four BIPS approved in Ireland - Dublin Airport, Dublin Port, Shannon Airport and Rosslare Port (recently added for the purposes of Brexit). All consignments must comply with EU rules for the importation of such products, including requirements for the approval of establishments, for consignments to be accompanied by a veterinary health certificate and for advance notification of arrival. Upon arrival, all consignments must undergo documentary and identity checks in accordance with European regulations. Physical checks, including sampling of products, are carried at frequencies laid down in EU legislation. Import control procedures on products of animal and fish origin are highly prescriptive and are audited by the European Commission (DG SANTE) to ensure compliance. Inspection finding reports are published on the DG SANTE's website.

Thirteen consignments, described as beef or beef products, comprising approximately 133 tonnes have been imported into Ireland from a variety of third countries (Australia, Uruguay, Botswana and Japan) since January 2018. This compares to total Irish beef production of over 500,000 tonnes in 2018. Checks on these consignments were carried out, in compliance with the rules described above, on behalf of Ireland, at the point of first arrival in the EU. The consignments were certified by the BIP inspector at the point of first arrival as being in compliance with EU requirements, and as such the consignments were released for onward travel to Ireland.

The CN codes under which beef and beef products travel internationally does not provide for a distinction to be made between meat coming from different categories of animals.

Departmental Data

563. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on issues raised on data released by his Department (details supplied); and the reason figures are rounded to the nearest thousand in the animal identification system for animal movements for cattle. [29886/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As part of the TB eradication programme, beef finishing herds, if they meet the necessary criteria, are allowed to avail of a special status, termed "Controlled Finishing Unit". When a herd meets the criteria to be regarded as a 'Controlled Finishing Unit' under the TB Eradication Programme, the herd is restricted under the TB Regulations and a special official supervisory and testing protocol is established. Such herds are not exempted from testing, reactor removal or disinfection requirements.

Restricted Controlled Finishing Units are TB tested at least once a year. This Controlled Finishing Unit status arrangement allows the delivery of an effective level of disease risk management while controlling the risk of further disease spread in compliance with animal health legislation, and enabling business continuity in this particular type of enterprise through the inward movement of cattle.

Cattle from Controlled Finishing Unit herds restricted under the TB Eradication programme are only permitted to move to a EU approved slaughter plant. The precise numbers of movement from these Units to slaughtering plants is available on my Department's website. The current table was published rounded to the nearest 1,000 for the purpose of clarity of presentation.

Tillage Sector

564. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason fodder beet is not considered an eligible tillage crop under the tillage capital investment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29970/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Fodder beet and other crops such as maize and sugar beet are excluded from the eligible crops list for the purposes of the Tillage Scheme of TAMS II.

These crops are sown primarily as a forage crop for animal feed.

Tillage Sector

565. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a farmer (details supplied) was not approved a grant under the tillage capital investment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29971/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named applied for a grant under the Tillage Capital Investment Scheme of TAMS II. This application was rejected as the applicant had insufficient hectares of eligible crops as per the Terms and Conditions of the scheme which states:

The Scheme is open to farmers who

(i) prior to submitting the online TAMS II application have a minimum of 15 hectares of eligible crops which have been declared under the Basic Payment Scheme or equivalent in the year of application or preceding year.

(ii) have a Department identifier

Fodder beet is not considered an eligible crop for the purposes of the TAMS scheme.

Trade Agreements

566. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 46 of 3 July 2019, the steps he has taken to provide data to support the climate threats posed by the Mercosur deal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29974/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The political agreement between EU and Mercosur includes a detailed chapter on Sustainable Development goals. The agreement recognises the need to address the urgent threat of climate change and the role trade has in this regard. It also underscores the importance of both Parties implementing the provisions of the Paris Agreement. It is fundamental that these provisions are adhered to by the Mercosur countries in order for the agreement to progress.

Now that political agreement has been reached between the EU Commission and Mercosur, Minister Humphreys will be commissioning a full economic and sustainability assessment to measure its impact. My Department will assist with that exercise.

Climate Change Policy

567. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics; the public bodies and agencies under his remit to which he has issued an instruction to cease the purchase and use of single-use plastics; when the instruction issued; the bodies which have confirmed that they no longer purchase and use single-use plastics, respectively; the bodies which have not provided such confirmation to date; when they will confirm; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29977/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In line with the Government Decision on the 4th of January of this year, my Department has ceased the use of single use plastics in all of its canteen facilities. All stocks of plastic beverage containers, cutlery, straws etc. were used up by the end of March and they have now been replaced with either compostable or metal alternatives. This was done in conjunction with an awareness campaign across the Department to make staff aware of the societal benefit of eliminating the use of single-use containers by replacing them with reusable containers.

Earlier this year, my Department wrote to all state bodies under its aegis to inform them of their obligation to cease the use of single use plastic cutlery and beverage containers. These bodies were also informed of the requirement to submit a report to the Department by the end of November this year outlining their efforts to minimise waste generation and maximise recycling, as required by the Government decision.

Electric Vehicles

568. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of vehicle e-charging points installed in Dublin since 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29715/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment(Deputy Richard Bruton): There are currently over 650 standard public charge points and 78 fast chargers as a part of the ESB eCars network. A map showing these charge points, including their status and availability, is available on the ESB's website at www.esb.ie/ecars.

The operation and maintenance of charge points is a matter for ESB eCars and therefore not in the remit of this Department. However, Department officials have contacted ESB eCars and have been advised that it has not installed any new charge points in Dublin since 2016.

It should be noted that there are also a number of location/destination chargers which in-

clude chargers provided at hotels, shopping centres, visitor attractions, places of employment, private car parks etc.

Under the first call for applications from the Climate Action Fund, I approved funding of up to €10 million to support ESB eCars to develop a nationwide, state-of-the-art electric vehicle fast charging network. This project successfully completed the assessment stage and the validation stage is now underway. The project includes the installation of 90 high-power chargers each of which will be capable of charging two vehicles simultaneously, upgrading 50 existing standard chargers to fast chargers and replacing over 250 existing standard chargers with next generation high reliability models. This is a multi-annual project and is expected to be fully completed by 2022.

The locations of the chargers have not been finalised. However, a provisional map of the planned network, showing indicative locations, was developed by ESB eCars and has been published on my Department's website. ESB eCars is currently identifying the most appropriate locations for the chargers to be sited. The sites will be identified using the latest software mapping techniques, taking account of information on current charge point usage, traffic volume, accessibility, amenities and grid capacity at the sites.

To support charging at home, a grant of up to €600 is available from the SEAI to support the purchase and installation of a home charger for purchasers of new and second-hand electric vehicles.

Broadband Service Provision

569. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to extend high-speed fibre broadband to a household (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29071/19]

570. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the parameters for deciding to exclude properties (details supplied) in County Donegal in high-speed fibre broadband installations in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29072/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 569 and 570 together.

Every home, farm, school and business in Ireland will have access to high speed broadband – no matter where they are located – following the Government's decision to approve the appointment of a preferred bidder to the National Broadband Plan.

There are 31 premises in the townland of Ballycroy, Co. Donegal. All 31 premises, including the specific Eircode referenced by the Deputy, are in the AMBER area on the National Broadband Plan (NBP) High Speed Broadband Map, which is available on my Department's website at www.broadband.gov.ie. The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP. The premises in the townland will receive access to a high speed broadband service through this intervention.

This intervention is the subject of the procurement process to engage a company to build, operate and maintain the NBP State intervention network. I recently brought a recommendation to Government to confer Preferred Bidder status on Granahan McCourt, the remaining bidder in the NBP procurement process and Government agreed to this.

The Government Decision of 7 May 2019 means that it is intended to award the State Intervention contract to the Bidder. This award is subject to contract close, including finalisation of financial and legal documents. Deployment of the NBP State Intervention network will commence shortly that.

The Bidder has indicated that the NBP State intervention will take an estimated 7 years from the beginning of deployment.

In the first year of this roll out, the Bidder will deploy approximately 300 Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) across all counties. It is anticipated that between 7 and 23 BCPs will be deployed in each county. BCPs will provide a community based high speed broadband service, enhancing online participation and allowing for the establishment of digital work hubs in these locations. A deployment plan will be made available by the bidder once the contract is signed. The Bidder is aiming to pass 133,000 premises by end of the second year of the overall deployment, with 70-100,000 passed each year thereafter until roll out is completed.

The Deputy makes reference to the proximity of the premises in Ballycroy to a commercial deployment of high speed broadband. This deployment is part of eir's commercial roll out of high speed broadband to 300,000 predominantly rural premises, in line with a Commitment Agreement signed with my Department in April 2017.

eir's rural investment in high speed broadband is an entirely commercial undertaking, and not part of the planned State Intervention network. Although the deployment is monitored under the terms of the Commitment Agreement, it is not funded by the State and it is not planned, designed or directed by my Department in any capacity.

Decisions made by private telecommunication operators relating to the roll out and siting of infrastructure to provide high speed broadband services throughout Ireland are undertaken on a commercial basis. I have no statutory role or function in such commercial decisions of private operators, and therefore cannot direct operators regarding infrastructure installation or delivery of services.

Renewable Energy Feed-in Tariff Scheme

571. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position regarding the auction process for feed-in tariffs for solar farms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29135/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Climate Action Plan includes a suite of actions to decarbonise the electricity sector and boost the quantity of renewable generation in order to meet our target of 70% of electricity demand from renewable sources by 2030.

In order to deliver on the ambition set out in the Plan, my Department is developing the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS). The RESS is being designed within a competitive auction-based, cost effective framework and the scheme will provide for a renewable electricity (RES-E) ambition of 70% by 2030.

Technology diversity, including solar PV and offshore wind, will occur naturally as the scheme matures and certain intervention levers may be used within each auction round to promote certain policy objectives such as community participation, community ownership and diversifying the renewable energy mix. Globally, the costs of renewable technologies are falling rapidly with solar PV showing the most rapid decrease in prices in recent years.

I am targeting the delivery of indicative volumes of up to 1.5 GW of grid scale solar by 2030. Grid scale solar energy farms will be critical to diversifying the renewable technology mix and to deliver gains through connecting hybrid renewable technologies.

The terms and conditions of the RESS auctions will set out the process by which all competing technologies including grid scale solar farms connect and receive support for supplying energy to the national grid. The first RESS auction is expected to open for applications in late 2019. In addition corporate power purchase agreements will provide a route to market for solar PV and will be key to meeting our 70% RES-E target.

Electric Vehicles

572. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the provisions which will be made for owners of electric cars who reside in estates when charging their cars and have to park on the public road (details supplied). [29174/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Climate Action Plan sets out a range of actions to support the delivery of charging infrastructure. This includes introducing a capital support that will be provided to Local Authorities for the development of up to 200 on-street chargers per annum. My Department is currently working with the SEAI to develop this scheme which is expected to be in place later this year. This will cater mainly for electric vehicle owners who rely on on-street parking as their primary means of parking near their homes.

Waste Tyre Disposal

573. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the scheme being administered by a company (details supplied) complies with the Waste Management (Tyres and Waste Tyres) Regulations 2007, is operating successfully, that is, that a 90% compliance rate is achieved under the structures put in place. [29202/19]

575. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans for a reduction of the environmental management charge to the tyre industry retailers. [29243/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 573 and 575 together.

Under the Waste Management (Tyres and Waste Tyres) Regulations, 2017 a new scheme for tyres and waste tyres was introduced and is operated by Repak ELT, supported by the Producer Register Limited.

All tyre producers and retailers are statutorily obliged to be members of the scheme. Under the regulations, all operators are obliged to provide data on the numbers of tyres coming on and off the Irish market. The scheme carries out all regulatory functions on behalf of its members and is funded by a visible Environmental Management Charge (vEMC) as established in the Regulations.

There are no targets in relation to the overall recovery and recycling of waste tyres contained in the Regulations, however in accordance with the terms of the scheme’s Ministerial approval, Repak ELT are obliged to work towards minimum targets by the end of 2018 and each subsequent year of the approval:

- a recovery rate of 70% of all tyres collected, and
- a recycling rate of 30% of all tyres collected.

Repak ELT, published their Annual Report for 2018, which can be accessed at the following link <https://repakelt.ie/wp-content/uploads-2019-06-relt-annual-report-2018-pdf/> and it shows that the scheme exceeded these targets.

In establishing the scheme, it was agreed that a review of the data flow and scheme operation would be undertaken at 6 and 12 months after its introduction. The scheme was kept under close review for the initial six months and three amendments were carried out to the Regulations. My Department engaged an independent body, RPS Group, to carry out a review of year 1 of the operation of the scheme.

The review is scheduled to be completed in quarter 3 of this year and the conclusions of this review will inform my decisions in relation to the Regulations supporting the Scheme.

Television Licence Fee Collection

574. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to address an anomaly regarding the selling of television licences (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29237/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): A Television Licence is granted under section 143 of the Broadcasting Act 2009 to a person to keep and have possession of a television set in a premises or specified place in the State. In accordance with the television licence regulations made under Section 144 of the 2009 Act, every television licence issued is valid for a twelve month period. The timing of the commencement of this period varies depending on whether the licence issued is new or a renewal of a previous licence.

Every new licence comes into force on the day on which it was granted and continues in force until the end of the eleventh month after the month in which it was granted.

A licence, granted by way of renewal of a previous licence, comes into force at whichever of the following times is the later, the expiration of the previous licence or the grant of the renewal licence. This licence continues in force from the time at which it commences until the end of one year from the expiration of the previous licence.

Question No. 575 answered with Question No. 573.

Medical Waste Disposal

576. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the proposed introduction of a waste compensation scheme for persons that need to dispose of medical related domestic waste such as incontinence pads; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29266/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Since mid-2017, a range of charging options have been operated, which encourage householders to reduce and separate their waste, and provides flexibility to waste collectors to develop various service-price offerings that suit different household circumstances. Manda-

tory per kilogramme ‘pay by weight’ charging was not introduced. A Price Monitoring Group (PMG) was established in mid-2017 to monitor the on-going cost of residential waste collection to homeowners across Ireland as the ‘flat-rate structure’ was being phased out. While fluctuations in prices and service offerings have been observed, the overall trend has been relative price stability. My Department has engaged with relevant stakeholders, including representative organisations and public bodies, in an effort to see how best to provide a financial support to persons with long-term incontinence with respect to the disposal of medical incontinence wear.

Notwithstanding the complex issues at play, which are understandable given the sensitive nature of the medical data in question, I would like assure the Deputy that I continue to be committed to addressing this issue.

Broadband Service Provision

577. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to extend high speed fibre broadband to a household (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29330/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Every home, farm, school and business in Ireland will have access to high speed broadband – no matter where they are located – following the Government’s decision to approve the appointment of a preferred bidder to the National Broadband Plan. Under this plan, Ireland will become one of the first countries in the world to ensure that those in rural areas have the same digital opportunities as those in urban areas.

The premises referenced by the Deputy is in the AMBER area on the National Broadband Plan (NBP) High Speed Broadband Map, which is available on my Department’s website at www.broadband.gov.ie.

The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP.

This intervention is the subject of the procurement process to engage a company to build, operate and maintain the NBP State intervention network. I recently brought a recommendation to Government to confer Preferred Bidder status on Granahan McCourt, the remaining bidder in the NBP procurement process and Government agreed to this.

The Government Decision of 7 May 2019 means that it is intended to award the State Intervention contract to the Bidder. This award is subject to contract close, including finalisation of financial and legal documents. Deployment of the NBP State Intervention network will commence shortly after that.

The Bidder has indicated that the NBP State intervention will take an estimated 7 years from the beginning of deployment.

In the first year of this roll out, the Bidder will deploy approximately 300 Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) across all counties. It is anticipated that between 7 and 23 BCPs will be deployed in each county.

BCPs will provide a community based high speed broadband service, enhancing online participation and allowing for the establishment of digital work hubs in these locations. A deployment plan will be made available by the Bidder once the contract is signed.

The Bidder is aiming to pass 133,000 premises by end of the second year of the overall deployment, with 70-100,000 passed each year thereafter until roll out is completed.

Departmental Advertising Expenditure

578. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount spent on digital marketing in each of the past eight years; the items on which funds were spent; the criteria by which target audiences were selected; the amount of the digital spend targeted here; the amount targeted abroad; the amount that related to private companies; the amount that related to policy initiatives; and the purpose of the digital advertisements. [29387/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information sought is outlined in the following table and relates to the period after the establishment of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment in 2016.

-	Type of advice/ campaign	Company engaged	Year	Cost
	Trading Online Voucher (TOV) Awareness	Digital Newspaper Advertise- ment	2016	€3,075
				The target audience was Irish Independent readers with all expenditure targeted in Ireland and related to a policy initiative.
	TOV Awareness	Facebook and Google Adwords	2018	€4,743
				Facebook - targeted at small business owners and those interested in e-commerce. Google Adwords – keywords associated with e-commerce and growing your business online and small business grants. All expenditure was targeted in Ireland and related to a policy initiative.
	TOV Awareness	Google Ad- words	2018	€2,649
				Keywords associated with e-commerce and growing your business online and small business grants. All expenditure was targeted in Ireland and related to a policy initiative.

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-	Type of advice/ campaign	Company engaged	Year	Cost
	Regional Gathering Athlone	Facebook	2018	€560
	Regional Gathering Tralee	Facebook	2018	€185
	Regional Gathering Tralee	Facebook	2018	€349
	Tidy Towns Awards	Facebook	2019	€528
				Audiences were selected by locality and related interests. All of the spend was targeted to audiences in Ireland with €1094 spent for the Regional Gatherings -a Government initiative to attract a local audience to attend locally held events. Tidy Towns – to advertise and attract entrants to enter DCCAE Tidy Towns Special Awards.
	ObSERVE Promotion	Facebook	2018	€369
				Promotion of the programme during the launch of the final reports & data being made available to the public. Targeted Audiences were selected on the following: location in Ireland; 3rd Level Education; industries or interest groups who may have an interest in Biodiversity data. Relates to a policy Initiative.
Broad-casting	Regulating Harmful Content	Facebook	2019	€301
Broad-casting	Regulating Harmful Content	Twitter	2019	€307

-	Type of advice/ campaign	Company engaged	Year	Cost
				Public consultation on the regulation of harmful online content and the implementation of the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive. All spend was targeted in Ireland and related to a policy initiative. Twitter was targeted at Male & Female; All Ages and those who have previously interacted with DCCAE tweets. Facebook was targeted at Male & Female and 18-65.
	Phasing Out Flat Fees	Facebook / Instagram	2018	€265
	Phasing Out Flat Fees	Focus Advertising in respect of advertising campaign on Twitter, Facebook & Instagram	2018	€12,300
				The spend was in support of a policy initiative to phase out flat rate fees and encourage greater segregation of waste. The target audience was anyone with a household bin. All spend was targeted in Ireland.
	Ploughing Championships	Facebook/ Instagram	2018	€369

-	Type of advice/ campaign	Company engaged	Year	Cost
				The spend was targeted in Ireland, Northern Ireland, UK (excluding urban zones) Male & Female; 18-65 and the following areas: Dairy farming Agricultural machinery, Local food, Rural tourism, Sustainable development, Poultry farming, Agricultural show, Local news, Community development, Farm, Tillage, Agriculture or Rural development, Farming, Fishing and Forestry, Community issues, Tidy Towns (Ireland), Sustainable living, Local Business, Online Home Business, Sustainable energy, Rural development or Environmentalism, Small business owners.

National Broadband Plan

579. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 210 of 12 June 2019, the fees paid to a company (details supplied) since 2015 regarding the National Broadband Plan; the companies, advisers and consultants engaged on the plan over the period; the fees paid to each to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29421/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment(Deputy Richard Bruton): The overall NBP procurement process is supported by a specialist team including external expertise and advisors. These include a range of national and international experts with commercial, economic, environmental, financial, insurance, legal, procurement, state aid, tax and technical expertise and experience. This includes KPMG who were appointed by my Department to provide specialist advice and services in relation to the NBP following a competitive tender process in 2015.

KPMG continues to provide advice and services to my Department in relation to the NBP. This include specialist commercial and financial advice; review of commercial operator plans, the procurement process and supporting documents, and preparation of commercial/financial provisions of the NBP Contract.

With reference to the Deputy's question on companies, advisers and consultants, the details of fees paid by my Department in each year from 2015 to 2019 in relation to the NBP are set out in the following table. The table sets out in tabular form the fees paid to each since 2015.

Total Fees

Total fees from 2015 to 2019 on advisory services €24,744,244.05 (incl VAT).

Year	Payments
2015	€2,870,430.16
2016	€2,306,365.91
2017	€9,914,150.32
2018	€8,227,358.43
2019	€1,425,939.68
TOTAL	€24,744,244.5

Departmental Expenditure

580. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the costs paid to companies (details supplied) for projects each was engaged for by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason each was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29438/19]

581. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the costs paid to a company (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason it was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29547/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 580 and 581 together.

My Department administers a very diverse, complex and technical brief across critical and strategic sectors of the Irish economy. The technical, commercial, legal complexity and evolving nature of sectors with which the Department deals at times requires access to external professional expertise to assist in discharging its functions. In procuring these specialised services, my Department always seeks to ensure value for money and that these services contribute to project delivery and informed, robust and evidence based policy making.

Details of costs paid to the specific companies referred to for services provided to my Department in each year from 2015 to date in 2019 are set out in the following table.

Mazers, A&L Goodbody and Davy were not engaged by my Department in the period concerned.

Name of Company	Reason for engagement	2015	2016	2017	2018	Costs incurred each year
						2019 (to date)
KPMG	Study of the wider economic costs and benefits of potential extensions of the Irish natural gas network	-	-	-	€208,879	-

Name of Company	Reason for engagement					Costs incurred each year
KPMG	Specialist support - National Broadband Plan	€729,831	€1,098,615	€4,777,775	€4,726,924	€778,907
PWC	Specialist support - National Broadband Plan	€1,040,440	€143,145	€759,927	€467,508	-
Deloitte	Specialist support - National Broadband Plan	-	€5,412	€16,236	€52,767	€8,456
Arthur Cox	Legal Advice on Shell's Divestment from Corrib Gas Field	-	-	-	€124,608	€4,142
Arthur Cox	Legal Fees re Corrib Consent Process	€359,376	-	€39,276	€7,334	-
Deloitte	Support on National Cyber Security Strategy	-	-	-	-	€7,804

Air Pollution

582. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the steps being taken to mitigate air pollution along the M50 corridor; and the steps being taken to mitigate significant noise pollution in residential areas between junctions ten and thirteen of the M50. [29589/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Recent scientific evidence indicates that air pollution is more damaging at lower concentrations than was previously understood. In relation to pollution from traffic sources, the pollutant of greatest concern is Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂). A report from the Environmental Protection Agency, released this week, indicates areas around certain heavily trafficked roads in the Dublin area, including the M50, may have higher levels of NO₂ than previously indicated. The report indicates that away from busy roads, levels of NO₂ drop significantly and are well beneath the recommended EU limits in many residential areas. Around the M50, the highest

concentrations are within 10 metres of the motorway edge, with levels falling to background levels at a distance of 50 to 75 metres.

Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) is an air pollutant associated with urban areas, strongly linked with traffic emissions and which is known to have detrimental impacts on human health. Diesel vehicles have historically far higher nitrogen dioxide emissions than other combustion engines, especially for older vehicles.

This report underlines the need to implement the Climate Action Plan. The Plan includes a number of actions which will have a significant impact on reducing emissions and improving air quality, including targets for electric vehicle numbers. This work will complement the work already underway in developing a Clean Air Strategy which will provide an overarching policy framework within which clean air policies can be formulated and given effect in a manner consistent with national, EU and international policy considerations and priorities. The Clean Air Strategy will address priority air pollutants in Ireland, including vehicle emissions, in an integrated manner. I intend to publish the Strategy in the coming months.

The European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018 provide a common framework to avoid, prevent or reduce, the harmful effects of exposure to environmental noise, including noise emitted by means of road, rail and air traffic.

The Regulations set out a two-stage process for addressing environmental noise. Firstly, noise must be assessed through the preparation of strategic noise maps for areas and infrastructure falling within defined criteria, such as large agglomerations, major roads, railways and airports. Secondly, based on the results of the mapping process, the Regulations require the preparation of noise action plans for each area concerned. The Regulations provide for strategic noise maps and action plans to be made available to the general public. The fundamental objective of action plans is the prevention and reduction of environmental noise.

Primary responsibility for both noise mapping and action planning is assigned to Local Authorities. The Regulations designate the Environmental Protection Agency as the National Authority for the purposes of the Regulations. The Agency's role includes supervisory, advisory and coordination functions in relation to both noise mapping and action planning, as well as reporting requirements for the purpose of the Directive.

Further information on strategic noise maps and action plans is available at the following links:

South Dublin County Council

<https://www.sdcc.ie/en/services/business/permits-and-licensing/noise/noise.html>

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council

<https://www.dlrcoco.ie/en/environment/environmental-health/environmental-noise>

EPA

<https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

Prospecting Licences

583. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a prospecting or mining licence will be granted to a person (details supplied);

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29591/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Canney): In light of current legal proceedings, I am not at liberty to discuss this matter further than my previous replies to Questions Nos. 551, 203 and 1204. This applies to both Prospecting Licence areas (PLA areas 3891 and 3931).

National Broadband Plan Implementation

584. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the roll out of the national broadband plan at a location (details supplied); if broadband will be connected in view of the number of houses in the area that have already been connected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29634/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Every home, farm, school and business in Ireland will have access to high speed broadband – no matter where they are located – following the Government’s decision to approve the appointment of a preferred bidder to the National Broadband Plan. Under this plan, Ireland will become one of the first countries in the world to ensure that those in rural areas have the same digital opportunities as those in urban areas. The school referenced by the Deputy is in the AMBER area on the National Broadband Plan (NBP) High Speed Broadband Map, which is available on my Department’s website at www.broadband.gov.ie.

The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP.

The State led intervention is the subject of the procurement process to engage a company to build, operate and maintain the NBP State intervention network. I recently brought a recommendation to Government to confer Preferred Bidder status on Granahan McCourt, the remaining bidder in the NBP procurement process and Government agreed to this.

The Government Decision of 7 May 2019 means that it is intended to award the State Intervention contract to the Bidder. This award is subject to contract close, including finalisation of financial and legal documents. Deployment of the NBP State Intervention network will commence shortly after that.

The Bidder has indicated that the NBP State intervention will take an estimated 7 years from the beginning of deployment

In the first year of this roll out, the Bidder will deploy approximately 300 Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) across all counties. It is anticipated that between 7 and 23 BCPs will be deployed in each county. BCPs will provide a community based high speed broadband service, enhancing online participation and allowing for the establishment of digital work hubs in these locations.

A deployment plan will be made available by the bidder once the contract is signed. The Bidder is aiming to pass 133,000 premises by end of the second year of the overall deployment, with 70-100,000 passed each year thereafter until roll out is completed.

The Deputy makes reference to houses in the area that have been connected. I note that these premises are likely part of eir’s rural deployment of high speed broadband. This deployment is part of eir’s commercial roll out of high speed broadband to 300,000 predominantly rural premises, in line with a Commitment Agreement signed with my Department in April 2017.

eir's rural investment in high speed broadband is an entirely commercial undertaking, and not part of the planned State Intervention network. Although the deployment is monitored under the terms of the Commitment Agreement, it is not funded by the State and it is not planned, designed or directed by my Department in any capacity.

Decisions made by private telecommunication operators relating to the roll out and siting of infrastructure to provide high speed broadband services throughout Ireland are undertaken on a commercial basis. I have no statutory role or function in such commercial decisions of private operators, and therefore cannot direct operators regarding infrastructure installation or delivery of services.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

585. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to ensure broadband is provided to a property (details supplied) through the roll out by Eir; and the timeframe for same. [29704/19]

586. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to ensure broadband is provided to a property (details supplied) through the roll out by Eir; and the timeframe for same. [29706/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 585 and 586 together.

Both premises referenced by the Deputy are in the LIGHT 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 LIGHT BLUE areas are where eir is in the process of deploying high speed broadband to 300,000 premises on a commercial basis. This means that both premises will receive access to a high speed broadband service through eir's current deployment.

Under a Commitment Agreement signed with my Department in April 2017, eir is in the process of passing 300,000 predominantly rural homes with high speed broadband. According to data for Q1 2019 the company has passed almost 250,000 premises nationwide as part of its ongoing deployment. According to information provided by eir to my Department, it plans to complete the vast majority of the deployment by the mid-year completion target with the remaining premises to be completed soon afterwards.

Information on eir's rural deployment is available on that company's website, <http://fibre-rollout.ie/Eircode-lookup/>. A copy of the Commitment Agreement is available on my Department's website, www.dccae.gov.ie.

Waste Management

587. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will address a matter regarding the recycling and reuse of rubble (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29731/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Article 28 of the European Communities (Waste Directive) Regulations, S.I. No. 126 of 2011, sets out the grounds by which a material which is recovered or recycled from waste, such as rubble or crushed concrete, can be deemed to be no longer a waste. As the designated

competent authority, decisions regarding applications for end-of-waste status are the responsibility of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In June 2018, my Department established a Construction Waste Resource Group comprising key Construction and Demolition sector and Waste sector stakeholders, including policy, regulatory and industry representatives to provide a valuable platform to discuss and monitor construction and demolition (C&D) waste issues arising, including the capacity of the sector to manage C&D waste.

The issue of end-of-waste status for certain materials, including crushed concrete, has been discussed at each of the three meetings of this Resource Group, including the most recent meeting which took place on 19 June 2019. My officials, in conjunction with representatives of the EPA, have reminded those present that end-of-waste decisions can only be made once industry has submitted comprehensive applications to the EPA and satisfied the EPA that a decision to grant end-of waste status is appropriate. End of waste decisions have been made when the application and supporting materials allows for positive decisions to be made. If the industry wish to co-ordinate a national application for end of waste status for crushed concrete they are welcome to do so.

Broadband Service Provision

588. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the provision of e-fibre broadband to a location (details supplied) which is subject to the provision of the State led intervention under the National Broadband Plan; when e-fibre roll out is envisaged at the location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29754/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Every home, farm, school and business in Ireland will have access to high speed broadband – no matter where they are located – following the Government’s decision to approve the appointment of a preferred bidder to the National Broadband Plan. Under this plan, Ireland will become one of the first countries in the world to ensure that those in rural areas have the same digital opportunities as those in urban areas. The premises referenced by the Deputy is in the AMBER area on the National Broadband Plan (NBP) High Speed Broadband Map, which is available on my Department’s website at www.broadband.gov.ie .

The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP.

This intervention is the subject of the procurement process to engage a company to build, operate and maintain the NBP State intervention network. I recently brought a recommendation to Government to confer Preferred Bidder status on Granahan McCourt, the remaining bidder in the NBP procurement process and Government agreed to this.

The Government Decision of 7 May 2019 means that it is intended to award the State Intervention contract to the Bidder. This award is subject to contract close, including finalisation of financial and legal documents. Deployment of the NBP State Intervention network will commence shortly after that.

The Bidder has indicated that the NBP State intervention will take an estimated 7 years from the beginning of deployment

In the first year of this roll out, the Bidder will deploy approximately 300 Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) across all counties. It is anticipated that between 7 and 23 BCPs will be deployed in each county.

BCPs will provide a community based high speed broadband service, enhancing online participation and allowing for the establishment of digital work hubs in these locations. A deployment plan will be made available by the Bidder once the contract is signed.

The Bidder is aiming to pass 133,000 premises by end of the second year of the overall deployment, with 70-100,000 passed each year thereafter until roll out is completed.

Waste Management

589. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of householders in each local authority not signed up to a waste service provider; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29805/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Local authorities do not record or register the number of households signed up or not signed up to a residential waste collection service. Such a record would not reflect the households who do not have a collection service available or who arrange the disposal of their waste at a civic amenity site and home compost. However, a report prepared by the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) in September 2018 on the household waste collection industry provided an initial estimate that suggested a initial non-participation rate of 23% of households in relation to waste collection services.

Departmental Expenditure

590. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the years 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by inquiry, tribunal or commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29829/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information requested is currently being compiled. I will forward this information to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Radiation Monitoring Systems

591. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on the potential health impacts of the roll out of 5G; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29853/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): As Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, I have policy responsibility for matters pertaining to public exposure to non-ionising radiation. Irish policy in this area is informed by a substantial volume of internationally recognised scientific research and evidence. This includes the guidelines set down by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection, ICNIRP. These guidelines provide scientifically-based exposure limits that are applicable to both public and occupational exposure from electromagnetic fields (EMF), including 5G. ICNIRP guidelines apply up to a frequency of 300 gigahertz (GHz), well above the maximum frequencies being considered for 5G. ComReg, the independent telecoms regulatory authority, ensures that licensed mobile operators comply with their licence conditions and do not exceed ICNIRP guidelines.

In 2015, the Irish Government commissioned a report by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment of the Netherlands (RIVM). This was published in 2016 and is entitled “*Electromagnetic Fields in the Irish Context*”. It examined and synthesised existing peer-reviewed research into clear findings, with particular focus on the potential health effects of electric and magnetic fields arising from high voltage power lines, and electromagnetic fields from base stations for mobile communication. This report reaffirms the overall conclusion of an earlier 2007 report, “*Health Effects of Electromagnetic Fields*”, that there is insufficient evidence to establish a causal relationship between exposure to low-frequency electromagnetic fields and adverse health effects.

This is an area that is kept under review, and in this regard, I have recently assigned a new statutory function to the Environmental Protection Agency to provide general information to the public on matters pertaining to public exposure to non-ionising radiation, to monitor international scientific developments and provide independent advice to my Department in this area.

Prospecting Licences

592. **Deputy Noel Greally** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of an application for a prospecting licence by a company (details supplied) that want to prospect for base metals in County Galway; his plans to grant the licence; if so, the timeframe for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29887/19]

593. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the reason he plans to issue a licence to prospect for minerals in townlands in the barony of Ballinahinch, Connemara, County Galway in view of the possible damage mining in the area would do to the environment and in further view of the fact that a major part of the area is designated as Natura 2000 sites; the consultations he has had with the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in relation to the planned prospecting licence in view of the high natural heritage value of the area; the consultations he has had with the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in relation to the matter in view of the possible effect of the licence on the local tourist industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29972/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Canney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 592 and 593 together.

A Prospecting Licence application from MOAG Copper Gold Resources has been received. The application requests consent to prospect in a number of townlands in County Galway. This application was published in the Connacht Tribune on 6 June 2019 and has been open for consultation since then.

A Prospecting Licence was held for this area between 2006 and 2018.

A Prospecting Licence (PL) relates to prospecting only and does not confer any permission to mine.

In the event that an economically viable mineral deposit is discovered, a completely new process is required in advance of permission being granted to mine. A State Mining Facility is only granted once Planning Permission has been obtained from the Local Authority (incorporating full environmental impact assessment) and an Integrated Pollution Control Licence (IPC) has been received from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

All prospecting activities proposed to be undertaken under a Prospecting Licence are subject to environmental screening by my Department (including screening for Appropriate As-

assessment and, in the case of drilling, Environmental Impact Assessment). Connemara National Park is more than 10 kilometres from the proposed licence area, and there is long standing policy in place that prohibits prospecting in a National Park.

There has been no specific consultation with the Minister for Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht or the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in relation to this application. However, should any future licensee propose to undertake prospecting activities within a designated Natura 2000 site, the normal protocol is for the Department to seek observations from the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

My Department is not in receipt of an application to mine in Connemara, Co Galway.

Climate Change Policy

594. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics; the public bodies and agencies under his remit to which he has issued an instruction to cease the purchase and use of single-use plastics; when the instruction issued; the bodies which have confirmed that they no longer purchase and use single-use plastics, respectively; the bodies which have not provided such confirmation to date; when they will confirm; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29980/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): On 3 January 2019, the Government decided that Government Departments and public bodies will show leadership in reducing generation of single use plastics and waste. In line with that Decision, my Department has ceased purchasing single-use plastic beverage cups, cutlery and drinking straws. On 19 February 2019, my Department wrote to each of the 17 public bodies (listed below) under its aegis advising of the Government Decision and their obligations arising from this. This includes a requirement to provide a statement to me regarding the steps being taken to minimise waste and maximise recycling by 30 November 2019.

Since January, my Department has been very active in providing support materials and workshops to Government Departments and the wider public sector to enable them to comply with the decision. Feedback has been extremely positive and I am very encouraged by the interest and initiative being shown across the public service for this activity.

Action 140 of the Climate Action Plan 2019 commits Government to maintaining leadership in taking responsibility for own resource consumption, particularly single use plastics, energy waste and water. Under that Action, Government Departments must publish a Resource Efficiency Action Plan by end September and Public Bodies must report on sustainability measures by end of the year. In 2020, my Department is committed to extending this initiative further.

- Eirgrid;
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU);
- An Post;
- Broadcasting Authority of Ireland;
- Bórd na Móna
- Digital Hub Development Agency;

- Environmental Protection Agency;
- ESB;
- Inland Fisheries Ireland;
- Irish National Petroleum Agency;
- Loughs Agency;
- National Oil Reserves Agency (NORA);
- RTÉ;
- Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland (SEAI);
- TG4;
- ComReg;
- Mining Board.

Fáilte Ireland Staff

595. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a person working for Fáilte Ireland can work beyond pension age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29109/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I have no direct role in the management of staffing resources within Fáilte Ireland. This is a matter for the board and management of Fáilte Ireland. Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy's question to the agency for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Road Projects Status

596. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of progress on the acquisition of land on the Hearse Road, Donabate, County Dublin (details supplied); the timeline for delivery of the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29669/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads (RLR) is the statutory responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. In this case the responsible local authority is Fingal County Council.

Works on RLR, including footpaths, are funded from local authorities' own resources supplemented by State road grants, where applicable. Arising from the introduction of the local property tax and its retention by local authorities, Fingal County Council has become self-funding for roads under the main road grant categories.

Accordingly, I have no information on the status of progress on the acquisition of land for the works referred to by the Deputy.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

597. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be considered for a school (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29765/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The 2018 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on Friday 19th October last. By that deadline, a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of €162m in funding.

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

619 equipment only applications were assessed next and 466 allocations with a value of €9.8m were announced in May.

Work is now underway in assessing the remaining applications for capital works, including an application from the school and organisation referred to by the Deputy. It should be noted that under the terms and conditions of the SCP, elements of projects that have already commenced are not eligible for funding but applicants may complete projects on a phased basis.

For the first time applicants who submitted incorrect documentation under this round are being given the opportunity to correct their application during the assessment period and my officials will be in touch with applicants if clarification is required. While there will be no undue delay in completing the assessment process, in view of the opportunity to correct documentation, the record number of applications received and the detailed information contained in each application, it is likely to take a number of months to have all applications assessed. Accordingly, I expect that it will be towards the end of the third quarter before the full set of allocations under this current round of the programme are announced.

Road Safety

598. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the regulations or national guidelines being used for compliance with road safety issues in the construction of the Sallins bypass; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29074/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The R407 Sallins Bypass is amongst a number of regional and local road schemes identified to be progressed in Project Ireland 2040. The construction contract was awarded by Kildare County Council to the successful contractor, SIAC Colas JV, in Q4 2017.

The Contractor, as Project Supervisor for the Construction Stage, is responsible for compliance with national standards and guidelines used for compliance with road safety issues. The most relevant of these in this case is the Traffic Signs Manual as published by my Department. This Manual sets out the type of traffic signs which should be used on public roads. In particular chapter 8 of the Manual identifies the type of traffic signs which should be used where construction works are undertaken on public roads.

Noise Pollution Legislation

599. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the lacuna in legislation regarding transport noise pollution; the measures he will introduce to mitigate noise pollution from aircraft, road vehicles and other forms of transport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29132/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Deputy will be aware that legislation exists, both EU and domestic, that limits the noise levels that can be emitted from vehicles.

With regard to Aircraft Noise, the Aircraft Noise (Dublin Airport) Regulation Act 2019 was signed into law in May this year. This Act designates Fingal County Council as the Competent Authority (aircraft noise regulator) tasked with assessing the noise situation at Dublin Airport and to ensure that measures are put in place to address any noise problem caused by aircraft. This assessment process will ensure the sustainable development of Dublin Airport while mitigating the impact of aircraft noise on local residents and businesses. Dublin is the only airport in the State that reaches the volume of civil aircraft movements to warrant the introduction of such a noise regulator.

The European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018 transpose Directive 2002/49/EC on the assessment and management of environmental noise, as amended by Directive (EU) 2015/996. Those Regulations provide for the implementation in Ireland of a common approach within the European Union intended to avoid, prevent or reduce on a prioritised basis the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to exposure to environmental noise. It also designates the noise mapping and action planning bodies with supervisory oversight from the Environmental Protection Agency.

This legislation requires Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and local authorities to undertake strategic noise mapping every five years for all major roads carrying in excess of 8,250 annual average daily traffic (AADT).

In terms of vehicle manufacturing (type approval) standards, the legislation pertaining to new vehicle manufacturing standards in the EU is Regulation (EU) No. 540/2014. This regulation establishes administrative and technical requirements for new vehicles with regard to their sound level and replacement of silencing systems. The regulation became effective from 1 July 2016.

Cycling Policy

600. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he is preparing a new national cycle policy framework in view of the fact that the current policy finishes in 2020; if there will be consultation with various interests in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29134/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy may be aware, in the coming weeks and in line with a Programme for a Partnership Government commitment, I will seek the public's views on public transport and active travel policy. This review will allow all stakeholders to reflect on what has been achieved, what remains to be done and how our policy frameworks can support the realisation of a more sustainable transport system.

The review is premised on the concept of integrated and sustainable transport, in keeping with the objectives of Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future which formed the overarching policy backdrop to the development of the National Cycling Policy Framework. As part

of the overall review therefore, analysis of the implementation status of the National Cycling Policy Framework's actions will be published as part of the overall review.

Last year, as part of this review I hosted a Round-Table Dialogue on Public Transport Policy in the Mansion House at which representatives from a broad spectrum of interest groups in the wider public and sustainable transport sector attended, including those representing cyclists.

I look forward to engagement by the general public and all stakeholders with the forthcoming consultation process as we look to review and refresh our policy frameworks in these important areas of public policy.

Sports Capital Programme Administration

601. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the date the latest round of sports capital grants will be announced. [29157/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The 2018 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on Friday 19th October last. By that deadline, a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of €162m in funding.

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

619 equipment only applications were assessed next and 466 allocations with a value of €9.8m were announced in May.

Work is now underway in assessing the remaining applications for capital works.

For the first time applicants who submitted incorrect documentation under this round are being given the opportunity to correct their application during the assessment period. While there will be no undue delay in completing the assessment process, in view of the opportunity to correct documentation, the record number of applications received and the detailed information contained in each application, it is likely to take a number of months to have all applications assessed. Accordingly, I expect that it may be the third quarter of this year before the full set of allocations under this current round of the programme are announced.

As soon as allocations have been made, my Department will carry out a review of all aspects of the 2018 round of the programme to include any possible improvements for the future. This review will include consideration of the timing and scale of the next round but I fully expect that the SCP will again be open for new applications before the end of this year.

Public Bike Schemes

602. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the locations that will be confirmed for the expansion of the public bike scheme in Cork city. [29158/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to cycle and public transport infrastructure. The administration and expansion of the public bike

scheme in the regional cities is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA).

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

Road Toll Data

603. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount collected in road tolls in the past two years to date, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29177/19]

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 operation and management of individual national roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Therefore, matters relating to the day to day operations regarding national roads, including toll roads and the establishment of a system of tolls, are within the remit of TII. More specifically, the statutory power to levy tolls, to make toll bye-laws and to enter into agreements with private investors are vested in TII under Part V of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended).

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

Road Tolls

604. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of State subvention paid to all road toll operators in the past two years to date; if subvention for road tolls is being reviewed in the context of the Climate Action Plan 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29178/19]

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 operation and management of individual national roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Therefore, matters relating to the day to day operations regarding national roads, including toll roads and the establishment of a system of tolls, are within the remit of TII. More specifically, the statutory power to levy tolls, to make toll bye-laws and to enter into agreements with private investors are vested in TII under Part V of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended).

The contracts for the privately-operated toll schemes are commercial agreements between TII and the Public Private Partnership (PPP) concessionaires concerned.

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

Road Network

605. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if Galway County Council or Transport Infrastructure Ireland has ownership of the road connecting the motorway to the local road at a site (details supplied); if the public has a right of way to the road as per the Roads Act 1993; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29198/19]

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, including the procurement and compulsory purchase of lands, in respect of individual national roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

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

Road Projects Expenditure

606. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the compensation paid to landowners to date for the construction of the N63 between Annagh Hill and Abbeyknockmoy; the timeline for the remainder of payments due; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29199/19]

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, construction and associated compulsory purchase of lands of individual national roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

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

Road Projects Expenditure

607. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the mechanism used to calculate the price paid to landowners for the construction of national roads when the lands are acquired through a compulsory purchase order; the reason there is a discrepancy for such payments nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29200/19]

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, construction and associated compulsory purchase of lands for individual national roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

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

Roads Maintenance

608. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the person or body responsible for the maintenance of the N63 at Abbeyknockmoy, County Galway, that is, roadside fencing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29201/19]

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, operation and maintenance of individual national roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

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

Road Projects Status

609. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will request from Transport Infrastructure Ireland the status of progress and the delivery date for the next stage of the M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy motorway scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29208/19]

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 question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Transport Infrastructure Provision

610. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will report on the capital plan published in September 2015 on the outlined proposed transport investment priorities to 2022; the status of each project; if there are delays in particular projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29209/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, the Capital Plan 2016-2021 to which he refers has been superseded by Project Ireland 2040.

Project Ireland 2040 provides indicative allocations over the next ten years for a range of public transport related projects and programmes including those referred to by the Deputy.

As noted in Project Ireland 2040 individual projects and programmes remain subject to compliance with the Public Spending Code, including its requirements in relation to appraisal and Sanctioning Authority approval points.

Details regarding indicative allocations, current status and expected completion dates where applicable are published on the Project Ireland 2040 Tracker as published by the Department for Public Expenditure and Reform and available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6db7c4-investment-projects-and-programmes-tracker/>

Road Network

611. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of public private partnerships, PPPs, in the capital programme involving road networks; the progress regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29210/19]

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, including the PPP projects, is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

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

Road Projects Status

612. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will report on large capital projects planned in conjunction with Transport Infrastructure Ireland for Cork city and county (details supplied); the progress of each project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29211/19]

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 question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days. *Questions Nos. 613 and 614 answered with Question No. 103.*

Railway Stations

615. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on moving the existing train station in Waterford to the North Quays; if the move will be supported as part of the redevelopment of the quays; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29228/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I am aware the Waterford North Quays SDZ was approved in 2018 and that Project Ireland 2040 recognises that redevelopment of the North Quays is a key growth enabler for this important city.

The Waterford North Quays SDZ seeks to support the sustainable growth of the city and build a city of scale in line with the objectives of Project Ireland 2040 which envisages the city's population expanding to approximately 85,000 by 2040. The approved SDZ comprises different elements and is designed to fully harness the city's riverfront potential as a focus for the development of a new urban area. As part of the redevelopment and regeneration of the area, there is a proposal to relocate the train station from its current location to the North Quays SDZ site.

In order to support National Strategic Objective 1: Compact Growth, Government estab-

lished an Urban Regeneration and Development Fund which is designed to support the the co-development of Project Ireland 2040's recognised key growth enablers for the cities. Administration of the Fund is a matter for the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

Public Transport Provision

616. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the additional bus and rail routes planned and the increased spend in public transport for Waterford city and county envisaged to meet climate change targets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29229/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Deputy will be aware that the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Waterford City and County Council will this year begin work on a new Waterford Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy.

Development of the Strategy will be similar to the work already done in Galway and underway in Cork and will allow for consideration of the area's transport needs over a 20 year period.

I very much welcome the development of this new Strategy which will allow us build upon the improvements already made to the city's public transport network, such as the launch earlier this year of a much improved bus network which has resulted in impressive increases in bus usage in the city.

Finalisation of the Strategy will provide the strategic backdrop to the increased levels of investment that are now being made available to support the further development of both active travel and public transport infrastructure. I look forward to the Deputy engaging with the consultation process which will take place as the new Strategy is being developed.

Greenways Development

617. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the differing modes of transport that are permitted to use greenways. [29281/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Greenways are multi-functional and designed for use by all types of bicycles. They must also be designed to be as accessible as possible for those with mobility issues and users of Wheelchairs and Mobility vehicles. It is also important to remember that many users of Greenways are pedestrians and thus design must also accommodate buggy and pram users.

The decision on the modes of transport permitted to use a particular Greenway, or sections thereof, is ultimately a decision made by the Local Authority or State Agency in charge of that Greenway. However, as is stated in my Department's Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways, there may be some short sections of Greenways where some motorized vehicles, such as cars and tractors, may use the Greenway. Generally this tends to be on discrete sections where houses have been built or where access to farmland is required and would entail a very low number of vehicular journeys per day, these movements would also tend to be at a low speed.

Public Transport Fares

618. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which a person can claim a refund for a cash overpayment for a fare on a bus operated by a company (details supplied); if the company refunds overpayments to either the customer or the NTA; the way in which cash fare overpayments are used; the amount collected in cash fare overpayments since the company began operating services here to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29341/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport.

The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Taxi Regulations

619. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if proposals to operate a service (details supplied) in the taxi industry that uses mobile apps and shared ridership has been examined by the National Transport Authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29358/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the *Taxi Regulation Act 2013*.

I have referred your question to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days

Sports Capital Programme Applications

620. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of an application for funding under the sports capital programme by a school and a club (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29374/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The 2018 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on Friday 19th October last. By that deadline, a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of €162m in funding.

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

619 equipment only applications were assessed next and 466 allocations with a value of €9.8m were announced in May.

Work is now underway in assessing the remaining applications for capital works, including an application from the school and organisation referred to by the Deputy.

For the first time applicants who submitted incorrect documentation under this round are

being given the opportunity to correct their application during the assessment period. While there will be no undue delay in completing the assessment process, in view of the opportunity to correct documentation, the record number of applications received and the detailed information contained in each application, it is likely to take a number of months to have all applications assessed. Accordingly, I expect that it will be towards the end of the third quarter before the full set of allocations under this current round of the programme are announced.

Departmental Advertising Expenditure

621. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount spent on digital marketing in each of the past eight years; the items on which funds were spent; the criteria by which target audiences were selected; the amount of the digital spend targeted here; the amount targeted abroad; the amount that related to private companies; the amount that related to policy initiatives; and the purpose of the digital advertisements. [29399/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The information requested by the Deputy is currently being collated by my officials and will be forwarded to the Deputy within 10 working days.

Sports Capital Programme Eligibility

622. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which funding can be secured for a facility (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29419/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The 2018 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on Friday 19th October last. By that deadline, a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of €162m in funding.

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

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Work is now underway in assessing the remaining applications for capital works, including the application referred to by the Deputy.

For the first time applicants who submitted incorrect documentation under this round are being given the opportunity to correct their application during the assessment period. While there will be no undue delay in completing the assessment process, in view of the opportunity to correct documentation, the record number of applications received and the detailed information contained in each application, it is likely to take a number of months to have all applications assessed. Accordingly, I expect that it will be towards the end of the third quarter before the full set of allocations under this current round of the programme are announced.

Departmental Expenditure

623. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the costs paid to companies (details supplied) for projects for which each was engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason each was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29451/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department routinely publishes financial information in relation to expenditure and payments.

Details of expenditure on external services made for the years 2015 to 2018 are available on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.dttas.ie/corporate/english/expenditure-external-services>

Details of expenditure to date in 2019 will be available shortly.

Question No. 624 answered with Question No. 103.

Greenways Funding

625. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the full budget for greenways remains to be exhausted; if €500,000 will be provided to facilitate the progressing of the design and planning stage of a project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29469/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): In addition to the recent allocations my Department is also funding from its annual allocation a number of greenways projects which were allocated funding in previous years. Available resources in any given year will depend on the rate of drawdown and the allocation in the annual estimates process. I am aware of the widespread interest across the country in developing Greenways as evidenced by the recent funding call and subject to the allocations in annual estimates process I will explore options for further funding calls over the coming years.

In regard to the project mentioned by the Deputy the most recent funding call was focused on greenways in a position to commence construction in the near future rather than for feasibility studies or design. Unfortunately the project was not therefore not in a position to be funded during this round.

Semi-State Bodies Expenditure

626. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the action he has taken with regard to recent media reports of alleged extravagant expenditure of public funds on credit cards by executives at Dublin Port; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29478/19]

631. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason he is not taking a similar hands-on approach further to the widespread reporting of the alleged gross misuse of taxpayers' money at Dublin Port as previously in a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29483/19]

632. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has absolute confidence in the board and executive of Dublin Port further to media reports of alleged gross misuse of taxpayers' money at the port; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [29484/19]

634. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether there is a need for a public inquiry into the use of credit cards by Dublin Port executives. [29486/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 626, 631, 632 and 634 together.

I want to emphasise that Dublin Port is an independent commercial State company and receives no Exchequer funding.

On foot of the recent media reports I immediately sought a meeting with the port. I can confirm that I have met with representatives from Dublin Port Company including the Chair and the CEO, to discuss the issues in detail.

The port outlined a number of areas of spending where credit cards are used and detailed how this spending is approved in advance at the correct management or board level, in accordance with internal company procedures. The port has stated there is no allegation of wrongdoing made in any report and that the leak of data to the media has been notified to the Data Protection Commissioner.

In addition, the port has engaged external consultants to carry out an independent review of all credit card expenditure and the company's policies and procedures around credit card use. This is to determine whether all expenditure was appropriate and properly authorised. The report is expected to be completed in approximately eight weeks.

Ports Policy

627. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact Dublin Port plans to ban cruise ships in the port from 2020; the analysis his Department has undertaken in terms of loss of tourists and revenue to Dublin as a result; the way in which he can reconcile such action against national objectives in growing tourism to Dublin and all of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29479/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I am of course aware of the decision taken by Dublin Port Company to restrict its cruise shipping capacity from 2021-2023, rather than ban cruise ships, owing to the impact of major construction works on berth availabilities. I am keen where possible to help mitigate any adverse impacts on the cruise tourism industry. With these concerns in mind, I first met with Dublin Port Company on this issue in March, when the Company outlined its capital development plans and rationale for prioritisation in the context of Brexit, as well as the specifics with regard to cruise berths. In my engagements with Dublin Port Company, I have always emphasised the need for it to take account of the broader impact of its commercial decisions. This includes the effect on sectors supporting the cruise tourism industry or serving cruise visitors, not just in Dublin but in other ports and associated regions around Ireland.

I have since held further, positive meetings with key stakeholders, including Dublin Port Company, and representatives of other ports, the tourism agencies and other industry stakeholders. These meetings have assisted the relevant bodies to consider the options available that could help mitigate any potential negative impacts on the cruise industry and Irish tourism during the period of construction work.

Through my wider stakeholder engagements, I have encouraged port and cruise industry stakeholders to take maximum advantage of other options available during the period of construction at Dublin port. While Dublin Port is important in attracting cruise liners to Ireland through Dublin, other benefits can accrue to other ports around our coast. To this end the Port of Cork, Dun Laoghaire Harbour and Belfast Harbour are considering how they can take some of the additional business that may be lost as a result of Dublin Port's infrastructural works.

Fáilte Ireland continues to support the development and promotion of the cruise tourism sector and assists with the visitor welcome at Dublin Port. I understand that they have completed survey research amongst cruise tourism passengers. This analysis has been shared with the economic advisers working on behalf of Dublin Port Company for input into their deliberations in respect of future investment in cruise shipping capacity at the Port. Tourism Ireland is supporting the Port of Cork and the Port of Belfast, to assist them with their programmes overseas, and is actively engaging with Cruise Ireland regarding marketing initiatives that could be pursued jointly overseas.

My officials continue to monitor developments on this matter, together with both tourism agencies. Given these ongoing efforts to disperse business across other ports, it remains to be seen what the ultimate impact the construction work at Dublin Port will have on overall cruise business.

Semi-State Bodies Expenditure

628. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will request Dublin Port to make available details of credit card spending for each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to 30 June 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29480/19]

629. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has requested Dublin Port to provide further details in relation to a matter (details supplied); if not, the reason; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29481/19]

630. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has requested Dublin Port to clarify if the moneys highlighted in recent press reports as credit card expenditure by executives at the port were spent on entertaining public representatives or departmental officials; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29482/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 628 to 630, inclusive, together.

Dublin Port is an independent commercial state company and receives no Exchequer funding.

On foot of recent media reports, I have met with representatives from Dublin Port including the Chair and CEO to discuss matters in detail.

The port has confirmed that policies and procedures are in place for the use of company credit cards. All expenditure is reviewed by the company's internal auditor to ensure compliance with approved procedures and reported to the Audit and Risk Committee.

In the normal course of their work, public representatives and officials, national, international, European and UN delegates have attended official events and meetings at Dublin Port Company. While I note that a considerable amount has been spent on hospitality I cannot comment until further clarification is available.

The port has now engaged external experts to carry out an independent review of credit card expenditure and the company's policies and procedures around same. The report should be completed in approximately eight weeks.

Questions No. 631 and 632 answered with Question No. 626.

Ministerial Meetings

633. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he was the beneficiary of entertainment by way of meals, drinks or other items paid for by Dublin Port since taking office; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29485/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): On 25 June 2018, I launched the Capital Investment Plan for transport, tourism and sport (Linking People and Places) as part of Project Ireland 2040 in Dublin Port. Dublin Port provided refreshments on the day for all participants. Apart from that occasion, I am not the beneficiary of any other entertainment from Dublin Port since I took up Office.

Question No. 634 answered with Question No. 626.

Protected Disclosures Data

635. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has received protected disclosures from current or former staff at Dublin Port; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29487/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department's Head of Internal Audit is notified of allegations/disclosures received which invoke the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 and monitors them to ensure they are processed on a timely basis.

Section 22 of the Act requires a public body to prepare a report setting out the number of protected disclosures made to it in the course of the immediately preceding year and certain other information relating to any such protected disclosures.

The information for 2015 and 2016 is available on the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport Website at the following link.

<http://www.dttas.ie/corporate/english/protected-disclosures>

Details for 2017 are set out in the 2017 Annual Report in the link below.

<http://www.dttas.ie/sites/default/files/publications/corporate/english/annual-report-2017-english/annual-reportbrandedcoverfinalen.pdf>

Details for 2018 will be included in our Annual Report 2018, to be published shortly.

Ports Facilities

636. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the Dublin Port Company has engaged a firm (details

supplied) to issue threats of legal proceedings against a media outlet that wished to cover details of credit card spending of public money by executives at Dublin Port; his views on whether such action is warranted; his further views on the way in which it serves the public interest; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29488/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Dublin Port Company is an independent commercial state company and receives no Exchequer funding . Any legal actions or proceedings taken by Dublin Port are solely a matter for the company and it would be inappropriate for me to make any comment in this regard.

Question No. 637 answered with Question No. 85.

Departmental Expenditure

638. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the costs paid to a company (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason it was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29560/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department routinely publishes financial information in relation to expenditure and payments.

Details of expenditure on external services made for the years 2015 to 2018 are available on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.dttas.ie/corporate/english/expenditure-external-services>

Details of expenditure to date in 2019 will be available shortly.

Cycling Facilities Provision

639. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the measures he has taken to provide secure parking for cyclists in Dublin city centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29587/19]

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 responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, including cycling infrastructure.

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

Road Network

640. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the person or body responsible for the installation of lighting along the off and on-ramps along the M17 and M18 motorway between Tuam and Gort; when the lighting will be installed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29616/19]

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 maintenance, upgrading and improvement of individual national roads, including lighting, is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

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

State Airports

641. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 592 of 2 July 2019, if the decision that Shannon Airport should not receive State funding for capital projects will be reviewed in view of the fact that it does qualify for State support under European Union rules (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29617/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): In my response of 2 July, I outlined that Shannon Airport is a State-owned enterprise with a commercial mandate. It is a matter for Shannon Airport to ensure that it operates within its statutory mandate so that it can meet its capital investments and operational expenditure from its own resources.

I have no plans to change government policy in relation to Shannon Airport.

Driver Test Waiting Lists

642. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if matters (details supplied) relating to driver licences will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29623/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Contrary to the Deputy’s assertion, waiting times for driving tests have in fact reduced significantly across all test centres in recent months. As of the 22 June, not a single test centre in the country has an average waiting time of greater than 10 weeks, with the national average waiting time currently standing at 6.9 weeks. This marked improvement has come about as a result of the recruitment by the Road Safety Authority (RSA) of a large amount of additional driver testers since the beginning of this year.

The Deputy’s follow-on suggestion that a long-term learner permit holder with an accident-free record be automatically entitled to a full licence runs entirely contrary to the principles underpinning our testing and licencing system. A learner who has held multiple consecutive permits will, in most cases, have had sufficient time to develop their driving skills and reach the point where they are ready to take the test. The purpose of the test is to allow learners to demonstrate their ability to drive safely and responsibly under varied and challenging conditions. To award a licence to an individual who has not met this basic passing standard would be a dangerous and retrograde step and not one my Department is prepared to entertain.

Rail Network

643. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status

of the upgrading of the northern commuter line; the details of the purchase of additional trains and carriages; the long-term plans for the DART expansion on the route; the details of the funding sign off; the timeline for delivery in view of the already over congested trains at peak times and continuing population growth; the plans being put in place in the interim to address the overcrowding at peak times; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29672/19]

673. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to take to augment the commuter rail services involving the towns of Sallins, Kilcock, Maynooth, Celbridge and Lexlip, County Kildare, with particular reference to ensuring a service adequate to meet the growing needs of commuters including provision of extra trains and or extra carriages on the existing network; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30054/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 643 and 673 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding of public transport. The operation of the heavy rail network, including the Kildare, Maynooth and Northern Lines and the assessing of rolling stock requirements for the network are a matter for Iarnród Éireann in conjunction with the National Transport Authority (NTA) which also has statutory responsibility for the development and implementation of public transport in the Greater Dublin Area including implementation of the DART Expansion Programme.

Noting the responsibility of the agencies, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply on the specific issues raised. Please advise my office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Aviation Industry

644. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to recent studies which highlight the bogus self-employment of pilots operating for airlines registered here; if his attention has been further drawn to the Ricardo study completed for the European Commission on working conditions for aircrew which found that the rate of contracted pilots is approximately three times that of the European average and that 93% of self-employment in European aviation is fake; his plans to address same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29676/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department is aware of the Ricardo study on employment and working conditions of aircrews in the EU internal aviation market ("the Ricardo Study") and the Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the Aviation Strategy for Europe: Maintaining and promoting high social standards ("the Commission's Report").

The Ricardo Study questioned the self-employment of pilots that indicated that they did not have the flexibility to determine when they wanted to fly and for how many hours. Such flexibility would be unusual, however, as airlines generally operate scheduled services.

The Commission's Report re-iterated many of the findings of the Ricardo Study and also called for the establishment of an ad hoc group of Member State experts dealing with aviation and labour law matters to identify best practices, ensuring a level playing field and quality working conditions. The first meeting of this expert group took place in Brussels in early April 2019 with aviation officials from my Department attending. The next meeting is scheduled for

the end of 2019 or beginning of 2020.

Issues that have been raised in relation to atypical employment and the standard of employment conditions in aviation are equally valid for other employment sectors far larger than aviation, such as construction, IT, hospitality, healthcare, etc. In order to maintain the coherence of the wider EU social dimension, such matters should be addressed through wider employment legislation at EU and Member State level, rather than at sector (aviation) level.

One of the numerous regulated areas of aviation safety is that relating to flying hours for aircrew. Compliance with these rules is overseen by the Irish Aviation Authority, in respect of airlines licensed in Ireland.

Road Projects Status

645. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason there is no construction works taking place on the Dunkettle interchange, Cork; and the revised timeframe for the completion of same. [29684/19]

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 question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Question No. 646 answered with Question No. 101.

Public Transport Initiatives

647. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the cost of public transport will be reduced and increase its reach within rural Ireland in order to reduce congestion and pollution. [29694/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I refer the Deputy to my response to his question number 70 which I answered earlier.

Dublin Bus Services

648. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the exceptional public service provided by Dublin Bus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29710/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I am pleased to recognise the growth in customer numbers of Dublin Bus during 2018, which increased by almost 3%, despite the impact of two severe weather events in the first half of the year, the impact of the Luas Cross City line and the transition of some PSO routes to a new operator towards the end of the year. The company has seen several years of passenger growth now, which links closely with the country’s strong economy and high levels of employment, and the resulting

strengthened demand for travel and public transport.

I understand that the Company has also recorded increased rates of customer satisfaction and continued delivery of cost efficiencies, which are to be particularly welcomed. All this performance reflects very well on the efforts of the Company - staff, management and Board - to deliver bus services for Dublin.

Dublin Bus Services

649. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the passenger numbers carried by Dublin Bus in 2017, 2018 and to quarter two of 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29711/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have overall responsibility for policy and funding in relation to public transport.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for the collection and publication of statistics relating to public transport and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Dublin Bus

650. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of funding provided to Dublin Bus in each of the years 2012 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29712/19]

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.

Since 2010, the award of Public Service Obligation (PSO) funding falls under the independent statutory remit of the National Transport Authority (NTA). The allocations to the companies are decided by the NTA in exercise of its statutory mandate and in accordance with the various contract arrangements that it has in place with PSO service providers. Therefore, I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Public Transport Initiatives

651. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of additional kilometres of bus corridor in Dublin provided since 2016 to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29713/19]

655. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the measures he has taken to counteract traffic congestion in Dublin; the measures completed, in place and operational since 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29719/19]

677. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the

timeline for the provision of extra transport facilities to alleviate traffic congestion at various locations nationally that have suffered in this regard particularly as the economic recovery deepens; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30058/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 651, 655 and 677 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. At a policy level our aim is encourage more and more people to choose sustainable mobility as their preferred means of transport and to support that aim I have secured significant increases to the funding levels available to support delivery by the relevant agencies, principally the National Transport Authority (NTA).

Since 2016, there have been a number of notable improvements across all modes –

- Continued expansion of the PSO bus fleet supporting expanded services in all major cities;
- The opening of the Phoenix Park tunnel in 2016 and expansion of rail services using it since that date;
- The opening of the Luas Cross City creating new interchange possibilities between both Luas lines and the heavy rail network;
- The Luas Green Line Capacity Enhancement project which will see all 26 trams extended to 55m and 8 additional trams purchased to increase capacity on the Line. The first of those extensions will enter service this year;
- The provision of significant additional funding to Iarnród Éireann which means the rail network is now funded at the “steady state” level as measured on an annual basis; and
- Completion of a number of important active travel projects in Dublin and in other cities.

In addition to the above, planning has continued in relation to the three transformative projects – BusConnects, DART Expansion and MetroLink.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area and our regional cities.

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

Cycling Facilities Data

652. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of additional kilometres of cycle paths in Dublin completed since his appointment. [29714/19]

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) is responsible for the development and implementation of public transport and sustainable transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, including cycling infrastructure.

Noting the NTA’s responsibilities, I have referred the Deputy’s question to the NTA for a

more detailed reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 days.

Cycling Facilities Data

653. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of cycle parking facilities within existing car parks provided since 2016 to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29716/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure, including cycling infrastructure.

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

Dublin Bus Fleet

654. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when Dublin Bus will completely migrate to either hybrid diesel or electric buses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29717/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Procurement of vehicles for Dublin Bus and other PSO bus fleets is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA). As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have made clear my intent, and that of the Government, to transition from diesel fuelled buses towards greener fuels and technologies, for the great potential such technologies offer to reduce carbon and other harmful air pollutant emissions, and importantly, placing the public transport system in a strong leadership role.

In the urban bus fleet, a clear trajectory towards low-emission has firmly been established. In the short term, we are committed under Project Ireland 2040 to no longer purchase diesel-only buses for the urban public bus fleet from this month onwards. Consequently, the NTA recently initiated a tender competition to award a "Framework Agreement for the Supply of Double-Deck Diesel-Electric Hybrid Buses". To help inform a longer-term bus procurement strategy, my Department, together with the NTA, Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann, has undertaken a comprehensive series of low-emission bus trials which are expected to conclude in the coming weeks. Findings from this trial, alongside EU public fleet procurement requirements under the Clean Vehicles Directive together with on-going market analysis and research will collectively inform the NTA's approach to its bus purchase programme in the years ahead.

Under Project Ireland 2040, the BusConnects programme will be rolled out across all our major cities, starting in Dublin. This programme is expected to have a transformative effect on the operation of bus services and will improve bus journey times by 40% to 50%; provide a bus service that is easier to use and understand; enable more people to travel by bus than ever before; and provide a network of cycling infrastructure that will enable more people to cycle. Low emitting buses will be employed under the BusConnects programme with the intention that 50% of the public urban bus fleet in the Greater Dublin Area will transition to a low emitting option by 2023 and 100% by 2030. Buses will be replaced when they reach the end of their optimal life. For the double deck bus fleet this is approximately 12 years. It is important to note

that additional vehicles may also be required to increase capacity on the network to cater for increasing travel demand or any new services.

Noting its responsibility with regards to this matter, I have referred your question to the NTA for consideration and direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Question No. 655 answered with Question No. 651.

Questions Nos. 656 and 657 answered with Question No. 103.

Cycling Facilities Provision

658. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of various cycle network plans being implemented in major cities; the funding being allocated to the implementation of such networks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29806/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy may be aware I have secured significant improved funding allocations over the period 2018-2021 which will benefit both walkers and cyclists.

These improved allocations over this period include:

- €110 million specifically dedicated to walking and cycling infrastructure in our major urban areas;

- €135 million for sustainable urban transport measures;

- €750 million towards the BusConnects programme in Dublin which will include the delivery of around 200 kilometres of segregated cycling lanes, where possible; and

- €53 million to support the development of new Greenways.

In addition to the above, Government has also made additional money available for cycling projects through both the Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Funds under Project Ireland 2040.

The impact of this improved funding is evidenced by the approximate 30% increase that is being provided in 2019 under my Department's 'cycling and walking' and 'sustainable urban transport' programmes as compared to 2018's expenditure.

In relation to the implementation of cycle network plans across our major cities, the National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure, including cycling infrastructure. I have therefore referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for a more detailed reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 days.

Public Transport Review

659. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to carry out a review of public transport and active travel policy; and if he will make a statement

on the matter. [29807/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, in the coming weeks and in line with a Programme for a Partnership Government commitment, I will seek the public's views on public transport and active travel policy. This review will allow all stakeholders to reflect on what has been achieved, what remains to be done and how our policy frameworks can support the realisation of a more sustainable transport system.

Last year, as part of this review I hosted a Round-Table Dialogue on Public Transport Policy in the Mansion House at which representatives from a broad spectrum of interest groups in the wider public and sustainable transport sector attended.

Discussions at last year's event looked at the potential challenges and competing priorities likely to arise in the future across all aspects of public transport and active travel provision including economic, social and environmental considerations. These discussions have helped inform the policy review work which my Department has been undertaking.

That work has represented a significant commitment of resources in order to undertake the comprehensive analysis this important policy area demands.

This work is now nearing completion and I will launch a public consultation shortly by publishing a comprehensive suite of documents looking at the most important areas of public transport and active travel policy and seeking the views of all stakeholders. I will also publish a report of last year's Dialogue with stakeholders, an Ex Post Evaluation of the Smarter Travel Areas programme 2012-2016 and a high-level assessment of the actions under the existing policies, Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future and the National Cycle Policy Framework.

I look forward to the next phase of this work and engaging with the public and all stakeholders as we look to shape the future direction of public transport policy.

Departmental Expenditure

660. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the years 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by inquiry, tribunal or commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29841/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Details of expenditure on external services, including amounts spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries are routinely published by my Department.

These details are available on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.dttas.ie/corporate/english/expenditure-external-services>

Details of expenditure to date in 2019 will be available shortly.

Noise Pollution

661. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views in relation to requirements (details supplied) regarding aircraft noise; and his further views on whether a challenge before the European Court of Justice might be made and that such a chal-

lenge might be successful. [29748/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy will be aware, the Aircraft Noise (Dublin Airport) Regulation Act 2019 was signed into law in May this year. The main purpose of that Act is to manage noise at Dublin Airport and to give applicability to EU Regulation 598/2014. Regulation 598 sets out the rules and procedures with regard to the introduction of noise related operating restrictions at European Union Airports.

The Act provides, for the first time, that noise generated by aircraft activity at Dublin Airport will be subject to extensive detailed assessment, on-going monitoring and to regular review. It also respects existing planning and development and environmental laws and is underpinned by binding EU Regulations and Directives on environmental and aircraft noise. It further ensures that every time a planning application at Dublin Airport is considered the aircraft noise implications are considered also.

Fingal County Council has been designated as the independent noise regulator for Dublin Airport with An Bord Pleanála designated as the independent appeals body.

Fingal County Council is establishing a new, dedicated aircraft Noise Regulation Office within the executive branch, which will include the appropriate noise expertise. The Office will be headed at a senior level by a Director of Services, with all of the appropriate arrangements to ensure decisions are taken fully in accordance with the law.

All of the provisions of the Act have been subject to legal scrutiny by the Office of the Attorney General and have been examined in great detail by the Oireachtas. I am fully satisfied that Fingal County Council meets the requirements set out in Regulation 598/2014 for a noise regulator.

Córas Iompair Éireann

662. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the assets owned by CIÉ by category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29900/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is an matter for Córas Iompair Éireann (CIÉ) and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to CIÉ for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Road Network

663. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to invest in the N63 in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29904/19]

664. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to invest in the N65 in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29905/19]

665. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to invest in the N84 in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29906/19]

666. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans

to invest in the N17 in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29907/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 663 to 666, inclusive, together.

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 question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Question No. 667 answered with Question No. 82.

Greenways Development

668. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the development of the greenway from Galway to Dublin; the status, timeline and expected completion date of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29909/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Over the Easter weekend, Westmeath County Council constructed an underpass in Athlone to extend the Galway to Dublin Greenway towards the banks of the Shannon, it is expected that work from the Underpass to the banks of the Shannon will be completed in early 2020. Separately I am pleased to announce that works in County Kildare and Meath will conclude next month so that it will now be possible to cycle from Maynooth to Athlone completely off-road.

West of the Shannon I am following up on the commitment in the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways to develop a Code of Practice. To deliver this, discussions are taking place with various state bodies and the farming representative bodies. The Government remains committed to achieving the goal of a coast-to-coast Greenway with the agreement of landowners and communities along the route. I am not setting a deadline for the completion of this work as I do not believe that would be conducive to achieving agreement.

Recreational Facilities Provision

669. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the development of the walkway from Portumna to Aughrim; the status of signage, styles and grass; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29910/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): My Department's role in relation to tourism lies primarily in the area of national tourism policy. It is not directly involved in the development, management or promotion of particular tourism initiatives, which are matters for the tourism agencies.

In regard to the walkway in question, I understand that it would form part of the Beara-Breifne route when completed. While Fáilte Ireland would have a role in promoting the Beara-Breifne route experience to tourists, neither the Department or Fáilte Ireland are involved in its development. I understand that funding may have been provided to the local development company by the Department of Rural and Community Development in regard to this walk and

my colleague the Minister for Rural and Community Development may be able to provide further information.

Climate Change Policy

670. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics; the public bodies and agencies under his remit to which he has issued an instruction to cease the purchase and use of single-use plastics; when the instruction issued; the bodies which have confirmed that they no longer purchase and use single-use plastics; the bodies which have not provided such confirmation to date; when they will confirm; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29993/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Government decision of 03 January 2019 was aimed at reducing the use of single use plastics, as well as introducing measures to cut waste in food and paper, and to improve efficiency in the use of energy and water, reducing waste generation and maximising recycling. My colleague the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment is the lead Minister on this matter.

I can confirm that my Department has ceased the purchase and use of single use plastics.

The Government decision also required that all public bodies and agencies were to cease purchase of single-use plastic beverage cups, cutlery and drinking straws after 31 March 2019, as well as reviewing waste management and recycling measures. All public bodies under the aegis of my Department will be required to report by end November 2019 on their compliance with this decision.

Road Projects

671. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of tenders received for the N22 Macroom bypass; the names of the tendering parties; if, upon review of the tenders, he or the Cabinet will have a role in approving the tenders and releasing the funding; and the timeline of same. [30032/19]

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. Once funding arrangements have been put in place by my Department with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), under the Roads Acts 1993-2015, the planning, design and construction, including procurement and distribution of the Capital roads budget allocation for individual national roads, is a matter for TII in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

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

Hotel Accommodation

672. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which adequate hotel accommodation remains available to meet the requirements of the tourism sector nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30053/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): 2018 was a remarkable year for Irish tourism, with Ireland continuing to appeal to holidaymakers from home and abroad. Overseas visitor numbers continued to grow and contributed over €5 billion to the economy.

Fáilte Ireland monitors the performance of tourist accommodation through regular occupancy surveys. This analysis indicates that while the country as a whole has sufficient stock of tourist accommodation, there are capacity constraints in areas of high tourist traffic at times of peak demand and additional capacity is required in certain parts of the country, particularly Dublin city.

In this context, Fáilte Ireland commissions periodic assessments of hotel accommodation in Dublin, most recently August 2018. Although the latest results confirm the current shortage, they expect that approximately 5,400 hotel rooms will come on stream in the coming years, including over 3,000 already under construction. Present projections are that this activity will still be outpaced by growing demand but this is a dynamic situation and additional room stock may be developed in response to this demand.

Last year Fáilte also commissioned a new study of accommodation capacity in three key non-Dublin destinations - Cork, Galway and Kilkenny. The report highlights the need to develop new accommodation stock and opportunities for investment in Kilkenny, where 41 new rooms are likely to come on stream by 2022 to add to the current supply, an increase of just 4%. Galway will have an estimated 17% increase in hotel bed stock over the next five years, 500 new hotel rooms, but this increase is likely to fall short of expected demand growth. In regard to Cork, current figures project a 35% increase (over 920 new hotel rooms) by 2022, which positions the city well to take full advantage of all future growth potential. As in Dublin, these are dynamic markets and the supply of room stock may change in response to demand.

Question No. 673 answered with Question No. 643.

Road Network

674. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the degree to which he expects to achieve sufficient improvement in the national arterial road network with particular reference to ensuring adequate distribution routes to meet the demand arising from increased job creation through the regions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30055/19]

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 maintenance, improvement and construction of individual national roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

The overall plans and priorities for the upgrading the national road network are set out in Project Ireland 2040 which encompasses the National Development Plan (NDP) and the National Planning Framework. TII are responsible for delivering the national road priorities set out in the NDP.

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

Tourism Industry

675. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he expects the hotel and accommodation sector to enhance the image of Ireland as a conference location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30056/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The hotel and accommodation sector is a key component of Irish tourism. A good stock of attractive high-quality hotels, operating to best international standards, is essential for the effective performance of the industry. The quality of Ireland's hotels is a key part of Ireland's national business tourism offering and instrumental in attracting international conferences to Ireland.

Business tourism overall, including conference tourism, has been an area of growth in recent years and one where Ireland continues to compete very successfully internationally. The tourism agencies, which have operational responsibility for the development and promotion of this sector, have been very active in competing for and securing the hosting of international conferences in Ireland. Fáilte Ireland is responsible for developing business tourism strategy and, internationally, it works with Tourism Ireland under the Meet in Ireland brand to support the positioning of Ireland as a world-class conference destination. The Meet in Ireland team works collaboratively with key stakeholders and through its Conference Ambassador Programme to secure high profile conferences for Ireland. It also offers training and trade supports for Irish and international businesses planning to host their conferences here.

I am very supportive of the ongoing efforts of the tourism agencies to attract international conferences to Ireland and am most encouraged by the latest statistics. In 2018 Fáilte Ireland supported and converted 385 conferences worth €204 million for current and future years. The broader business tourism sector is currently worth €760m to the Irish economy and supports 22,000 jobs and Fáilte Ireland has ambitious targets to grow that to €1 billion by 2025.

Tourism Industry

676. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the degree to which opportunity exists for winter holidays here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30057/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): As set out in the Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021, lengthening the season is an essential part of developing a sustainable tourism industry into the future. Both tourism agencies, Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland are very focussed on increasing the seasonal spread of tourism across the country.

I have asked both agencies to reply directly to the Deputy with further information on this matter. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Question No. 677 answered with Question No. 651.

Sports Capital Programme Applications Data

678. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding allocated to various sporting and recreational bodies by way of capital grant nationally

in the past three years to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30059/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): Details of all allocations under the Sports Capital Programme (SCP) since 1998 and all payments since 2007 are available on my Department's website at <http://www.dttas.ie/sport/english/sports-capital-programme>.

In relation to the 2018 round of the SCP, this closed for applications on Friday 19th October last. By the deadline, a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of €162m in funding. 186 of these applications were for projects that were deemed invalid under the 2017 round of the programme that subsequently submitted corrected documents. These applications were assessed first and approximately €7m in allocations to 170 projects were announced on the 17th January.

619 equipment only applications were assessed next and 466 allocations with a value of €9.8m were announced in May.

Work is now underway in assessing the remaining applications for capital works and I expect that it will be towards the end of the third quarter of this year before these final allocations are announced. All details will be published on the Department's website.

Sports Events

679. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he sees opportunity to attract major sporting events here thereby promoting Ireland as an attractive location for these events internationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30060/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The hosting of major sports competitions, both participative and spectator sports, can provide great opportunities to showcase Ireland and drive international visitor numbers. In addition, the media coverage of sports events helps to put Ireland onto travel itineraries as a holiday destination.

Accordingly, I am very supportive of the work of the tourism agencies and the national governing bodies of sport to attract international events, subject, of course, to an assessment of the costs and benefits involved in any State financial support, in particular the number of overseas visitors.

Fáilte Ireland provides financial assistance, subject to eligibility criteria, to applicants who are proposing to bid to host international events (including sporting events) in Ireland that would attract significant numbers of international visitors. When an event with international tourism appeal is confirmed for Ireland, Tourism Ireland would then promote it in relevant markets overseas.

In terms of forthcoming sporting events, Ireland will host four games as part of the UEFA EURO 2020 football tournament in June 2020 - three group games and one round of 16 game. The bid to host was a collaborative effort between the Football Association of Ireland, Dublin City Council and my Department. Depending on qualification, up to 160,000 overseas visitors may attend Euro 2020 matches in Dublin.

Minister Ross and I also support efforts to explore possibilities to host other major sporting events. With regard to soccer, we welcomed the announcement by the FAI and IFA of their

intention to submit a joint bid to host the UEFA European Under 21 Championships in 2023. In addition, the national football associations of the United Kingdom and Ireland are in discussions about the feasibility of bidding to host the 2030 FIFA World Cup. This consideration is at an early stage.

In the sport of golf, Minister Ross and Department officials met with representatives of the PGA European Tour at the Ryder Cup in Paris last year to discuss the possible hosting of a future Ryder Cup in Ireland. The PGA European Tour subsequently visited Dublin and met the Taoiseach and Minister Ross. The purpose of these meetings was to explore the opportunities that may exist for hosting the Ryder Cup in the future and considerations are ongoing in this regard.

Sport Ireland and Fáilte Ireland have both supported the bid to host the European Cross-Country Championship which was successful and now will be hosted in Dublin in December 2020.

Brexit Preparations

680. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he remains satisfied that adequate travel provisions remain available in the air travel sector to meet the requirements of air passengers in the aftermath of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30061/19]

683. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he is making provision for the eventuality of Brexit with particular reference to its implications for air and sea travel in view of the necessity to ensure easy travel access to continental Europe for Irish customers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30064/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 680 and 683 together.

Brexit has been identified as my Department's highest strategic risk and the Department, along with other Government Departments and key Agencies, has been preparing for Brexit for three years. This preparation is continuing through extensive contingency planning and stakeholder engagement. While planning continues for both a no-deal Brexit and the 'central case' scenario, the Government is focussing its preparations on a no-deal Brexit on 31st October 2019.

While the full implications of Brexit for our air and maritime transport are not yet clear, I do not anticipate that direct maritime or direct air services by community air carriers between Ireland and continental Europe will be affected, even in a no-deal Brexit scenario.

That said, a significant proportion of our goods destined for EU markets are transported via the UK landbridge to access these markets. Brexit could impact on the efficiency of the landbridge route particularly where there are increased border and custom procedures and associated delays, or were the UK to subsequently apply differing standards, road charging or regulatory regimes. The landbridge is the fastest route to continental Europe and as such is relied upon for the transport of time-sensitive products, such as those in the agri-food/perishable goods sector, just-in-time and high value goods. Any delays or barriers to this key route to European markets will be detrimental for certain sectors. Significant work has been and continues to be undertaken through the Landbridge Project Group, chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in seeking to ensure continued access through the landbridge to markets in continental Europe.

In relation to shipping, in the past shipping operators have responded to economic developments and increased or reduced capacity in response to market demands. Following a series of meetings between my officials and the major ferry companies operating at Irish ports, I am confident that shipping services can be expected to adapt to changing market demands that may arise and we have seen the evidence of this over recent months with the increase in shipping capacity on direct routes to continental ports. These services include the MV Celine which was last year launched from Dublin Port and will serve routes to Rotterdam and Zeebrugge and the MV WB Yeats, which is operating between Dublin and Cherbourg since March 2019. Additionally, a new ferry route to Santander in Spain commenced from the Port of Cork in 2018.

If disruption to the landbridge does arise, it is likely to be most acute in the immediate period following the UK exit. My Department, along with IMDO, will be implementing a number of mitigating actions to encourage a market response in a timely manner. These will include a focussed awareness campaign from early September aimed at shipping companies, importers and exporters to create a dialogue between them to identify new market demands as early as possible.

In relation to infrastructural requirements, the Government's Project Ireland 2040 recognises the role and infrastructural plans of ports and airports in supporting continued enhancement of Ireland's high-quality international connectivity. Key actions planned include a new runway for Dublin Airport, continued development of Cork and Shannon Airports, investment in Ireland West Airport Knock, and for smaller airports under the Regional Airports Programme. There will also be major development of Dublin, Cork, Shannon-Foynes and other ports, as well as investment in transport connectivity to ports.

In response to the Deputy's query regarding adequate travel provisions in the air travel sector, under EU law, air operators must fulfil certain ownership and control (O&C) criteria in order to be classified as an EU air carrier. The European Commission has been clear from the outset that it is essential for air operators for whom Brexit may lead to a failure to comply with these requirements to take appropriate counter measures. The EU Contingency Regulation on Air Connectivity set down a timeframe for restructuring plans to be submitted to national regulators. All affected air operators licensed in Ireland have submitted their respective restructuring plans to the Commission for Aviation Regulation (CAR), within the 11th April deadline under the EU basic connectivity regulation. CAR has issued its determinations on these plans and is in ongoing contact with these airlines in relation to their restructuring plans and these determinations have been notified to the European Commission. It is understood that the Commission will review all such proposals.

In addition, Regulation (EU) 2019/502 on common rules ensuring basic air connectivity aims to ensure the continuation of a basic level of air connectivity for citizens and business between the UK and Europe in the event of the UK exiting the EU without an agreement. While certain provisions within this Regulation have entered into force, the majority will only apply if and when the UK exits the EU without a deal.

Climate Change Policy

681. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the degree to which the transport and tourism sectors expect to be in a position to respond positively to the challenges of climate change in a realistic way while maintaining services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30062/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The recently pub-

lished Climate Action Plan sets out a whole-of Government approach to climate action and maps a potential pathway to meet Ireland's 2030 emission reduction commitments. The Plan clearly recognises that Ireland must significantly step up its commitments to tackle climate disruption.

The transport sector, which accounts for about 20% of Ireland's overall carbon emissions, plays a key role in the national decarbonisation effort. It is worth noting that transport emissions are classified under both the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) and non-ETS systems. Generally, non-domestic emissions such as those from international aviation within Europe are accounted for under the ETS system while domestic transport emissions fall under the non-ETS system. The Climate Action Plan deals primarily with the non-ETS sector, where Ireland has a legal binding emissions reduction target of 20% by 2020 and 30% by 2030 (relative to 2005 levels). Accordingly, the focus of the transport elements of the Plan relate mainly to reducing land transport emissions and not those generated by international travel and in-coming tourists.

My Department has worked hard to develop an ambitious, challenging and wide-ranging set of actions for inclusion in the Climate Action Plan, particularly in relation to public transport and active travel. A critical challenge is reducing the 52% of transport emissions that come from private car use. Our aim in expanding the carrying capacity and the attractiveness of our public transport and active travel networks is to provide a viable sustainable alternative to private car use for more people for more of their journeys. Under Project Ireland 2040, an indicative allocation of €8.6 billion is assigned to support sustainable mobility ensuring that public transport and active travel become more available and attractive alternatives.

A switch to electric vehicles (EVs) is a key mitigation measure of the Plan, with a target of almost 950,000 EVs on Irish roads by 2030. While this level of transition is incredibly challenging, as technologies improve and become cheaper, and if we continue incentives and invest in the recharging network we are ambitious that with a real push we can make real progress towards this target by 2030. Concerted efforts across several Departments will be essential if we are to maintain a supportive environment to assist citizens in making the greener choice and switching to an EV. My Department and I will work closely with Ministers Bruton and Donohoe and their respective Departments to map out the roadmap that will be necessary to achieve our collective ambition.

In terms of tourism, while there are no specific actions in the Plan, climate change can have direct and indirect impacts on Ireland's tourism industry. Urban tourism may be less affected than coastal tourism where sea level rise, increasing ocean acidification and coastal erosion can threaten Ireland's coastal tourism infrastructure and natural attractions. It is difficult to predict possible changes to Ireland's attractiveness as a destination as a result of climate change and the impact of this on the economic value of tourism in Ireland and tourism demand. Destination attractions such as Skellig Michael and the Burren could be especially vulnerable; therefore the role of the tourism sector in adaptation planning is extremely important.

The range of implications of climate change on the transport, tourism, and even sport sectors means that I and my Department are fully committed to achieving the climate change objectives set out in the Climate Action Plan. I am personally committed to the decarbonisation of the transport sector and I hope to see transport emissions levels continue to fall as they did in 2018. Indeed, every sector must step-up if Ireland is to meet our emission reduction targets in 2030 and beyond.

Traffic Calming Measures

9 July 2019

682. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to combat the traffic congestion on the M50; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30063/19]

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, operation and improvement of individual national roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) along with other stakeholders, is continuing to implement a number of measures on the M50 to optimise operational efficiency.

It should be noted that a single piece of infrastructure cannot be looked at in isolation in an urban context. The National Transport Authority's (NTA) Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016- 2035 sets out a number of projects and initiatives for the Greater Dublin Area that, when implemented, will greatly ease congestion for commuters. Project Ireland 2040 provides the funding for flagship projects such as BusConnects, DART Expansion and MetroLink.

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

Question No. 683 answered with Question No. 680.

Early Years Sector

684. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will address a matter regarding the case of a school (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29173/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Applications for the 2019 Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare Capital Programme opened on 25th of February and closed on the 27th of March. Under Strand C €1 million was available for the creation of new school age childcare places with a maximum of €20,000 per grant.

In early June, following an appraisal process, applicants were notified of the outcome of the capital programme.

The process of releasing funding to successful applicants began at the beginning of this month. Pobal are contacting the successful applicants to ensure that all the pre-conditions for the release of funding have been met.

It is important to note that while the first payment of the School Age Capital funding can be released to a service on confirmation that they have begun the process of registering with Tusla, the full payment will not be released until this registration process is complete.

Community Childcare Subvention Programme

685. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of CCS plus services, both community and private, found to be non-compliant due to of the timekeeping rule of her Department; the number of children that have had funding withdrawn as a result of the rule; and the amount of funding withdrawn from these children and or

services. [29360/19]

686. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount paid to Pobal to carry out compliance visits to early years services both community and private in the past year. [29361/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 685 and 686 together.

The Deputy will be aware that investment in childcare has increased by an unprecedented 117% over the last four budgets, now totalling €575m per year. Given the large amount of public money that is used in funding these programmes, there needs to be an appropriate level of oversight and accountability. Ensuring that this money is properly accounted for, and that as many children as possible benefit from it, is a core responsibility of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Pobal assists the Department in the administration of the funding and in ensuring that services are compliant with the clearly documented rules of the schemes.

The Public Accounts Committee on June 13 paid significant attention to this matter and highlighted the importance of compliance with scheme rules. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs' approach to compliance, and supporting services, strikes a necessary and appropriate balance. The approach involves setting out the rules for the receipt of State funding, supporting providers to deliver services, and at the same time, the approach offers assurances to the taxpayer that the funding assigned is being spent as it was intended through a strong compliance framework.

A high level of compliance with the rules of the various childcare schemes is vital to maintaining existing investment as well as ensuring future investment. It is a requirement that services operating the early learning and care and school age childcare programmes funded by the Department must be compliant with the 'Rules for DCYA childcare funding programmes', which are available on the DCYA website. As stated above, compliance with these Rules is overseen by Pobal on behalf of the Department.

Part of Pobal's role in overseeing compliance is to carry out unannounced visits to services to check their compliance with programme rules. Subsidies for the Early Learning and Care and School Age childcare programmes are paid based on child attendance, which is a vital governance component of the funding for which my Department is responsible. Where Pobal discover that the actual attendance of a child does not match registrations for that child on Pobal's Programme Implementation Platform (Pobal's IT system) they will calculate the amount of funding that has been overclaimed. The service will be advised by Pobal to make the necessary corrections to PIP registrations to ensure that the total amount of funding received for the programme year is correct. There is an appropriate amount of flexibility applied to this corrections process and Pobal works with services on a case by case basis. However, the recovery of overclaimed funds is an integral part of ensuring that public money is properly accounted for.

Results from Pobal compliance visits for the period October 2018 – March 2019 show some issues in relation to non-compliance which required immediate attention. Under CCSP, if a child increases or decreases their attendance, the service provider must update PIP registrations to reflect the actual attendance of that child. Following a compliance visit, funding is only corrected to account for the time a particular child actually attends a service. My Department does not collect information on the number of children for whom incorrect registrations are identified through compliance visits. However, in the period October 2018 - March 2019, 233 services operating CCSP contracts were found to need to update PIP registrations to match the actual attendance of children. Over this six-month period, Pobal estimated that approximately €1.4 million in potential overclaims were identified and prevented on the CCSP programme,

with approximately €4.7 million potential overclaims identified and prevented across all programmes. These figures come with caveats owing to the type of data involved.

It is important to note that the compliance activity should not result in any child having any service withdrawn, rather that the service provider only claims from the Department for the hours the child is attending. Data available to the Department shows that the number of children accessing Government subsidies continues to increase.

Significant support is available to services facing sustainability issues to bring their service onto a sustainable footing, whilst being necessarily compliant with scheme rules. My Department oversees an integrated Case Management system operated by Pobal through which a dedicated team assesses services facing challenges. This Case Management service provides non-financial assistance or support in the first instance. Financial supports are also available for community services facing certain challenges which may also be accessed through Case Management following a financial assessment. I would recommend all services to get in contact with Pobal or their local City / County Childcare Committee if they need support or advice, or if they believe a sustainability issue arises.

The existing targeted childcare schemes will be replaced later this year with the National Childcare Scheme. Its attendance rules will seek to reflect the reality of children and parents' lives and the need for services to operate as businesses. The attendance rules will reflect a certain degree of flexibility whilst honouring the requirement to ensure that Exchequer funding is used for the purposes it was intended.

The National Childcare Scheme will mark another significant milestone for early learning and care and school age childcare in this country, creating an infrastructure from which Government can further increase investment in services over the next decade. This is in line with the commitment made in First 5, the Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families, which I published last November.

Departmental Advertising Expenditure

687. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount spent on digital marketing in each of the past eight years; the items on which funds were spent; the criteria by which target audiences were selected; the amount of the digital spend targeted here; the amount targeted abroad; the amount that related to private companies; the amount that related to policy initiatives; and the purpose of the digital advertisements. [29386/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Six digital marketing campaigns have been run by my Department over the past number of years. Five of the six related to the promotion of LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018 - 2020. The Strategy provides an opportunity to build a more inclusive Ireland for LGBTI+ young people and is the first of its kind in the world. The digital campaign was targeted at social media users. In addition to this, a digital media campaign to build public awareness of the new National Childcare Scheme (then referred to as the Affordable Childcare Scheme) took place during 2017. The target audience was parents with young children living in Ireland needing childcare supports.

Details of the expenditure by my Department in respect of digital marketing activities are set out in the following table.

Year	Purpose of Campaign	Type of Digital Marketing	Target Audience	Cost (€)
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2017	Facebook Promotion of an LGBTI+ Consultation Report	Social Media	Irish, LGBTI+ Young People Aged 12-24	€4
2017	Building public awareness of the Affordable Childcare Scheme	Online display; Programmatic Marketing; Social Media; Ad-Serving; Articles.	Irish, Parents of Young Children	€29,722
2018	Facebook promotion of the Launch of LGBTI+ Strategy	Social Media	Irish, LGBTI+ Young People Aged 12-24	€16
2018	Facebook promotion of Video for LGBTI+ Strategy	Social Media	Irish, LGBTI+ Young People Aged 12-24	€12
2019	Twitter advertisement of LGBTI+ Competition	Social Media	Irish, LGBTI+ Young People Aged 12-24	€45
2019	Facebook advertisement of LGBTI+ Competition	Social Media	Irish, LGBTI+ Young People Aged 12-24	€20

With regards to the agencies under the remit of my Department, Oberstown Children's Detention Centre incurred costs amounting to €9,840 for a web video for people interested in a career in youth justice, which was posted on a national online publication in 2019. The Adoption Authority of Ireland, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children, and the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes have indicated that they did not incur any digital marketing related costs. I have requested Tusla, the Child and Family Agency to contact the Deputy directly on the matter.

Departmental Expenditure

688. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the costs paid to companies (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by her Department to conduct in each of the years 2015 to 2018, and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason each was engaged; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29437/19]

694. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the costs paid to a company (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by her Department to conduct in each of the years 2015 to 2018, and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason it was engaged; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29546/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 688 and 694 together.

My Department has engaged the services of Mazars in the period specified. Mazars have primarily provided consultancy services in respect of internal audits for my Department and are also engaged in a review of internal organisational structures at present. Details of the funding provided (to end of June 2019) is listed in the following table.

Company	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Mazars	€0	€16,605	€204,709	€73,821	€72,201

I can confirm that my Department has not incurred any costs in respect of the other compa-

nies named.

Early Years Sector

689. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the percentages of GNP and GDP being invested in pre-primary education; if updated figures have been calculated since the publication of a document (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29455/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The publication the Deputy is referring to is the OECD Education at a Glance Report 2018. This publication, which estimates that Ireland spends 0.1% of GDP on pre-primary education, is based on public investment levels from 2015. I understand the OECD Education at a Glance Report 2019 is currently being drafted.

The OECD adopt a number of approaches to calculate Ireland's expenditure on early learning and care. One approach includes an estimate of the cost of primary school for children under 6 as well as other early learning and care costs: this is to account for the fact that many children in Ireland start primary school at an earlier age than in some other countries. Using this approach, the OECD estimates that Ireland spent 0.5% of GDP on early learning and care in 2016. The OECD indicates that every .1% of GDP increase above this will cost €300 million. If the cost of primary school for children under six is excluded, Ireland spent just 0.2% of GDP on early learning and care. This level of investment in 2016 investment compares poorly to other European countries where the OECD average investment on children under six is 0.8%. It also falls short of the UNICEF-recommended investment level of 1% of GDP.

Historically, there has been low levels of investment in early learning and care in Ireland. Since 2015 however, we have started to address this. Over the past four budgets, investment in early learning and care and school age childcare has increased by some 117% - rising from in €260 million 2015 to €574 million in 2019. Notwithstanding this very significant progress, investment remains relatively low to other developed countries.

The OECD in its report - Faces of Joblessness - compared the Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare supports previously available in Ireland with the expected impact of the National Childcare Scheme. For a lone parent working full time at the 25th percentile of the full-time earnings distribution, Early Learning and Care costs in Ireland were the highest among all OECD countries in 2015. The Faces of Joblessness report estimated that NCS will bring net ELC costs down to make Ireland only the 11th highest in the OECD, or closer to the OECD average. This analysis was performed before Budget 2019 which increased the NCS thresholds at both ends and which would have enhanced the results further if included.

First 5: A Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families published in November 2018 sets out an ambitious programme of work across Government Departments to improve the experiences and outcomes of children in Ireland from birth to age 5 across all aspects of their lives in the coming ten years. One of the major objectives is that babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally appropriate Early Learning and Care which reflects diversity of need. Allied to that objective, First 5 identifies as a key building block additional public funding, strategically invested to achieve the best outcomes for babies, young children and their families. Under this objective, First 5 commits to at least doubling investment in Early Learning and Care by 2028.

Childcare Services Funding

690. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the timeline for the completion of the sponsorship agreement in advance of the roll out of the national childcare service; the status of the training for frontline staff that will be involved in the administration of the sponsorship service; if detailed qualifying criteria have been agreed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29457/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Childcare Support Act 2018 makes provision for specific statutory bodies to access childcare to support vulnerable children and families and for the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to enter into formal agreements with the various bodies for these purposes. Engagement is ongoing between my officials and each of the bodies in relation to the terms of agreements under which vulnerable children will be referred to the scheme. The terms of each agreement will include such matters as the qualifying criteria under which children will be referred.

Engagement is very advanced and is progressing well. It is anticipated that agreements will be in place with each of the bodies before the launch of the National Childcare Scheme in the Autumn.

Where a referral is made by a sponsor body, the families will automatically qualify for a subsidy without having to satisfy any income test. The agreement between the Minister and each sponsor body will specify details under which children will be referred, including age limits having regard to the provisions of the Act.

Training will be provided for frontline staff who will be involved in the referral of vulnerable children to the National Childcare Scheme under sponsor agreements. Detailed and comprehensive training sessions, tailored specifically for referrals under sponsor arrangements, will be made available to staff in the various bodies. The training programme will commence in the coming months.

Childcare Services

691. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to an issue (details supplied) regarding the roll out of the national childcare service; if her Department has assessed the potential impact of this on the uptake of the scheme with service providers; the discussions that have taken place with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government on the issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29458/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): It is important to note that the matter of rates payments for the early learning and care sector does not fall under the remit of my Department, nor does my Department have a role in determining which properties are rateable. The levying of commercial rates is the responsibility of the Valuations Office, which falls under the aegis of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

The Valuation Act, 2001 as amended by the Valuation (Amendment) Act 2015 provides that all buildings used or developed for any purpose, including constructions affixed thereto, are rateable unless expressly exempted under Schedule 4 of the Act. Under Schedule 4, paragraph 22, community childcare facilities are exempt from commercial rates, by virtue of the fact that they operate on a not-for-profit basis. The Valuations Office have also advised that,

under Schedule 4 paragraph 10, facilities who provide the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE) only are exempt from commercial rates. All other childcare providers are, therefore, rateable.

My Department has made considerable investment in the provision of affordable and accessible quality childcare, and I am conscious that the issue of commercial rates may be a barrier to achieving these goals.

I am also conscious of this issue in the context of the introduction of the National Childcare Scheme (NCS), the new, national scheme of financial support for parents towards the cost of childcare, in October 2019. If an ECCE-only service wishes to offer NCS it will become liable for commercial rates. This disincentivisation to provide wraparound services has the potential to create capacity issues within the sector, at a time when my Department is seeking to increase capacity.

The issue of commercial rates is one that has been raised by the early learning and care sector, in particular through the National Early Years Forum, which I established in 2016. My Department has therefore taken a number of steps to pursue this matter, including meeting with relevant officials to explore the possibility of obtaining an exemption of the application of commercial rates to private childcare providers, on the basis that they are educational facilities.

Most recently I contacted the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, requesting reconsideration of the position of private childcare facilities in respect of their rateability for commercial rates. It was confirmed that there are no proposals under consideration for a discount of commercial rates for private childcare providers, and that the Commissioner of Valuation has no discretionary latitude to grant exemptions not covered by Schedule 4 of the Act.

My Department and I have made every effort to raise the concerns of the early learning and care sector in this respect, however as the matter falls outside the remit of my Department, I am constrained in the role I can play. My Department will, however, continue to monitor this matter and raise it where appropriate.

Adoption Data

692. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of adoption tracing inquiries received by Tusla in the past 12 months by domestic and intercountry adoptions in tabular form. [29465/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the subject matter of the Deputy's question relates to an operational matter for Tusla, I have referred the matter to them for a direct reply.

Adoption Data

693. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of adoption information inquiries, including GDPR or subject access requests, received by Tusla in the past 12 months by domestic and intercountry adoptions in tabular form. [29466/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the subject matter of the Deputy's question relates to an operational matter for Tusla, I have referred the

matter to them for a direct reply.

Question No. 694 answered with Question No. 688.

Gender Proofing of Policies

695. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if the national childcare scheme has been gender proofed. [29598/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): One of the stated policy objectives of the National Childcare Scheme is to support labour market activation and participation, including female labour market participation.

The original policy paper for the scheme, published in October 2016, considered international evidence on the effects of more affordable childcare on labour market participation. Using the best available evidence, it modelled likely impacts and found that a decrease in childcare costs in Ireland, through a mechanism such as the National Childcare Scheme, would see a resulting rise in female labour market participation.

In late 2017, a Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA) was published alongside the Childcare Support Bill 2017. At the outset, the RIA referenced the European Commission statement that “The availability and cost of quality fulltime childcare present barriers to female labour market participation and hinder efforts to reduce child poverty”. It then analysed the costs, benefits and impacts of the National Childcare Scheme, finding it to result in wider eligibility for childcare subsidies and positive labour market incentives.

The National Childcare Scheme will greatly increase the number of families who can access financial support for quality childcare, thereby supporting labour market participation, female labour market participation and poverty reduction.

At a broader level, the implementation of the Scheme is also referenced as an action in the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017- 2020.

Finally, in addition to gender-proofing the Scheme, I have also worked to poverty-proof the Scheme by ensuring that families at or below the relative income poverty line will benefit from the highest subsidy rates under the Scheme. Analysis by the OECD finds that the Scheme will significantly address affordability for lower income families, with analysis showing that Ireland will, for example, change from being the most expensive country in the OECD for childcare for lone parents, to 11th position.

Domestic Violence Refuges Provision

696. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of refuge places for families that have experienced domestic violence by county or local authority. [29725/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I understand the Deputy’s question relates to a request for the total number of domestic violence refuge units including both family units and single occupancy units by county in tabular form.

Tusla, the Child and Family Agency provides funding and coordination supports to some 59 organisations that deliver a range of services for victims of domestic, sexual and gender based

violence throughout the country.

In 2019, €25.3 million is being allocated to Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence services, an increase of €1.5 million over 2018. With these additional resources, Tusla will be able to provide:

- A 10% increase in funding to sexual violence services,
- 12 new outreach workers for women and children affected by domestic violence to improve access to support and services,
- The national roll out of a 12 week healing programme for children who have been impacted by domestic abuse,
- The opening in the Autumn of a new refuge in South Dublin,
- A specific initiative to reduce the waiting times for counselling for victims of sexual violence.

I have requested Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy with regard to the total number of domestic violence refuge units including both family units and single occupancy units by county.

Child and Family Agency Staff

697. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of social workers employed by Tusla by region in tabular form. [29779/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As this is an operational matter for Tusla, my officials have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on this issue.

Child and Family Agency Staff

698. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of link workers employed by Tusla by region in tabular form. [29780/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As this is an operational matter for Tusla, my officials have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on this issue.

Child and Family Agency Data

699. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children waiting on the appointment of a social worker by region in tabular form; and the average length of time such children have been on a waiting list. [29781/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): This question relates to an operational matter for Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. I have therefore referred the matter to Tusla, and asked that a direct response be provided to the Deputy.

I can inform the Deputy that data on the number of cases awaiting allocation is reported

monthly, and published in the National Performance and Activity Dashboard on the Tusla website.

Child and Family Agency Data

700. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of families waiting on the appointment of a fostering link worker by region in tabular form; and the average length of time such families have been on a waiting list. [29782/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): This question relates to an operational matter for Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. I have therefore referred the matter to Tusla, and asked that a direct response be provided to the Deputy.

School Completion Programme

701. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of school completion programmes in operation nationally; the number of children availing of such programmes; and the breakdown of such programmes by county in tabular form. [29783/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): There are 124 School Completion Programmes nationally providing interventions to 69,775 children and young people to support attendance, participation and retention across School Completion Programme cluster schools.

The number of School Completion Programmes broken down by county is set out in the following table.

County	No of SCP's
Carlow	2
Cavan	1
Clare	2
Cork	11
Donegal	5
Dublin	47
Galway	5
Kerry	2
Kildare	4
Kilkenny	1
Laois	1
Limerick	7
Longford	1
Louth	5
Mayo	2
Meath	2
Monaghan	3
Offaly	2
Roscommon	1

County	No of SCP's
Sligo	1
Tipperary	5
Waterford	3
Westmeath	2
Wexford	5
Wicklow	4

Child and Family Agency Staff

702. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the progress made in recruiting social workers for Tusla; the number of social workers that left Tusla in the past year; the number recruited in the past year; the number of social workers that left within one year of being recruited; the number of administrative staff recruited in the past year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29784/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I wish to advise that my officials have submitted this to Tusla for direct response to the Deputy.

Domestic Violence Refuges Provision

703. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of domestic violence refuges and refuge places nationally; her plans to increase provision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29785/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency provides funding and coordination supports to some 59 organisations that deliver a range of services for victims of domestic, sexual and gender based violence throughout the country. 22 of these organisations provide emergency accommodation for victims of domestic violence.

In 2019, €25.3 million is being allocated to Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence services, an increase of €1.5 million over 2018.

With these additional resources, Tusla will be able to provide five additional emergency family accommodation units in South Dublin by the end of Quarter 3, 2019, with the opening of a new domestic violence refuge. The refuge will accommodate 5 adults and up to 15 children.

Other initiatives facilitated by extra resources in 2019 are:

- A 10% increase in funding to sexual violence services,
- 12 new outreach workers for women and children affected by domestic violence to improve access to support and services,
- The national roll out of a 12 week healing programme for children who have been impacted by domestic abuse,
- A specific initiative to reduce the waiting times for counselling for victims of sexual violence.

With regard to the future provision of additional refuge spaces, it should be noted that

the responsibility for capital investment in new refuges falls under the remit of a number of Government bodies. Tusla is in contact with funded organisations in relation to proposed new developments, with plans underway in a number of areas for additional refuge spaces. These plans are at various stages.

Any additional funded developments will be informed by Tusla's review of emergency refuge accommodation nationwide, and the identified needs of service users throughout the country.

I have requested Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy with regard to the total number of domestic violence refuge units and refuge spaces nationally.

School Completion Programme

704. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of school completion programmes operating nationally; the number of staff employed in the scheme on a full-time, part-time and sessional basis in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29787/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The School Completion Programme is a core programme under the DEIS programme and is one of three service strands under Tusla's Educational Welfare Services (EWS) providing direct interventions to children and young people. Each year since the programme transferred to Tusla in 2014, €24.7 million in funding has been allocated to the School Completion Programme projects nationally. There are 124 SCPs currently operating nationally.

The following table sets out the number of staff employed in SCPs. Figures are based on the most recent plans submitted by the 124 SCP's.

		Number of SCP Staff
Full-time	Part-time	Sessional
219	195	1191

Childcare Services Staff

705. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of paying childcare workers across the sector directly by her Department on a pay scale in line with primary school teachers. [29794/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the State is not the employer, my Department does not pay the wages of staff working in early learning and care settings, and I cannot set wage levels or determine working conditions for these staff. As a result, my Department is not in a position to estimate the cost of directly paying staff on a pay scale in line with primary school teachers.

I am, however, doing all that is in my power to improve wages and working conditions in the sector. I have repeatedly called for the sector to pursue a Sectoral Employment Order, which offers a viable mechanism to establish appropriate wage levels. My Department will readily cooperate with such a process when it is underway.

In the interim, I have introduced a range of measures to support employers to improve pay and conditions. These include a 7% increase in ECCE capitation in 2018; higher capitation payments for graduates and Inclusion Co-ordinators; annual Programme Support Payments to recognise administrative demands; support for School-Age Childcare which will make it easier to offer full-time employment contracts; and a pilot measure to fund participation in CPD.

I have set out my vision for the sector, and a roadmap to achieve it, in First 5. First 5 commits to a Workforce Development Plan, to raise the profile of careers in the sector and to ensure sufficient numbers of staff at all levels. The Steering Group for the Workforce Development Plan met for the first time on 30 May, and the Stakeholder Group held its first meeting earlier this week. First 5 also commits to develop a new funding model for the sector, which may open up new mechanisms to influence pay and conditions.

Family Resource Centres

706. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount allocated to each family resource centre in each of the years 2016 to 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29808/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, administers the Family Resource Centre (FRC) Programme.

In Budget 2019, I secured an increase of €1.5 million for the FRC Programme. This brings the overall financial allocation for the Programme to €18 million.

This additional funding will be used to:

- Increase core funding to each of the 110 FRCs which existed pre-2018 by 5%.
- Employ an additional 17 Family Support Workers - one FRC in each of the 17 Tusla geographical areas will be allocated funding to employ a Family Support Worker.
- Fund the Family Resource Centre Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Promotion Programme.

The allocation of funding to individual Family Resource Centres is an operational matter for Tusla. I have requested Tusla to provide the Deputy with the requested information directly.

Youth Services Funding

707. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the development of a single targeted youth funding programme; if she is satisfied that funding is now targeted at the most disadvantaged areas; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29809/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Implementation of the Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Funding Programmes been a priority for my Department for some time and represents a significant multistrand change management programme.

Replacement of the existing four targeted schemes with a fit for purpose single targeted scheme is one of the key recommendations of the review. In July 2018 I brought the high-level

scheme outline to Government for Information; this outline was arrived at following detailed consultation with the sector and young people, relevant evidence review and a sampling process. The outline stated that young people aged 10 to 24 years of age who are described in the National Youth Strategy (NYS) as marginalised, disadvantaged or vulnerable will be the primary target group for services available through the TYFS.

This outline has since provided the basis for further development of the scheme, the final drafting process of which is currently underway. In addition to development of the new scheme, significant other changes have been introduced including; in January of this year, four funding streams were successfully collapsed in to one scheme in advance of the introduction of the new scheme in 2020. In April 2019, a Service Level Agreement (SLA) was signed between my Department and each of the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and the process of transferring funds to their functional ETB area began on a phased basis.

Throughout this reform my Department has been engaging proactively with the stakeholders and sample services in relation to various component of the new scheme. In 2018, 6 ETBs participated in a trial and co-design of the Area Profile, Needs Assessment and Service Requirement Tool (APNARS). The tool is designed to enable Education and Training Boards (ETB), who have a mid-level governance role in the new youth funding scheme, to gather and use available demographic data and local knowledge to produce an area profile of their ETB functional area to enable better targeting of services for young people. Based on the information gathered, the ETB analyse the needs of young people in the area and consider the extent to which these needs are being met within existing youth service provision. Completing the tool provides ETBs with a systematic and evidence-informed assessment of needs to inform judgements about priorities for service provision. It also ensures that youth services/projects funded under the new scheme are focused on working to meet the identified needs and key issues in the area in line with the stated objectives of the new scheme. The tool also provides a standardised national template for producing an area profile, needs assessment and Service Requirement document across all ETBs. The tool is a critical component in an evidence-informed approach to providing well targeted services to young people. Service Requirement documents will issue from ETBs to services/projects who are applying for funding through the grant application process on the targeted groups and key issues that are priority.

Youth Services Data

708. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of new youth projects that commenced in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019 under the young persons facilities and services fund; the location of the projects; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29810/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Deputy's question refers to new youth projects set up under the young persons facilities and services fund (YPFSF 1 and 2) for the years 2017 to 2019. No new services were set up under this funding in that period.

However, as the Deputy may be aware, my Department is managing the most significant reform of youth services ever undertaken. This reform is informed by the Value for Money and Policy Review (VFMPR) of the Youth Funding Programmes 2014. The VFMPR of the Youth Funding Programmes 2014 examined three of the targeted funding schemes, the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund, the Special Projects for Youth (SPY) scheme and Local Drug Task Force projects scheme. Overall, the review found that the youth programmes can provide a significant contribution to improving outcomes for young people and should be con-

sidered for on-going public funding. The review made a number of recommendations for the future operation of the youth schemes and their development in the years ahead to ensure an evidence-based and outcomes focussed programme designed to secure the optimal outcomes for young people. The review recommended the development of a single targeted youth funding programme to replace the current schemes.

To facilitate the review's recommendations regarding the future development of a single targeted youth funding programme to replace the current schemes, I approved funding allocations for the establishment of several sample projects in 2016 and 2017.

There are now 23 such sample projects approved since 2016, of which 21 were operational in 2018 and a further two are to commence in 2019. Of the 23 projects, seven have involved the augmentation of existing projects to respond to identified needs.

I am circulating a set of tables with details of the 23 sample projects, by year of first approval.

In determining the sample projects for funding, my Department has worked closely with the 16 Education and Training Boards, all of which were invited to nominate locations within their catchment areas for new and augmented projects.

The 23 sample projects fall within ten of the ETB areas. The remaining six ETBs are currently involved in a process to identify the local needs of young people in these areas, with a view to submitting applications for new or augmented services in 2019.

In advance of the introduction of a new single targeted funding scheme in 2020, a transition phase in 2019 will see the funding previously provided under four funding programmes, (Special Projects for Youth, Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund 1&2, Local Drugs Task Force Projects and Youth Information Centres) collapsed into one funding stream for 2019 to assist with preparations for the new scheme in 2020.

I believe that the reformed system will bring substantial benefits to our young people, and my Department will continue with this important work.

New Sample Projects approved 2016

Location	ETB
Boomerang Youth Service Drogheda, Co Louth	Louth Meath ETB
Crosscare Youth Service West Wicklow	Kildare Wicklow ETB
Cahir Youth Project, Co Tipperary	Tipperary ETB
Fethard/ Killenaule Youth Project, Co Tipperary	Tipperary ETB
Bounce Back Youth Project, East Cavan, Co Cavan	Cavan Monaghan ETB
Roscommon VFM Project, Co Roscommon	Galway Roscommon ETB

Augmented Projects approved 2017

Location	ETB
Include Youth Service Co Monaghan	Cavan Monaghan ETB
Cloyne Diocesan Youth Service Project Middleton	Cork ETB
Crosscare – East Wicklow Youth Service	Kildare Wicklow ETB
Ossory Youth Kilkenny Gateway Project (YWI)	Kilkenny Carlow ETB
Croom Foróige Youth Project, Croom Co Limerick	Limerick Clare ETB
Co Longford Youth Service (CLYS)	Longford Westmeath ETB

Templemore Youth Project & Thurles Youth Project, Co Tipperary	Tipperary ETB
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New Sample Projects approved 2017

Location	ETB
Bounce Back Youth Project West Cavan	Cavan Monaghan ETB
Carrigaline Youth Project, Co Cork	Cork ETB
Mitchelstown Youth Project, Mitchelstown, Co Cork	Cork ETB
Dublin Rural North (Skerries)	Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB
Tyrrelstown Youth Project Dublin 15	Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB
County Longford Project	Longford Westmeath ETB
Foroige Gort Youth Project, Gort, Co Galway	Galway Roscommon ETB
Tullow Community Youth Project, Tullow Co Carlow	Kilkenny Carlow ETB
Garryowen Youth Project, Garryowen, Co Limerick	Limerick Clare ETB
Foroige Ballyhaunis Youth Project, Ballyhaunis, Co Mayo	Mayo Sligo Leitrim ETB

School Completion Programme

709. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of on the new school completion strategy to further improve school completion rates particularly in disadvantaged areas; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29811/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Education and schooling are critical in the lives - and indeed life chances - of children and young people. As part of the range of responses in place that support children in completing their schooling, the School Completion Programme is key. This programme provides learner-centred and holistic supports for young people who are at risk of leaving school early. Indeed, I believe that this programme, along with the Home school Community Liaison Scheme and the DEIS programme, has played an important part in the achievement of our high rates of school retention.

The Programme for Government includes a commitment to prepare a School Completion Strategy. Having considered the existing and emerging needs in this area, I directed my officials to take a strategic approach to the subject of school engagement and retention. I am pleased to say that my Department has produced a Blueprint for the Development of Educational Welfare and Alternative Education, Assessment and Registration Services, which is currently being consulted on.

This policy platform comprehends the both the strategic and operational actions that need to be advanced to ensure the best possible system of supports for tackling educational engagement and retention are in place and integrated.

My Department works with the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) in Tusla to ensure that necessary resources are available to support this programme and to ensure staffing levels are sufficient to deliver a high quality service for those young people most at risk of early school leaving, particularly in DEIS schools. In Budget 2019 I secured an additional €500,000 in funding for the EWS and the Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service. And I will continue to lead on advancing supports both in policy and provision in this crucial area.

Departmental Expenditure

710. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the years 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by inquiry, tribunal or commission; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29828/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): There is currently one commission of investigation currently under way for which I am the specified Minister under the Commissions of Investigation Act 2004. This is the Commission of Investigation (Mother and Baby Homes and Certain Related Matters) and it is chaired by Judge Yvonne Murphy.

The commission is independent in the performance of its functions and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on any aspects of their work. However, I can confirm costs to date in relation to the work of the Commission. This includes expenditure incurred directly by the Commission itself and costs incurred directly by my Department in supporting their work and responding to various interim reports. This expenditure also includes costs associated with processes I have commenced to complement the Commission's work by facilitating former residents of these institutions to directly engage on the issues of concern to them and their families.

Year	Expenditure
2019	€1.5m
2018	€3.0m
2017	€2.7m
2016	€2.3m
2015	€1.7m

There have been no other tribunals, committees of investigation or statutory inquiries for which I was the specified Minister.

Child and Family Agency Expenditure

711. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the budget and expenditure costs for an organisation (details supplied). [29939/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): It should be noted that Meitheal is not an organisation, it is a national practice model which operates as part of the Programme for Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS). PPFS is a programme of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, as part of its National Service Delivery Framework. The programme seeks to strengthen and develop Tusla's prevention, early intervention and family support services.

PPFS has been driven by a logic model which aims to realise a series of medium-term and long-term outcomes for the programme. In the medium-term, these outcomes include ensuring the effective operation of Tusla's prevention and early intervention services, increasing the rigour of the agency's commissioning approach, and embedding the participation of children and parents in Tusla's culture and operations. In the longer term, it includes improved outcomes for children and parents, and value for money in service provision, achieved through shifting Tusla's family support budget in favour of evidence-informed prevention and early intervention services.

It aims to achieve these outcomes through five main operational work streams. These work streams are Meitheal and Child and Family Support Networks, Children's Participation, Parenting Support and Parental Participation, Public Awareness, and Commissioning.

In practice the Meitheal model focuses on identifying, understanding, and responding to the needs and strengths of children, young people and families in a timely manner to provide help and support to improve outcomes. It is intended to be used when children and young people need support around, for example, behavioural issues or emotional needs, but do not meet the threshold for an intervention by Tusla's Child Protection and Welfare service.

The family's voluntary involvement in identifying their strengths and needs and developing associated action plans is a key part of the process. In some cases, a single organisation can provide support but in general a team of people from a number of agencies with relevant expertise is brought together to work with the parents or guardians, the child or young person. A co-ordinated action plan is developed to meet the needs of the child or young person and if necessary other family members. Regular meetings are held to review the progress made and to discuss possible new actions.

PPFS was subject to an evaluation study by the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at NUI Galway, published in September 2018. The evaluation found that the Meitheal practice model was improving family outcomes, particularly among mothers, and that it was valued by participating families.

For 2019, a budget of €9.5 million has been allocated to the PPFS and Area-Based Childhood (ABC) Programmes. This figure includes €8.2 million which has been ring-fenced for the ABC Programme funding community based prevention services. €1.3 million has been allocated to support the PPFS, and the ABC Programme has transitioned to the PPFS. To consolidate this important work the PPFS is a central subgroup of each Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) which are in place in every county. My Department has led this strategic development and integration to ensure that a robust prevention and early intervention infrastructure comprising all relevant services is in place in local communities.

Child and Family Agency Staff

712. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of Tusla staff trained in the use of signs of safety since its inception; the number that remain with Tusla; and the number of staff not trained in the practice. [29940/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I wish to advise that my officials have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Child and Family Agency

713. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if a practice (details supplied) used by Tusla is provided under a licence agreement; and if so, the budget for such an agreement. [29941/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The practice referred to by the Deputy is an innovative strengths-based, safety-organised approach to child protection casework. It is a child protection methodology, which has at its core the involvement of the child in any assessment and decision making process.

As any license agreement and associated budget are operational matters for Tusla, I have requested Tusla to respond to the Deputy directly.

Child and Family Agency Staff

714. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of aftercare workers employed by Tusla by location and professional title. [29942/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As this is an operational matter for Tusla, my officials have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on this issue.

Child and Family Agency Staff

715. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of vacancies for social workers that exist for which funding is available but posts cannot be filled due to difficulties recruiting staff by location. [29943/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I wish to advise that my officials have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Child and Family Agency Staff

716. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of social workers employed by Tusla in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019 from recruitment agencies; the cost of using such companies; and the location of such agency staff. [29944/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I wish to advise that my officials have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Child and Family Agency Staff

717. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of social workers who left and joined Tusla in 2018, respectively; the number of social workers employed by Tusla; and the number who have left Tusla to date in 2019. [29945/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I wish to advise that my officials have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Guardians Ad Litem

718. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the way in which the guardian ad litem service is funded. [29946/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Guardians ad litem are appointed by judges in child care proceedings under Section 26 of the Child Care Act, 1991. The role and function of a Guardian ad litem is to inform the court of the child's views and to advise the court of what, in the Guardian ad litem's professional opinion, is in the best

interests of the child.

The 1991 Act obliges Tusla, the Child and Family Agency to pay costs (fees, travel, and legal representation) incurred by Guardians ad litem in the performance of their functions and otherwise gives it no role.

During 2018, Guardians ad litem were paid €8.44m in fees by Tusla. Legal fees incurred by Guardians ad litem amounted to a further €6.21m in 2018.

Work on the reform of Guardian ad litem arrangements is underway. In December 2017, the Government approved the establishment of a new national Guardian ad litem service within an executive office of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs

The Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2019, which is close to publication, includes a presumption in favour of the appointment of a Guardian ad litem for all children in child care proceedings.

It will also provide for the establishment of an executive office within my Department, which will employ Guardians ad litem and also establish a panel of Guardians ad litem who will provide services as independent contractors.

Early Childhood Care and Education Funding

719. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will ensure that the programme support payment will ensure appropriate financial support to childcare providers in respect of the substantial costs in the administration of the TEC, CCSP and ECCE schemes as announced in May 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29951/19]

720. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason the programme support payment does not provide for the registration of children after 31 December 2018 to August 2019 in respect of TEC and CCSP and to June for ECCE; if the scheme will be amended to recognise the additional time required for childcare providers to complete the administrative work associated with the scheme as she announced on 10 May 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29953/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 719 and 720 together.

Over €19m of Programme Support Payments (PSPs) are currently being paid out to early learning and care and school age childcare providers in recognition of the additional time required to complete the administrative work associated with the various DCYA-funded schemes. The payment also recognises the time required to perform activities outside of contact time with children, such as preparing materials for early learning and care sessions and assisting parents in understanding how they might benefit from the various early learning and care and school age childcare schemes supported by the State.

The PSP was first introduced by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in 2017 with an initial budget of €14.5m and has been increased since then to amount to €19.4m in 2019. Prior to that it was intended that capitation payments for ECCE or subsidies under the targeted programmes, together with parental co-payments, would cover all costs associated with the schemes including administrative overheads. While the budget for PSP has increased since introduction, the PSP remains a budget limited programme that cannot be demand lead and must

therefore be reconsidered on an annual basis as circumstances change; for example significantly increased child registrations. The distribution of the 2019 PSP has been designed to be fair, effective and in keeping with the general policy set in previous years, in so far as possible.

The 2019 PSP is calculated as equal to 7 days' (1.4 weeks') registrations for ECCE at standard capitation, and 14 days' (2.8 weeks') registrations for CCS(P) and TEC. The June 2019 payment is made in respect of the programme year 2018/2019. As in previous years, the payment is based on child registrations at a snapshot point in the year.

As we countdown towards the introduction of the National Childcare Scheme, it is important that providers continue to be supported. There will be an additional €2m (over and above the €19.4m described above) associated with the National Childcare Scheme which will be made available to service providers later in 2019 as "Transitional Support Payment". This one-off payment is being provided to support providers to meet the administrative requirements associated with transitioning to a new Scheme. The size of the maximum payment available to each service will be based on the number of services applying and the number of children in those service who were actively registered on one of the Department's childcare programmes on 13th May 2019. Finally, it should also be noted that the subsidies for the NCS have been calculated to reflect the full costs (contact with children and non-contact/ administrative) of delivering early learning and care and school age childcare services.

Climate Change Policy

721. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics; the public bodies and agencies under her remit to which she has issued an instruction to cease the purchase and use of single-use plastics; when the instruction issued; the bodies that have confirmed they no longer purchase and use single-use plastics, respectively; the bodies that have not provided such confirmation to date; when they will confirm; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29979/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department has ceased the purchase of single-use plastics in response to the Government decision in January 2019 that government departments, public bodies, and schools will lead the way in the response to cutting down on single use plastics, with a number of measures, including no longer purchasing single-use plastic cups, cutlery and straws for use within their offices.

My Department advised agencies under its remit of this decision in early February 2019 and the Adoption Authority and Oberstown Children's Detention Campus have confirmed to my officials they also no longer purchase single-use plastics. I have requested that Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, and the Ombudsman for Children respond directly to the Deputy.

Adoption Legislation

722. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on the 14 motions tabled by councils nationally on behalf of an organisation (details supplied) requesting that her Department acknowledge adoptee identity rights; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30051/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am aware of the Council motions referred to by the Deputy and that these motions request that my Department allows adoptees access their own information.

The Adoption (Information & Tracing) Bill is at Committee stage in Seanad Éireann. It has always been the policy intention of the Bill to provide for the greatest possible release of birth information to adopted persons, consistent with the legal and constitutional framework.

An initial debate took place in the Seanad on Wednesday, 12 June and on June 19 the House took the decision to ‘pause’ the legislation and instead allow for statements on adoption. My legal advice is that some protection of birth parents’ constitutional right to privacy must be reflected in the legislation. There are two rights at play, the right to identity and the right to privacy, and the Bill must seek to harmonise these rights. In my recent amendments, I sought to provide for the release of identifying information with the minimum restrictions possible.

I recognise that there are strong views on and opposition to the privacy provisions in the Bill, and to the revised scheme set out in my proposed amendments for Committee Stage. Accordingly I have formed the view that further consultation is required to seek to identify a more acceptable mechanism for the release of information.

I have therefore embarked on further consultations with Members of the Oireachtas and with stakeholder groups, to seek to reach a consensus which will allow the legislation to progress.

Pending the outcome of these engagements, I hope to be in a position to bring the Bill back to Seanad Éireann in the autumn.

Child and Family Agency Investigations

723. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of allegations of child sex abuse investigated by Tusla involving an organisation (details supplied); the number of such cases referred to An Garda Síochána; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30052/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Deputy has asked about an operational matter for Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. I have referred the matter to Tusla and asked that they respond directly to the Deputy.

Community Enhancement Programme

724. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if a process to reintroduce and integrate a RAPID type programme to support the most disadvantaged communities will be established further to his recent comments in Dáil Éireann. [29816/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department’s Community Enhancement Programme provides funding to community groups to enhance facilities in their areas. The programme does not ring-fence funding for specific locations, as was the case with RAPID. Instead funding is allocated to each local authority area, taking into account the relative deprivation levels. Local community development committees, LCDCs, administer the programme locally to ensure that funding is provided to groups and areas that need it most in order to address disadvantage.

The LCDCs monitor the programme closely using local knowledge to ensure that funding is benefitting communities in the fairest way possible. The programme has been widely welcomed with over 3,000 projects approved for funding across the country in 2018. There are currently no plans to reintroduce a RAPID type programme.

Animal Breeding Regulations

725. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if the introduction of more stringent legislation to ensure that licences are not granted for the establishment of puppy farms in urban and residential areas in the interests of noise pollution affecting local communities situated in close proximity to same will be investigated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29817/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development (Deputy Seán Canney): My Department has overall policy responsibility for the Dog Breeding Establishments Act 2010. Under the Act local authorities are responsible for operational activities such as the registration, inspection and regulation of Dog Breeding Establishments, including enforcement activities.

Last year, following a public consultation process my Department published new Guidelines for Dog Breeding Establishments. These were put in place under the Dog Breeding Establishments Act 2010, and came into effect on 1 January of this year.

Sections 2.1.2. and 2.5.1. of the Guidelines refer to noise pollution in particular and outline that buildings which house dogs must not be a source of nuisance such as excessive noise from barking dogs and must be managed to ensure that the premises is not a source of noise nuisance.

It is a matter for each local authority, as the licensing authority under the DBE Act, to ensure that all premises comply with the standards set out in the Guidelines.

Anti-Social Behaviour

726. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the projects funded by his Department that have been most successful in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour in areas of Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29133/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department's mission is to support viable, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland. While the Department's role is not specifically related to tackling crime and antisocial behaviour, its Community Development programmes have a role in tackling social exclusion and addressing deprivation in all communities, both urban and rural.

SICAP 2018 to 2022 has a funding allocation nationally of €38 million in 2019 and will provide some €190 million over the five year period of the Programme. SICAP supports disadvantaged communities and individuals including unemployed people, people living in deprived areas, people with disabilities, single parent families, people on a low income, members of the Traveller and Roma community and other disadvantaged groups.

There is also €4.5m in funding for the **Community Enhancement Programme** this year, providing funding towards grants for Community Groups across Ireland. The allocation of funding is weighted towards those communities in most need.

I have also provided ring-fenced supports for particular areas of urban deprivation including, for example, €6.5m for initiatives in Dublin's North East Inner City, an area suffering extreme deprivation.

All of these measures play a role in making our communities better places to live in.

CLÁR Programme

727. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development when funding from the CLÁR programme will be announced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29143/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The CLÁR programme provides funding for small scale infrastructural projects in disadvantaged rural areas that have experienced significant levels of de-population. Since I relaunched the programme in 2016, more than 1,200 projects have been approved funding of over €25 million.

I launched the 2019 CLÁR programme on 28 February last. Applications were invited under three separate measures:

Measure 1: Support for “School and Community Safety Measures”,

Measure 2: Support for “Play Areas and Multi-Use Games Areas”, and

Measure 3: Funding for “Community Wellbeing Support”.

Community Wellbeing Support covers the provision of equipment and vehicles for voluntary first-response organisations, as well as the provision of specialist vehicles to bring people to cancer care centres and other community care services. The measure will also provide funding for sensory gardens.

The closing date for the 2019 CLÁR programme was the 30th April, and almost 500 applications were received by my Department.

My officials are currently finalising the assessment of the applications received and decisions on the successful projects will be made shortly.

Leader Programmes Data

728. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount spent on projects in County Carlow under the LEADER programme; the number of projects allocated funding; the number still pending; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29270/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The LEADER programme is administered in County Carlow by the Carlow Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), which acts as the Local Action Group in partnership with Carlow County Council and Carlow County Development Partnership.

The total amount of funding allocated to the county for the duration of the 2014-2020 LEADER programme is in excess of €6.4 million, which includes administration and project funding.

To date, 33 projects with a combined value of €2,069,280 have been approved by the Local Action Group. This amounts to 43% of its project budget. In addition, a further 4 applications seeking total funding in excess of €700,000 are at various stages of the approvals process.

Project payments are drawn down as approved works are completed and claims for payment are submitted by the project promoters. To date, €1,146,666 has been spent on these LEADER projects in County Carlow.

Departmental Advertising Expenditure

729. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount spent on digital marketing in each of the past eight years; the items on which funds were spent; the criteria by which target audiences were selected; the amount of the digital spend targeted here; the amount targeted abroad; the amount that related to private companies; the amount that related to policy initiatives; and the purpose of the digital advertisements. [29398/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department was established on 19 July 2017. Since then the following has been expended on digital marketing :

Earlier this year, my Department hosted a series of regional ‘Rural Opportunity’ information sessions to raise awareness of the wide variety of funding supports available to rural communities from across Government Departments. Staff from my Department and a number of other Departments and agencies were also on hand at the events to provide further information to attendees on the range of supports available. As part of the Rural Opportunity campaign, a video was produced by a company, procured through the tendering process, which featured recipients, and demonstrated the range of supports available, detailing how the funding received made a difference to:

- job creation/enterprise in rural communities, enabling people to work in rural Ireland;
- improving the quality of life for those living and working in rural communities – reducing social isolation and improving social cohesion;
- attracting more visitors and tourism to rural communities;
- harnessing a vibrant cultural scene within rural communities; and - assisting a Gaeltacht community and promoting the Irish language.

The cost of producing the campaign video was €19,557. In addition to the production cost, €4,078 was spent on promoting the video on social media to users in Ireland (not internationally) who had displayed an online interest in Irish rural life.

My Department also placed an online advertisement for the public consultation on our Department’s Irish language Scheme which cost €615. This is the Department’s first Language Scheme, and runs from 2019-2022. This Scheme has been formulated with the intention of ensuring that all relevant obligations under the Official Languages Act relating to the Department of Rural and Community Development are being fully addressed on an incremental basis, through this and future schemes. It sets out the Department’s commitments to customer service in Irish and advises of the availability of services through Irish.

Departmental Expenditure

730. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the costs paid to companies (details supplied) for projects for which they were engaged by his Department in each of the years from 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason each was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29449/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I can confirm that my Department has not engaged the companies in question since the Department’s

establishment in July 2017.

CLÁR Programme

731. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of projects approved under CLÁR measures 1, 2, 3 and 4 since the programme was re-established, on an annual basis by county; the number of projects not approved by county; the main reasons for refusal; if there is an appeal mechanism in place to appeal refusal decisions; the funding allocated for approved projects in each county under the CLÁR programme annually; and the amount expended on approved projects annually and to date in 2019, in each county under CLÁR, in tabular form. [29535/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): It is not possible, within the timeframe available, to compile the detailed level of information sought by the Deputy. However, I have asked my officials to collate the information requested and I will forward it to the Deputy in the coming days.

Leader Programmes Data

732. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount allocated to each local action group, LAG, under the 2014 to 2020 LEADER programme; the amount expended to date under the programme in each LAG to 30 June 2019; the percentage of the spend to date of the amount allocated to each LAG for the programme period to 30 June 2019; the amount expended to date by administration and project costs by each LAG to 30 June 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29536/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): LEADER is a multi-annual programme with a total budget of €250 million over the period 2014-2020. €220 million of this funding has been allocated to the Local Action Groups (LAGs) throughout the country who deliver the LEADER programme. This funding is allocated to the LAGs for the full period of the programme.

The remaining €30 million is available for schemes to be delivered at a national level.

Table 1 provides details as at 30 June 2019 of:

- The budget allocations to the LAGs under the LEADER 2014-2020 programme.
- The total spend by the LAGs broken down by:
 - the cost of developing their strategies (preparatory support);
 - the expenditure incurred on LEADER administration and supporting the development of projects (administration & animation);
 - the funding provided to LEADER projects.
- The total spend expressed as a percentage of the LAG's budget allocation.

While the overall spend to date is 24% of the total allocation available to the LAGs, there has been a significant increase in project approvals since the start of 2018, with over 2,100 projects approved to a value of €75.8 million. Project payments, in particular, under the programme will increase significantly as these projects are completed and submit payment claims.

Table 1: LEADER Expenditure data as of 30 June, 2019

Local Action Group	Total Allocation	Prep Support Spend	Admin & Animation Spend	Project Spend	Total Spend	% Spent
Carlow	€6,416,803	€20,000	€570,502	€1,146,666	€1,737,168	27%
Cavan	€8,522,286	€50,000	€737,081	€1,047,813	€1,834,895	22%
Clare	€8,920,225	€83,336	€1,335,000	€816,240	€2,234,576	25%
Cork North	€5,091,846	€15,000	€942,141	€712,143	€1,669,283	33%
Cork South	€3,831,303	€65,000	€623,243	€305,996	€994,239	26%
Cork West	€5,015,674	€135,240	€832,922	€207,971	€1,176,133	23%
Donegal	€12,913,878	€57,594	€1,702,128	€2,900,157	€4,659,880	36%
Dublin Rural	€6,370,438	€55,000	€785,045	€471,303	€1,311,348	21%
Galway East	€7,655,851	€155,356	€986,700	€160,677	€1,302,733	17%
Galway West	€4,540,033	€75,000	€415,000	€227,665	€717,665	16%
Kerry	€10,219,868	€16,344	€1,788,522	€1,677,653	€3,482,519	34%
Kildare	€5,261,600	€50,000	€560,699	€211,422	€822,120	16%
Kilkenny	€7,791,573	€57,295	€1,250,000	€788,707	€2,096,002	27%
Laois	€7,124,587	€35,191	€760,446	€767,771	€1,563,408	22%
Leitrim	€5,998,475	€25,000	€721,134	€461,622	€1,207,756	20%
Limerick	€9,276,594	€22,187	€1,531,620	€1,408,285	€2,962,092	32%
Longford	€7,597,623	€30,000	€807,276	€448,966	€1,286,242	17%
Louth	€6,101,862	€28,000	€792,558	€570,498	€1,391,057	23%
Mayo	€11,121,432	€119,238	€1,679,598	€1,108,103	€2,906,939	26%
Meath	€6,903,124	€40,000	€996,343	€288,898	€1,325,240	19%
Monaghan	€7,592,720	€58,296	€744,456	€728,217	€1,530,969	20%
Offaly	€8,036,764	€30,000	€1,026,781	€1,377,419	€2,434,200	30%
Roscommon	€8,852,659	€58,213	€942,029	€546,829	€1,547,071	17%
Sligo	€7,655,648	€15,000	€688,174	€967,757	€1,670,931	22%
Tipperary	€10,103,443	€20,000	€1,222,600	€955,709	€2,198,309	22%
Waterford	€7,522,796	€75,427	€951,636	€1,735,656	€2,762,720	37%
Westmeath	€7,384,206	€25,602	€876,475	€402,401	€1,304,479	18%
Wexford	€9,840,141	€15,000	€950,872	€1,100,344	€2,066,216	21%
Wicklow	€6,336,549	€35,794	€784,206	€439,607	€1,259,607	20%
Total	€220,000,000	€1,468,112	€28,005,188	€23,982,497	€53,455,797	24%

CLÁR Programme

733. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount allocated to each local authority under the CLÁR programme in 2017 and 2018; the amount paid to each local authority up to 30 June 2019 for each allocation, in tabular form; the percentage of the amount paid out to date of the figure allocated to each local authority in each year, based on the latest data to 30 June 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29537/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): As the Deputy will be aware, CLÁR is an important part of the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development and focuses on areas which have suffered the greatest levels of population decline.

The table outlines the amount allocated under the CLÁR programme to each Local Authority in 2017 and 2018, the amount paid to each Local Authority up to 30 June 2019 in respect of

each year's allocation, and the percentage of the allocation paid at that date.

All Local Authorities were requested to submit their final outturn in respect of 2017 allocations by the end of June this year and my officials are currently working on closing out the 2017 programme. My officials will also be asking Local Authorities to complete their 2018 CLÁR projects with a view to closing this programme round as soon as possible.

Local Authority	Amount Allocated CLÁR 2017	Total Paid to 30.06.19	% of Allocation Paid	Amount Allocated CLÁR 2018	Total paid to 30.06.19	% of Allocation Paid
Carlow	€178,760	€156,445	87.52%	€337,707	€132,490	39.23%
Cavan	€288,731	€288,469	99.91%	€551,489	€508,653	92.23%
Clare	€323,132	€323,132	100.00%	€371,598	€370,865	99.80%
Cork	€195,600	€175,000	89.47%	€611,191	€493,815	80.80%
Donegal	€70,590	€70,590	100.00%	€461,841	€441,064	95.50%
Galway	€519,792	€519,492	99.94%	€603,615	€465,987	77.20%
Kerry	€134,188	€134,188	100.00%	€431,677	€48,000	11.12%
Kilkenny	€161,932	€161,932	100.00%	€303,464	€281,900	92.89%
Laois	€51,395	€51,395	100.00%	€508,313	€453,359	89.19%
Leitrim	€457,552	€457,552	100.00%	€380,236	€225,430	59.29%
Limerick	€161,730	€160,925	99.50%	€343,840	€343,540	99.91%
Longford	€238,417	€237,067	99.43%	€414,181	€95,120	22.97%
Louth	€245,869	€155,370	63.19%	€266,207	€215,552	80.97%
Mayo	€628,230	€596,637	94.97%	€624,166	€393,763	63.09%
Meath	€104,000	€104,000	100.00%	€226,440	€209,804	92.65%
Monaghan	€536,784	€528,987	98.55%	€503,164	€337,771	67.13%
Offaly	€186,954	€185,665	99.31%	€259,639	€259,638	100.00%
Roscommon	€320,555	€311,516	97.18%	€312,465	€292,447	93.59%
Sligo	€274,650	€271,746	98.94%	€376,895	€353,820	93.88%
Tipperary	€191,258	€187,978	98.29%	€361,355	€229,884	63.62%
Waterford	€313,365	€313,365	100.00%	€528,840	€491,641	92.97%
Westmeath	€77,096	€77,096	100.00%	€324,867	€251,825	77.52%
Wicklow	€33,300	€6,300	18.92%	€130,590	€42,795	32.77%

Local Improvement Scheme Data

734. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount allocated to each local authority under the local improvement scheme in 2018; the amount paid to each local authority up to 30 June 2019, in tabular form; the percentage of the amount paid out to date of the figure allocated to each local authority in each year based up to 30 June 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29538/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): In 2018, I allocated over €20.8 million for Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) roads in two phases. To date, over €18.4 million has been paid out under the 2018 scheme; this equates to over 88% of the total allocated. The figures requested by the Deputy are provided on the table, by Local Authority:

Local Authority	Total Allocation 2018	Amount of 2018 Allocation Paid to Date	Percentage of Allocation Paid to date
Carlow	€528,279	€521,812	98.78%
Cavan	€636,680	€500,008	78.53%
Clare	€1,038,844	€1,023,900	98.56%
Cork	€1,700,000	€1,344,107	79.07%
Donegal	€1,792,516	€1,360,232	75.88%
Galway	€1,942,000	€1,942,000	100%
Kerry	€1,209,990	€1,011,739	83.62%
Kildare	€329,590	€329,590	100%
Kilkenny	€679,683	€533,810	78.54%
Laois	€568,255	€440,352	77.49%
Leitrim	€550,120	€550,120	100%
Limerick	€684,349	€575,009	84.02%
Longford	€472,217	€382,350	80.97%
Louth	€250,000	€249,984	99.99%
Mayo	€1,843,235	€1,447,941	78.55%
Meath	€773,404	€765,001	98.91%
Monaghan	€540,841	€540,841	100.00%
Offaly	€644,654	€644,486	99.97%
Roscommon	€820,968	€639,662	77.92%
Sligo	€606,870	€606,870	100%
Tipperary	€794,400	€713,368	89.80%
Waterford	€607,047	€607,047	100%
Westmeath	€607,224	€607,224	100%
Wexford	€511,410	€477,768	93.42%
Wicklow	€668,135	€668,135	100.00%
TOTAL	€20,800,711	€18,483,356	88.86%

Local Improvement Scheme Data

735. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of rural roads that have received funding under the local improvement scheme, LIS, in each of the years from 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by local authority, in tabular form; the projected number of road projects to be completed in 2019; the number of projects approved under the LIS since it was re-established on an annual basis, by county; and the number of projects that were not approved, by county. [29539/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Since I re-introduced the Local Improvement Scheme in 2016, I have allocated over €48 million to the scheme, which has resulted in the approval of over 2,000 roads projects.

The LIS is funded by my Department and administered through the Local Authorities. The number and location of roads to benefit from improvement works is a matter for the relevant Local Authority, and my Department does not hold records of projects not approved at Local Authority level.

The table outlines the number of LIS projects approved, and the number that have been

confirmed as completed to date since 2017. In a small number of cases, the number completed is greater than the number originally approved, due to necessary substitutions agreed with the Department. A number of Local Authorities have yet to submit their final account confirming the funding spent and the number of roads projects completed, particularly in respect of 2018. My Department is addressing this with the Local Authorities.

Local Authority	Number of Roads Approved in 2017	Number of Roads Confirmed Complete under the 2017 Scheme	Number of Roads Approved in 2018	Number of Roads Confirmed Complete under the 2018 Scheme to Date	Number of Roads Approved in 2019
Carlow	20	20	28	28	14
Cavan	10	10	11	6	4
Clare	28	28	30	30	12
Cork	21	TBC	61	42	20
Donegal	164	164	106	56	34
Galway	57	57	66	69	37
Kerry	41	41	58	36	26
Kildare	0	0	12	12	8
Kilkenny	16	16	15	9	12
Laois	21	20	19	21	6
Leitrim	18	18	21	24	10
Limerick	18	17	21	22	13
Longford	18	17	25	13	15
Louth	8	8	5	6	7
Mayo	89	86	139	79	73
Meath	22	22	21	21	12
Monaghan	21	21	31	28	10
Offaly	20	20	31	31	11
Roscommon	41	41	92	55	21
Sligo	16	16	22	22	7
Tipperary	9	9	25	24	21
Waterford	17	17	19	20	4
Westmeath	23	23	22	22	12
Wexford	18	18	17	17	11
Wicklow	7	7	15	15	11
TOTAL	723	696	912	685	411

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

736. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount allocated to each local authority under the town and village renewal scheme in 2017 and 2018; the amount paid to each local authority up to 30 June 2019 for each allocation, in tabular form; the percentage of the amount paid out to date of the figure allocated to each local authority in each year up to 30 June 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29540/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The tables detail the funding allocated to each Local Authority under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme in 2017 and 2018 and the amount paid to date to each Local Authority by my Department.

It should be noted that projects under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme can typically take 12 to 18 months to complete. Interim payments are only made when Local Authorities reach a certain threshold of expenditure on projects, and final payments are made on full completion of the project.

All Local Authorities were requested to submit their final outturn in respect of their 2017 allocations by the end of June this year and my officials are currently working on closing out the 2017 programme.

The allocations under the 2018 scheme were announced on 5th October 2018 and final funding drawdowns can therefore be expected to run into the first half of 2020.

Table 1 - 2017 Town and Village Renewal Scheme

County	Funding allocated	2017 allocation paid to date	Amount paid as % of allocation
Carlow	€884,488	€884,488	100%
Cavan	€929,688	€929,681	100%
Clare	€944,000	€630,000	67%
Cork	€1,347,827	€1,060,466	79%
Donegal	€1,159,000	€399,796	34%
Dunlaoghaire/Rathdown	€80,000	€80,000	100%
Fingal	€252,000	€224,212	89%
Galway	€1,004,231	€948,231	94%
Kerry	€868,472	€466,386	54%
Kildare	€416,403	€328,202	79%
Kilkenny	€873,364	€546,363	63%
Laois	€983,407	€895,785	91%
Leitrim	€1,098,538	€863,538	79%
Limerick	€1,087,943	€910,873	84%
Longford	€637,400	€447,400	70%
Louth	€775,726	€707,729	91%
Mayo	€1,348,178	€1,144,089	85%
Meath	€901,724	€803,081	89%
Monaghan	€580,000	€530,000	91%
Offaly	€300,000	€300,000	100%
Roscommon	€575,508	€420,300	73%
Sligo	€1,063,968	€1,017,216	96%
South Dublin	€20,000	€20,000	100%
Tipperary	€857,384	€699,622	82%
Waterford	€625,800	€625,800	100%
Westmeath	€596,000	€356,214	60%
Wexford	€1,157,525	€724,078	63%

County	Funding allocated	2017 allocation paid to date	Amount paid as % of allocation
Wicklow	€262,828	€118,828	45%
Total	€21,631,402	€17,082,376	79%

Table 2 - 2018 Town and Village Renewal Scheme

County	Funding allocated	2018 allocation paid to date	Amount paid as % of allocation
Carlow	€786,118	€0.00	0%
Cavan	€530,000	€0.00	0%
Clare	€581,000	€0.00	0%
Cork	€1,001,800	€0.00	0%
Donegal	€1,100,000	€0.00	0%
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	€100,000	€0.00	0%
Fingal	€597,960	€0.00	0%
Galway	€900,000	€0.00	0%
Kerry	€476,000	€0.00	0%
Kildare	€520,000	€0.00	0%
Kilkenny	€652,280	€0.00	0%
Laois	€872,094	€60,000.00	7%
Leitrim	€737,520	€50,000.00	7%
Limerick	€963,918	€0.00	0%
Longford	€593,856	€196,928.00	33%
Louth	€892,157	€0.00	0%
Mayo	€1,183,615	€257,486.00	22%
Meath	€670,834	€0.00	0%
Monaghan	€868,500	€0.00	0%
Offaly	€1,300,000	€0.00	0%
Roscommon	€880,000	€50,000.00	6%
Sligo	€1,138,400	€0.00	0%
Tipperary	€913,266	€0.00	0%
Waterford	€756,000	€0.00	0%
Westmeath	€452,000	€0.00	0%
Wexford	€1,334,798	€37,215.00	3%
Wicklow	€518,004	€11,880.00	2%
Total	€21,320,120	€663,509.00	3%

Departmental Schemes

737. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of applications permissible per county for schemes (details supplied) in 2019, in tabular form. [29541/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I have provided the number of applications permissible per county for schemes (details supplied) in 2019, in the following table.

Scheme/Programme	Number of applications permissible by county and local authority for schemes
Community Enhancement Programme The RAPID and Communities Facilities Schemes are no longer available; the Community Enhancement Programme replaced these two earlier schemes.	No limit to number of applications per county or local authority.
Town and Village Renewal Scheme	A maximum of 12 applications can be submitted under this scheme per county.
Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme	A maximum of 14 applications can be submitted under this scheme per county.
Walks Scheme	The Walks Scheme currently covers 39 trails in 15 counties
CLÁR Programme	A maximum of 15 applications can be submitted under Measures* 1 & 2. There is no limit to the number of applications which can be submitted for Measure* 3 a, b and c.
Local Improvement Scheme	No particular number of roads as long as the Local Authorities work within their funding allocation and within the scheme criteria.

* The Measures funded under the 2019 CLÁR programme are: Measure 1: Support for Schools/Community Safety measures, Measure 2: Play Areas (including Multi-Use Games Areas). And,

* Measure 3: Community Wellbeing Supports (new in 2019), comprising of: (a) First Response Support,(b) Mobility and Cancer Care Transport and (c) Sensory Gardens.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

738. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of applications to the outdoor recreation infrastructure scheme by measure 1, 2 and 3 in each of the years from 2016 to 2018, by county; the number of successful project applicants in each year, by county and measure; the number of unsuccessful project applicants, by county and measure; and the value of funding approved for projects, by county and measure in each year, in tabular form. [29542/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): It is not possible, within the timeframe available, to compile the detailed level of information sought by the Deputy. However, I have asked my officials to collate the information requested and I will forward it to the Deputy in the coming days.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

739. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount allocated to each local authority and LDC under the outdoor recreation infrastructure scheme in each of the years from 2016 to 2018; the amount paid to each local authority and LDC up to 30 June 2019 for each allocation; the percentage of the amount paid out to date of the figure allocated to each local authority and LDC in each year up to 30 June 2019; and if he

will make a statement on the matter. [29543/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): It is not possible, within the timeframe available, to compile the detailed level of information sought by the Deputy. However, I have asked my officials to collate the information requested and I will forward it to the Deputy in the coming days.

Departmental Expenditure

740. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the costs paid to a company (details supplied) for projects for which it was engaged by his Department in each of the years from 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason it was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29558/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I can confirm that my Department has not engaged the company in question since the Department's establishment in July 2017.

Departmental Schemes

741. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount allocated to each local authority and local development committee, LDC, for the RAPID programme, community facilities scheme and the community enhancement programme in each of the years from 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the amount paid to each local authority and LDC up to 30 June 2019 for each allocation; the percentage of the amount paid out to date of the amount allocated to each local authority and LDC in each year up to 30 June 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29622/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The information sought is set out in the table.

The original RAPID programme was closed to applications from 2011 onwards. Spend in the year 2016 of €0.032m reflects my Department's contractual commitments under existing RAPID projects, mainly under the Sports Capital Scheme.

The nationwide re-cast RAPID programme and the Communities Facilities Scheme were launched for the first time in 2017. €65,000 was provided to each local authority area under each scheme, a total of €130,000 for each area and €4m across the country.

In 2018, the re-cast RAPID programme and the Communities Facilities Scheme were replaced by the **Community Enhancement Programme (CEP)**, which received total funding of €13m.

In March this year I allocated €4.5m to the CEP and in May I allocated a further €500,000 ring-fenced for Men's Sheds (& Women's Sheds). Applications are being processed by LCDCs at present and as of 30th June no payments had been issued to the Local Authorities.

Local Authority	2016 No Rapid/CFS/ CEP Scheme open	2017 Rapid Allocation	2017 CFS Allocation	2017 No CEP Scheme	2017 Draw-down	2018 CEP replaced Rapid & CFS Scheme	2018 CEP Allocation	2018 Draw-down	2019 CEP Allocation (inc Mens Sheds (& Womens Sheds))
Carlow		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€259,285	€259,285	€139,442
Cavan		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€274,141	€274,141	€153,082

Clare		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€336,239	€336,239	€151,037
Cork City		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€472,567	€472,567	€168,875
Cork		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€650,400	€650,400	€189,558
Donegal		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€632,449	€632,449	€188,257
Dublin City		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€1,364,607	€1,364,607	€251,573
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€369,788	€369,788	€153,888
Fingal		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€493,131	€493,131	€163,610
Galway City		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€233,676	€233,676	€139,000
Galway County		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€397,778	€397,778	€165,652
Kerry		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€382,630	€382,630	€162,043
Kildare		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€468,672	€468,672	€172,882
Kilkenny		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€289,901	€289,901	€148,099
Laois		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€294,177	€294,177	€145,686
Leitrim		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€189,068	€189,068	€134,459
Limerick		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€542,485	€542,485	€180,429
Longford		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€234,155	€234,155	€140,238
Louth		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€418,627	€418,627	€154,704
Mayo		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€425,542	€425,542	€166,145
Meath		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€393,662	€393,662	€163,835
Monaghan		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€238,172	€238,172	€139,116
Offaly		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€322,142	€322,142	€150,330
Roscommon		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€248,252	€248,252	€142,463
Sligo		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€263,402	€263,402	€144,555
South Dublin		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€750,743	€750,743	€185,106
Tipperary		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€486,017	€486,017	€169,324
Waterford		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€402,777	€402,777	€153,661
Westmeath		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€303,516	€303,516	€154,896
Wexford		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€494,079	€494,079	€169,699
Wicklow		€64,500	€64,500		€129,000		€367,921	€367,921	€158,359
Total		€1,999,500	€1,999,500		€3,999,000		€13,000,000	€13,000,000	€5,000,000

Departmental Expenditure

742. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the years from 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by inquiry, tribunal or commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29839/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I can confirm that my Department has not incurred any expenditure in respect of tribunals, commissions of investigation or statutory inquiries since its establishment on 19 July 2017.

Climate Change Policy

743. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if his Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics; the public bodies and agencies under his remit to which he has issued an instruction to cease the purchase and use of single-use plastics; when the instruction issued; the bodies which have confirmed that they no longer purchase and use single-use plastics, respectively; the bodies that have not provided such confirmation to date; when they will confirm; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29991/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department is implementing the Government decision on the 3rd January 2019 to eliminate the pur-

chase of single-use plastic cups, cutlery and straws in Public Bodies.

My Department began to eliminate the use of single-use plastics in 2018. All staff were provided with re-usable aluminium drinking bottles and biodegradable or compostable drinking cups were made available for use by visitors. No single-use plastic cups, cutlery or straws have been purchased by my Department since 2018.

I can also confirm that the agencies under the remit of my Department - the Western Development Commission, Water Safety Ireland, the Charities Regulator and Pobal - no longer purchase any single-use plastics. There is a small stock of plastic cups remaining in the Charities Regulator, though supply arrangements for compostable cups for the Regulator's office are already in place.

CLÁR Programme

744. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development when successful applications under 2019 CLÁR funding will be announced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30030/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The CLÁR programme provides funding for small scale infrastructural projects in disadvantaged rural areas that have experienced significant levels of de-population. Since I relaunched the programme in 2016, more than 1,200 projects have been approved funding of over €25 million.

I launched the 2019 CLÁR programme on 28th February last. Applications were invited under three separate measures:

Measure 1: Support for “School and Community Safety Measures”,

Measure 2: Support for “Play Areas and Multi-Use Games Areas”, and

Measure 3: Funding for “Community Wellbeing Support” .

Community Wellbeing Support covers the provision of equipment and vehicles for voluntary first-response organisations, as well as the provision of specialist vehicles to bring people to cancer-care centres and other community-care services. The measure will also provide funding for sensory gardens.

The closing date for applications under the 2019 CLÁR programme was the 30th April. Almost 500 proposals were received by my Department. My officials are currently finalising the assessment of these applications and I hope to be in a position to announce successful projects shortly.

Household Benefits Scheme

745. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to introduce a free television licence or reduction in the licence fee for legally blind persons; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29305/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The free television licence is received as part of the household benefits package (HHB) which also comprises the electricity or gas allowance. The package is generally available to people living

in the State, aged 66 years or over who are in receipt of a social welfare type payment or who satisfy a means test. The package is also available to carers and people with disabilities under the age of 66 who are in receipt of certain welfare type payments. Widows and widowers aged from 60 to 65 whose late spouses had been in receipt of the household benefits package retain that entitlement. My Department will spend approximately €248 million this year on the household benefits package for over 446,000 customers.

Disability related payments that are qualifying payments for HHB include:

- Invalidity Pension
- Disability Allowance
- Blind Person's Pension
- Incapacity Supplement or Workmen's Compensation, with Disablement Pension, for at least 12 months
- a Social Security Invalidity Pension/Benefit (from a foreign Social Security Agency) or equivalent payment for at least 12 months, from a country covered by EC Regulations, or from a country with which Ireland has a Bilateral Social Security Agreement
- Disability Living Allowance with Severe Disablement Allowance (from the United Kingdom) for at least 12 months.

My Department pays a bulk payment to the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment for the free television licence element of the HHB package. Customers entitled to this element of the HHB package do not receive a cash payment.

Any decision to expand entitlement for receipt of HHB to include people with disabilities who are not in receipt of a qualifying payment from my Department or to introduce a scheme that will provide payment to persons with a disability to pay their TV licence would have to be considered in the context of overall budgetary negotiations.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance Scheme Data

746. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of children attending secondary school eligible for the back to school clothing and footwear payment in 2018 and to date in 2019; the overall cost of the back to school clothing and footwear payment for such children; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29881/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The back to school clothing and footwear allowance (BSCFA) scheme provides a once-off payment to eligible families to assist with the costs of clothing and footwear when children start or return to school each autumn. The Government has provided €56.3m for the scheme in 2019 which operates from June to September.

The payment rates for the 2019 scheme are €150 for eligible children aged 4 to 11 years and €275 for children aged over 12 years and attending secondary school. The 2019 scheme opened on 1 June. 110,000 customers (200,000 children) were awarded the allowance automatically from a matching exercise on the Department's computer systems and did not have to make an

application. These customers will receive a letter during the month of June and will be paid €40.5m this week.

Customers wishing to apply for the allowance who did not receive an award letter by the end of June will need to submit an application. Applications can be made online or applications can be downloaded from *www.welfare.ie* since 24 June. Application forms are also available since 24 June in all department Intreo Centres and Citizens Information centres, or by texting Form BTSCFA followed by name and address to 51909 or by e-mailing *BSCFA@welfare.ie*.

The number of children aged 12 or over who received the allowance in 2018 was 112,000 at a cost of €28m. The number in this age group who have received the allowance in 2019 so far is 89,000 at a cost of €24.5m.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Partial Capacity Benefit Scheme Data

747. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made on a partial capacity benefit application by a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29145/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Partial Capacity Benefit allows a person who has been in receipt of Illness Benefit for six months or Invalidity Pension and who may not have full capacity for work, to return to employment and continue to receive a partial or full payment from the Department.

The personal rate of Partial Capacity Benefit payment is based on the assessment of a person's restriction on capacity for work i.e. moderate, severe or profound, where either 50%, 75%, or 100% of a person's payment is maintained.

The Partial Capacity Benefit claim from the person concerned has been processed and she has been assessed as having a moderate restriction on her capacity for work. A letter issued to her on the 2nd July 2019 giving full details of this decision.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Data

748. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a review for carer's allowance for a person (details supplied). [29147/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

Means are any income belonging to the carer and their spouse, civil partner, or cohabitant, property, (except their own home) or an asset that could bring in money or provide them with an income, for example occupational pensions, or pensions or benefits from another country.

The person concerned is in receipt of a reduced rate of CA due to her spouse's income.

9 July 2019

On 13 December 2018 she requested a re-assessment of her CA entitlement.

Additional information in relation to the person's means was requested by a deciding officer on 2 July 2019.

Once the information is received the application will be processed without delay and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

749. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision on an application for carer's allowance will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29166/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence, decided to disallow the appeal of the person concerned by way of a summary decision on 28 March 2019. Under Social Welfare legislation, the decision of an Appeals Officer is final and conclusive and may only be reviewed by an Appeals Officer in the light of new evidence or new facts, or where there has been a change of circumstances which has come to notice since the date of the Appeals Officer's original decision.

I am advised that the person concerned has submitted additional evidence and that the Appeals Officer is reviewing their case. The person concerned will be advised when the review of their appeal has been finalised.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

750. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29179/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred on 29th May 2019 to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Personal Public Service Numbers Data

751. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the 70 plus PPS numbers provided by an organisation (details supplied) in relation to an issue that has been raised of workers being blacklisted. [29185/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Scope Section of my Department undertakes investigations on foot of requests from a variety of sources, for example employees, employers or Social Welfare Inspectors. These investigations cover a variety of situations, for example, modified classes of PRSI for civil and public servants, family employments or insurability of Directors.

As a number of applications have been made to Scope Section for determinations in relation to the employment status of workers / former workers in the TV / film industry, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the likely outcome of these cases. Files have been allocated to Social Welfare Inspectors to commence preliminary investigations.

If anyone has a query about their insurability for PRSI purposes, they should contact Scope with details. I encourage other workers with concerns to contact Scope with details of their cases (dates of employment, employer's name, PPSN etc). Scope's contact details are:

Scope Section

Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

Gandon House

Amiens Street

Dublin 1

Email: Scope@welfare.ie

Phone: 01 6732585

Where an individual believes they are being deprived of employment rights applicable to employees they may refer a complaint to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) where the matter can be dealt with by way of mediation or adjudication leading to a decision that is enforceable through the District Court. Complaints can be made on a single online complaint form available at the WRC's website www.workplacerelations.ie or on lo-call 1890 80 80 90.

The Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court, which operate under the aegis of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, also hear cases involving industrial relations disputes. Industrial Relations policy matters fall under the responsibility of the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Working Family Payment Data

752. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the decision to reduce a working family payment will be reviewed in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29194/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Working Family Payment (WFP) is an in-work payment which provides additional financial support to employees on low earnings with children. In order to qualify for WFP a person must

have at least 1 qualified child. In calculating entitlement to WFP no allowances can be made for personal, family, or household expenditure. The governing social welfare legislation provides that, once WFP is awarded the rate remains the same for a 52 week period while a person continues to satisfy the employment condition regardless of changes in circumstances or income or expenditure. There are only 2 exceptions to this rule as follows which permit a review of the WFP rate during the award period:

An additional child.

or

In the case of a WFP recipient who is also receiving a One Parent Family Payment (OPF) where this payment is terminated on account of their youngest child reaching the relevant age threshold during the WFP award period.

In accordance with the governing legislation “a qualified child” for WFP is defined as a child who is under 18 years of age or over 18 years and under 22 years who is attending full-time certified day education and who normally resides with the applicant. The governing legislation further provides that a child who attains the age of 22 years during an academic year is also regarded as a qualified child for WFP while in full-time education for the duration of that academic year.

The person concerned was in receipt of WFP for 4 qualified children and their claim was renewed on 20 December 2018 for the period 03 January 2019 to 01 January 2020 at the appropriate rate for 3 qualified children. However their eldest child was no longer deemed to be a qualified child for WFP at the time of renewal as they had reached the age of 22 years on 05 September 2018 in advance of their relevant academic year which commenced on 17 September 2018.

Following an unsuccessful appeal to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) the Department’s decision of 20 December 2018 was upheld and the person concerned was notified of the appeal outcome on 17 June 2019.

An Appeals Officer’s decision is normally final and conclusive in the absence of any new facts or evidence. However it may be subject to review by the Chief Appeals Officer where it is considered that the decision was incorrect because of an error relating to the law or facts.

In order to request a review of the Appeals Officer’s decision the person concerned should enclose new facts or evidence to the SWAO or if seeking a review by the Chief Appeals Officer they must specify clearly the grounds for their review request.

However the legislation also provides that a customer retains the right to request a review of any WFP decision and that this right is not time limited. Accordingly the person concerned may forward their request for a review of the Department’s decision of 20 December 2018 to Working Family Payment Renewals, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, St. Oliver Plunkett Road, Letterkenny, Co Donegal, stating clearly the grounds for their review request. It should be noted that the subject of their disallowed appeal cannot be reviewed by the Department.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

JobPath Data

753. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person can opt out of the JobPath scheme in cases in which the client has found and secured employment outside of the JobPath programme such as in a case (details supplied); if JobPath providers are not rewarded financially in instances in which a person secures employment arising from their own endeavours; the amount paid to Seetec and Turas Nua since 1 January 2019 to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29220/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy will be aware JobPath is a case management service that provides employment counselling and advice to long-term unemployed jobseekers with a view to improving their prospects of securing sustained employment. It complements the case management services provided directly by the Department's own staff via Intreo and via other contracted providers such as the Local Employment Service.

Client participation on JobPath is for one year and is mandatory for all clients selected by the Department.

As in this case, long-term jobseekers that may have left the live register to go into employment for less than a year are still considered to be long-term if they reopen their claim within that period and are eligible for selection for activation services including JobPath.

Should a client secure and start employment during their time with the service, the service provider is contractually obliged to offer each client "In-Employment" support and this can be tailored to suit an individual's requirements. This support is offered for up to twelve months while an individual is in employment. A person is not under any obligation to avail of this support or to provide employment or employer details to the JobPath provider but, if they wish to do so all information will be treated confidentially.

JobPath is not a placement service and there are no barriers to the way by which jobseekers can source employment. The service is provided to help and support clients to identify and pursue suitable job opportunities themselves with the help of a Personal Adviser. Support can range from CV preparation, to assisting with job applications, to, in some cases, financial assistance for clothing or transport costs at interview stage or in the first days of employment.

I am advised that my Department has responded to this client's correspondence through the Department's Complaints Process on the 1 July 2019.

The person was referred on 11 May 2019 and agreed a Personal Progression Plan on 23 May 2019. Until a client has started employment and as long as they are still in receipt of a Jobseeker's Allowance payment, they are obliged to engage with the JobPath service and attend their activation appointments.

My Department has advised Turas Nua of the client's request that contact ceases once he has started in employment.

Within the terms of the JobPath contract, a JobPath provider may submit a fee for any client who gains employment of over 30 hours per week and maintains it. Payments are made at intervals of thirteen (13), twenty-six (26), thirty-nine (39) and fifty-two weeks (52).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Schemes Data

754. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the social protection schemes or measures that have sunset clauses; the annual cost of these measures; the dates in which these measures are set to expire; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29242/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised that the Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) (Amendment) (No. 10) (Assessment of Means) Regulations 2019 and the Social Welfare (Consolidated Supplementary Welfare Allowance) (Amendment) (No. 5) (Assessment of Means) Regulations 2019 are due to cease to have effect on 31 December 2019.

These Regulations provide that, for the purposes of certain means-tested schemes operated by my Department, the net cash value of meals, accommodation and related services provided by the Department of Justice and Equality will continue to be taken into account in the assessment of means of those who have been granted refugee status, subsidiary protection or leave to remain, or who have refugee status on arrival under UN resettlement programmes. There is no cost to the Department associated with the operation of the Regulations.

Officials in my Department are engaging with counterparts in the Department of Justice and Equality to assist that Department with the introduction of new arrangements which are expected to be in place by the end of the year.

Otherwise, there are currently no schemes or measures operated by my Department where a sunset clause is in effect.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

755. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29247/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's benefit (CARB) is a PRSI based payment, made to a person who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

It is payable for a maximum of 104 weeks for each person being cared for. This may be claimed as a single continuous period or in any number of separate periods up to a total of 104 weeks. While a person is receiving benefit for a set period and will have used less than 104 weeks at the end of that period, they can seek to have their current period of entitlement extended on request. As part of the request they must submit evidence to show that they will be remaining out of employment during the extended period, except where the regulations otherwise allow.

They may also need to submit evidence to show that their care recipient will require full-time care and attention for the duration of the expended period. CARB was awarded for a period 5 July 2018 to 3 July 2019. Upon expiry of the claim on 3 July 2019 the person concerned made a further application to extend her period of benefit. CARB was awarded for an extended period 22 August 2019 to 19 August 2019. The person concerned was notified on 4 July 2019 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Defined Benefit Pension Schemes

756. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to protect workers who are members of defined benefit schemes in which the scheme is solvent and the company is highly profitable; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29258/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Defined Benefit (DB) schemes are voluntary tri-partite arrangements between employers, employees (or their representatives) and trustees. Responsibility rests with all the parties for ensuring that the scheme is properly managed and funded to meet the promised level of benefits. Almost all Irish defined benefit pension schemes have a rule that allows the employer to cease contributions, usually after a notice period.

As the Deputy will be aware, the General Scheme of the Social Welfare and Pensions Bill 2017 (now the Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2017) was published in May 2017 and contained a number of key measures relating to DB pension schemes. It is intended that these measures will act to support existing provisions in the Pensions Act by providing for further protection for scheme members' benefits and enhancing employer responsibilities for their schemes.

In July 2018, Government approval was obtained to draft additional provisions to be included in the Bill at Committee Stage including provisions relating to defined benefit schemes.

In developing these provisions, it is essential to take account of the current pension landscape in Ireland so that a balanced, proportionate approach is developed and that unintended negative consequences do not arise.

The provisions of this Bill will introduce a new regime into the Pensions Act 1990 which, amongst other things, will ensure that an employer cannot "walk away" at short notice from the pension scheme it is supporting by providing for a 12-month notification period, and will enable the Pensions Authority to make a funding obligation direction specifying payments to be made by a sponsoring employer to the pension scheme where no agreement is reached, within a specified time period, to resolve a funding deficit.

The defined benefit pension provisions are very technical and involve complex policy issues. In order to achieve a resilient solution it has been necessary to consult in detail with other Government Departments and obtain numerous legal advices from the Office of the Attorney General on various aspects of the provisions. When outstanding matters have been resolved and amendments approved by Government, an early date for Committee Stage will be requested.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Data

757. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress to date in the determination of an application for an increase to an adult dependant allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); when the application will be concluded; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29259/19]

9 July 2019

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The increase for a qualified adult, payable with the state pension (contributory), is a means-tested payment, based on the means of the qualified adult, solely or jointly held. An increase has been awarded to the person concerned with effect from 7 March 2019, at the maximum weekly rate for a qualified adult under 66 with nil assessable means.

Written notification of this decision issued to both the person concerned and their qualified adult on 2 July 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

758. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if self-employed persons such as farmers will be entitled to the maximum pension rate under the changes in the new total contributions approach, TCS, planned for post-2020; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29261/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The introduction of a Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to establishing the level of entitlement for all new state pension contributory claims was signalled by the then Government in the National Pensions Framework in 2010. At that time it set a target date of 2020 for the implementation of TCA. More recently, the Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018-2023 targeted implementation of the TCA from Q3 of 2020. This is subject to the necessary legislation being enacted and supporting structures being in place.

Consultation is a very important part of the development and design of the new pension. With this in mind, I launched a public consultation on the design of the TCA on the 28th of May 2018 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.

Shortly afterwards, Oireachtas members were invited to a detailed briefing by my officials in Leinster House. 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 the issues of most interest to them including how self-employed people and Class S PRSI contributions since 1988 could be treated.

Having carefully examined the outputs of the consultation process, my Department is now designing the scheme and I intend to shortly bring a proposal to Government setting out that design. When the Government has agreed the approach to be taken, I will initiate the work required to introduce this reform.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Free Travel Scheme Data

759. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of extending the free travel scheme to persons that are visually impaired or blind and are unable to obtain a driver licence (details supplied). [29277/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The free travel scheme provides free travel on the main public and private transport services for

those eligible under the scheme. These include road, rail and ferry services provided by companies such as Bus Átha Cliath, Bus Éireann and Iarnród Éireann, as well as Luas and services provided by over 80 private transport operators. There are currently approx. 948,000 customers with direct eligibility. Following recent announcements in Budget 2019 the funding for the free travel scheme was increased by €5 million to a total of €95 million.

I am advised that my Department cannot providing an accurate projection of the cost of extending the free travel scheme to those unable to drive a vehicle on medical grounds or because they do not meet regulations set out by the Road Safety Authority. The extra cost to the free travel scheme is determined by the usage of the extra passes provided and not by the number of newly qualified people.

The objective of the free travel scheme is to assist older people and people with disabilities in remaining active within their community. Extending the eligibility of the free travel scheme to include all people who are deemed unsuitable to drive by the national licensing authority, regardless of whether they receive a payment from my department, would have to be considered in the overall budgetary context.

Under the supplementary welfare allowance scheme (SWA) the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection may award a travel supplement in any case where the circumstances of the case so warrant. The supplement is intended to assist with ongoing or recurring travel costs that cannot be met from the client's own resources and are deemed to be necessary. Every decision is based on consideration of the circumstances of the case, taking account of the nature and extent of the need and of the resources of the person concerned.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Support Services

760. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of extending the workplace adaptation grant to those that are blind and vision impaired for a second year on community employment schemes. [29278/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department provides a range of grants and supports to assist both jobseekers with disabilities and employers to take appropriate measures to enable either a potential employee or existing employee with disabilities to obtain or retain employment. These include the:

- Disability Awareness Support Scheme (DASS)
- Reasonable Accommodation Fund (RAF), which encompasses:-
- Employee Retention Grant
- Workplace Equipment / Adaptation Grant
- Personal Reader Grant
- Job Interview Interpreter Grant

The purpose of the Workplace Equipment/Adaptation Grant (WEAG) is to increase the job opportunities for people with a disability by supporting any additional costs, related to the disability, incurred by private sector employers employing or retaining an employee with a disability or self-employed people with a disability.

The general principles of the scheme are that it:

- applies only to the additional costs of adapting workplace equipment or of the provision of equipment arising from the individual's disability. It should not be used to provide support usually provided by employers or supports required under legislation for employees who do not have a disability;

- is a contribution towards the cost of an adaptation or of equipment up to a current limit of €6,350. It can also be used to upgrade adaptive equipment which may have been funded previously. Application in excess of this sum will be considered on an individual basis up to a maximum of €9,523 if specialist training for the assistive technology is required;

- is not intended to meet the usual costs of setting up and running a business either for an employer or a self-employed person;

- will be treated as a grant; and

- may be used in part for training in the use of the grant-aided equipment.

Those eligible for receipt include:-

- Any person with a disability who is about to take up employment with a private sector employer, change job as a result of re-deployment or promotion, or become self-employed, and who requires assistive technology or an adaptation to the workplace in order to undertake the duties required.

- Any person employed by a private sector employer who acquires a disability whilst in employment, whose employer is participating in the Employee Retention Grant Scheme (ERGS), and who requires assistive technology or an adaptation to the workplace in order to retain his/her employment.

- Any person with a disability who is employed by a private sector employer, whose condition deteriorates so that he/she requires new assistive technology or a further adaptation to the workplace in order to retain his/her employment.

The Community Employment (CE) scheme provides part-time employment and training opportunities in local communities for people in receipt of a long term Social Welfare payment as a stepping stone back to employment. It is important to note that community employment, does not, nor is it intended to, provide full-time sustainable employment. As CE projects are funded by the exchequer, participation on a CE scheme is not currently considered as private sector employment for the purpose of eligibility for WEAG.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Data

761. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the Christmas bonus will be available in 2019. [29279/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Christmas Bonus payment is made to long-term social welfare recipients, such as pensioners, carers, people with disabilities, lone parents and long-term unemployed people who rely wholly or mainly on their social welfare payments for financial support.

As is the case every year, the payment of a Christmas Bonus is a discretionary decision made by Government in the context of the annual Budget process and available resources. A decision to pay the bonus this year will be made when announcing the 2020 Budget in October and must be consistent with the legal requirements set out in the Fiscal Responsibility Acts 2012 and 2013, and within the context of achieving targets set for Ireland by the EU rules.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Applications Data

762. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an invalidity pension, IP, application by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29304/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Invalidity pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

The department received a claim for IP for the gentleman concerned on 17 September 2018. The claim was refused on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on 14 February 2019 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review and appeal. He requested an appeal of this decision and submitted further medical evidence in support of his request. Following a review of all the information available the deciding officer is satisfied that the medical conditions for the scheme are satisfied.

The gentleman referred to has been awarded invalidity pension with effect from 20 September 2018. Payment will issue to his nominated bank account on 18 July 2019. Any arrears due from 20 September 2018 to 17 July 2019 (less any overlapping social welfare payment) will issue as soon as possible. The gentleman in question was notified of this decision on 03 July 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Pensions Legislation

763. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to ensure that the next social welfare Bill permits the full work record of a person to be evaluated in terms of social insurance for payment of jobseeker's benefit when he or she reaches 65 years of age and during the 66th year until he or she qualifies for the State pension at 66 years of age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29316/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011 provided that State pension age will increase to age 67 in 2021 and age 68 in 2028. The purpose of these changes is to make the pension system more sustainable in the context of increasing life expectancy. This has significant implications for future cost of State pension provision which is increasing by approximately €1 billion every 4 to 5 years.

Jobseeker's payments are currently paid to eligible jobseekers aged 18 to 66 years subject to the person satisfying the general scheme conditions. Social Welfare legislation states that jobseeker payments may be made until the person reaches pensionable age. In this regard, the du-

ration of jobseeker's payments will naturally adjust in line with increases in state pension age.

Jobseekers Benefit is normally paid for 9 months (234 days) for people with 260 or more PRSI contributions paid and for 6 months (156 days) for people with fewer than 260 PRSI contributions paid. Arrangements are in place to provide that jobseekers whose benefit expires in their 65th year can generally continue to be paid benefit up until pensionable age provided they satisfy the necessary contribution conditions.

I am also introducing a new jobseekers benefit for the self-employed later this year which I announced as part of Budget 2019. The Social Welfare Bill 2019 will provide for the necessary legislation required to introduce this new scheme which is progressing through the Houses of the Oireachtas. Once enacted, this scheme will also provide for the alignment of payment in line with increases in state pension age.

There is no statutory retirement age in the State, and the age at which employees retire is a matter for the contract of employment between them and their employers. While such a contract may have been entered into with a retirement age of 65, in the context of previous State pension arrangements, there is no legal impediment to the employer and employee agreeing to increase the employment duration, if both parties agree to do so.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Pensions Data

764. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of awarding full State pension entitlements to each cohort of citizens when they reach 65 years of age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29317/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): In 2019, it is estimated that this Department will spend over €8 billion on pension payments. The cost includes payments to over 650,000 pensioners and qualified adults who are aged 66 and over as well as pensions paid to those who are under 66 years of age (such as widows and qualified adults under the age of 66).

According to the CSO's Population and Labour Force Projections for 2018, and taking account of various assumptions, the number of people aged 65 and over resident in Ireland is estimated to range between 664,634 and 666,680. The cost of providing a pension payment of €248.30 for all people aged 65 and over would then range between €8.5 billion and €8.65 billion.

It should be noted that this does not include the cost of increasing pension payments to pensioners living abroad who are entitled to a contributory pension and those under 66 who currently receive a pensions payment.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

JobPath Data

765. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a matter will be addressed regarding the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29318/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): JobPath is an employment activation service that supports people who are long-term unemployed, including those working part-time and those at risk of becoming long-term unemployed, to secure and sustain full-time paid employment. All jobseekers over one year on the Live Register are eligible for selection for the JobPath service and clients are chosen by means of a random selection process.

Customers referred to JobPath who are also working part-time will have all activities including meetings with their personal advisor scheduled around their work commitments and the JobPath contractors are required to be flexible in the provision of the service in that respect.

The customer in question had completed a year with the JobPath service last November. In the intervening period of six months they had not found sustainable full-time employment, and had not been selected for any other activation support service, and therefore became eligible for reselection for JobPath in May.

Seetec have stated that an error was made when scheduling an initial appointment after the client had informed the service provider of their work days. A complaint was submitted directly to the service provider by the customer. Seetec immediately acknowledged the error and apologised to the person concerned and also gave an undertaking to schedule appointment for days on which the individual was not working.

This matter has now been rectified and appointments will only be scheduled for days on which the client is not working. The incorrect appointment and follow on letter have been removed from the client's record.

JobPath provides an intensive personal service which focuses on the skills and the experience of the individual. As this client is already in part-time employment the focus will be to secure sustainable full time employment.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

766. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason there is a different means test for the disability pension as opposed to the blind pension; and if this will change. [29327/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The social protection system includes a variety of social assistance payments with different rules in relation to means testing, reflecting the different contingencies under which payments are made.

The blind pension is a means-tested payment paid to blind and visually impaired people. It is unique in the social protection system as it is a payment provided to people with a specific physical impairment. As such, it contains different eligibility and means criteria to disability allowance. Unlike disability allowance, recipients of blind pension may also qualify for a range of other primary schemes such as jobseeker's benefit, illness benefit, and one-parent family payment. Persons in receipt of the blind pension may also have an entitlement to blind welfare allowance from the HSE which is disregarded for the blind pension means test.

The capital means test for disability allowance is also unique in the social protection system, in that it disregards €50,000 of capital completely, compared to €20,000 for most other social assistance schemes including blind pension. 84% of blind pension recipients with means from

capital have means of less than €20,000 and this is therefore completely disregarded. A further 13% (about 65 people) have capital means between €20,000 and €50,000.

Subject to meeting the qualifying conditions, a person with significant visual impairment on blind pension may, instead, apply for disability allowance.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

767. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a carers allowance will be granted to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29331/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

An increased payment can be made where full-time care is being provided to two people.

An application for CA was received from the person concerned on 30 August 2018 in respect to two care recipients.

It is a condition for receipt of CA is that the person being cared for must have such a disability that as a result they require full-time care and attention.

This is defined as requiring from another person, continual supervision and frequent assistance throughout the day in connection with normal bodily functions or continual supervision in order to avoid danger to him or herself and likely to require that level of care for at least twelve months.

The applications were refused on the grounds that the person concerned was already in receipt of two social welfare payments from by department at a higher rate of payment. The person concerned was in receipt of Blind Pension and a One Parent Family Payment (OPFP).

The application in relation to her son was also refused on the grounds that the evidence did not indicate that the requirement for full-time care was satisfied in relation to him.

The person concerned was notified of these decisions on 28 February 2019, the reasons for them and of her right of review and appeal.

Following termination of her OPFP the person concerned requested a review of her claims.

The outcome of the review is that on examining the evidence submitted in support of her application in respect of her son, the deciding officer decided that this evidence did not indicate that the requirement for full-time care was satisfied in respect of him.

CA was awarded to the person concerned with effect from 9 May 2019 in respect of her daughter. The first payment will issue to her nominated post office on 11 July 2019.

Arrears for the period 9 May 2019 to 10 July 2019 will also issue shortly.

The person concerned was notified on 5 July 2019 of these revised decisions, the reason for them and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

768. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to grant credits to self-employed persons who were in full-time self-employment before self-employed pay related social insurance, PRSI, was introduced for the purposes of assessing them under the new total contributions approach to assessing State pensions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29338/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The introduction of a Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to establishing the level of entitlement for all new state pension contributory claims was signalled by the then Government in the National Pensions Framework in 2010. At that time it set a target date of 2020 for the implementation of TCA. More recently, the Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018-2023 targeted implementation of the TCA from Q3 of 2020. This is subject to the necessary legislation being enacted and supporting structures being in place.

Consultation is a very important part of the development and design of the new pension. With this in mind, I launched a public consultation on the design of the TCA on the 28th of May 2018 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.

Shortly afterwards, Oireachtas members were invited to a detailed briefing by my officials in Leinster House. 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 the issues of most interest to them including in particular how self-employed people and Class S PRSI contributions since 1988 could be treated.

Having carefully examined the outputs of the consultation process, my Department is now designing the scheme and I intend to shortly bring a proposal to Government setting out that design. When the Government has agreed the approach to be taken, I will initiate the work required to introduce this reform.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Support Grant

769. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a carer's support grant will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29342/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Carer's Support Grant is an annual payment made by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to full-time carers.

The person concerned was paid the 2018 grant earlier this year. A short questionnaire was sent to her for completion in April in order to assess her eligibility for the 2019 grant. However, the completed questionnaire has not been returned by her.

The questionnaire was reissued to the person concerned on the 3rd of July and a decision will issue to her on receipt of the completed questionnaire.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Treatment Benefit Scheme Data

770. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of self-employed persons who have availed of the extension of the treatment benefit scheme to the self-employed by county, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29345/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The number of treatment benefit claims made in respect of self-employed contributors in 2018 and 2019 (to date) is outlined in the following tables, categorised under the Dental, Optical and M&S (hearing aids) schemes. Treatment benefits have been available to self-employed contributors since March 2017. Statistics are not available for the 2017 year as the claims received in that year were processed on the old system and not coded separately to claims from employed contributors.

Self-employed TB claims 2018

-	Dental	M&S	Optical
Carlow	1399	52	990
Cavan	2139	75	1266
Clare	3204	116	2178
Cork	19079	521	10140
Donegal	4358	99	2089
Dublin	27056	903	19692
Galway	7524	197	3944
Kerry	5561	179	3254
Kildare	4707	178	3386
Kilkenny	3099	113	1883
Laois	1713	73	1038
Leitrim	1120	34	558
Limerick	5259	144	2636
Longford	1417	25	691
Louth	2455	90	1762
Mayo	4508	144	2465
Meath	4507	164	3070
Monaghan	1301	72	1216
Offaly	1861	66	1307
Outside RoI	3318	110	1955
Roscommon	1660	59	1125
Sligo	1800	58	1148
Tipperary	5194	150	3438
Waterford	3749	104	1782
Westmeath	2549	85	1531
Wexford	4115	156	2280
Wicklow	4162	152	2535

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-	Dental	M&S	Optical
Sum:	128814	4119	79359 Total: 212,292

Self-employed TB claims 2019 to end June.

-	Dental	M&S	Optical
Carlow	872	26	498
Cavan	1372	43	562
Clare	1989	68	1250
Cork	11225	230	5129
Donegal	2749	56	998
Dublin	16944	472	9356
Galway	4758	105	1987
Kerry	3459	67	1663
Kildare	2757	80	1769
Kilkenny	1787	58	904
Laois	953	36	501
Leitrim	714	15	247
Limerick	3163	75	1315
Longford	835	20	318
Louth	1554	42	815
Mayo	2826	72	1169
Meath	2829	98	1476
Monaghan	878	34	547
Offaly	1161	21	674
Outside RoI	2129	67	1205
Roscommon	1004	20	500
Sligo	1052	31	560
Tipperary	3046	89	1763
Waterford	2405	43	863
Westmeath	1493	49	705
Wexford	2468	76	1223
Wicklow	2514	68	1250
Sum:	78396	2061	39247
Total:	Total: 120,244		

Invalidity Pension Data

771. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of self-employed persons who have availed of invalidity pension since its extension to the self-employed by county in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29346/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

(Deputy Finian McGrath): The extension of Invalidity Pension (IP) to self-employed contributors from the 1st December 2017 has, for the first time, given the self-employed access to a social insurance based income support if they become permanently incapable of work as a result of an illness or disability, without having to go through a means test. This represented a real improvement in the level of social insurance cover available to the self-employed even though the level of contribution was not increased. When deciding to extend access to this benefit to the self-employed, the Government wanted to ensure that it was on a similar basis to that of those in employment.

A separate IP scheme for the self-employed was not set up; rather the qualifying conditions specified in legislation for the existing scheme, were amended to include self-employed PRSI contributions in the “reckonable” category for the purpose of IP.

To date, 867 customers whose social insurance record included self-employed (“Class S”) PRSI contributions have been awarded IP. Of this figure, 165 customers have either returned to employment or transferred to other schemes leaving 702 customers that are currently in payment and the following table gives a breakdown by county.

COUNTY	Total
CARLOW	14
CAVAN	12
CLARE	29
CORK	96
DONEGAL	28
DUBLIN	112
GALWAY	42
KERRY	28
KILDARE	32
KILKENNY	23
LAOIS	8
LEITRIM	8
LIMERICK	36
LONGFORD	12
LOUTH	17
MAYO	24
MEATH	24
MONAGHAN	7
OFFALY	14
ROSCOMMON	11
SLIGO	14
TIPPERARY	32
WATERFORD	19
WESTMEATH	19
WEXFORD	25
WICKLOW	16
Grand Total	702

Jobseeker's Benefit Eligibility

772. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons expected to benefit as a result of the roll out of jobseeker's benefit to the self-employed by county in tabular form; when she expects the new scheme to be operational; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29347/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): It is planned that the new scheme of jobseekers benefit for the self-employed which I announced as part of Budget 2019 will be introduced from November this year. The Social Welfare Bill 2019 will provide for the necessary legislation required to introduce this new scheme and is progressing through the Houses of the Oireachtas. Once enacted, jobseeker's benefit self-employed will be payable to individuals who lose their self-employment and as a consequence are no longer engaged in self-employment. To qualify for the scheme a person will have to satisfy the qualifying conditions including a PRSI contribution condition.

As with any new demand led scheme it is difficult to forecast the numbers that will apply and qualify. Factors such as labour market conditions and the prevailing economic conditions will affect the take up of this scheme. The Department estimates that some 1,000 could benefit from the scheme in 2019 and approximately 6,500 could benefit at any point in time in a full year. A breakdown of this information on a county basis is not currently available.

I trust that this information is of assistance to the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Applications

773. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for an invalidity pension by a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [29349/19]

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 lady concerned on 18 January 2019 and further medical evidence in relation to her claim was received on 05 April 2019. This claim was disallowed on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. She was notified on 04 July 2019 of this decision, the reasons for it and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Payments

774. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a first payment will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29363/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is

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habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

A person can be considered to be providing full-time care and attention where they are engaged in employment, self-employment or on training courses outside the home for a maximum of 15 hours per week, provided that they can show to the satisfaction of a deciding officer that adequate care has been provided for the care recipient in their absence.

The application for CA was disallowed on the grounds that the person concerned was found to be working outside the home for more than 15 hours per week.

The person concerned was notified on 11 October 2018 of this decision, the reason for it and of his right of review and appeal.

The Department was notified that the person concerned had appealed this decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO). A submission in support of the decision was forwarded to the SWAO on 28 January 2019.

As a result of an appeals officer's decision CA was awarded to the person concerned on 4 July 2019 with effect from 30 August 2018. The first payment will issue to his nominated bank account on 11 July 2019.

Arrears of allowance for the period 30 August 2018 to 10 July 2019 will issue shortly.

The person concerned was notified of this outcome on 4 July 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Payments

775. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the case of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29365/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): On 10 December 2018 the person concerned was awarded disability allowance (DA) at full rate with effect from 3 January 2018 following a review of her means.

During the period 3 January 2018 to 16 August 2018 an increase was paid to her separated spouse for her benefit. Consequently, the amount of social welfare already paid required calculation and was deducted from any arrears due. A person cannot receive two social welfare payments consecutively in any one period.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Applications

776. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an invalidity pension for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29371/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Invalidity pension is a payment for people who are permanently

incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the contribution conditions.

To date, an application for invalidity pension has not been received from the lady concerned. An application form has issued to her for completion. On receipt of the completed application form, her entitlement will be examined and she will be notified directly of the outcome.

Carer's Allowance Applications

777. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29373/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): An application for carer's allowance (CA) was received from the person concerned on 2 October 2018. The application was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) to assess the level of care being provided, assess means and confirm that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied.

It is a condition for receipt of CA that every claimant shall furnish such certificates, documents, information and evidence as may be required for the purposes of deciding the claim. The person concerned failed to provide the SWI with information that was required to determine if her means were below the statutory limit.

As the requested information was not supplied it was decided that the person concerned was not entitled to CA.

The person concerned was notified on 1 May 2019 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

The person concerned requested a review of this decision. The outcome of the review is that the person concerned has been awarded CA with effect from 4 October 2018. First payment will issue on 18 July 2019.

Arrears of allowance from 4 October 2018 to 17 July 2019 will also issue shortly.

The person concerned was notified on 8 July 2019 of this outcome, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Advertising Expenditure

778. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount spent on digital marketing in each of the past eight years; the items on which funds were spent; the criteria by which target audiences were selected; the amount of the digital spend targeted here; the amount targeted abroad; the amount that related to private companies; the amount that related to policy initiatives; and the purpose of the digital advertisements. [29391/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): For this response, I interpret 'digital marketing' as digital advertising, which includes both social media and online advertising.

My Department administers over 70 separate schemes and services, which affect the lives of almost every person in the State. The Department is committed to ensuring that members of the public are fully aware of the welfare supports and services that are available to them. Public information campaigns, including social media and online digital advertising, are an important part of this work.

In accordance with Government procurement policy, the Department undertook procurement for the provision of “Media Strategy, Planning and Buying Services” in 2017. As a result of this, Wavemaker was appointed under an Office of Government Procurement framework tender and all media buying since 2017, including digital advertising, is via Wavemaker.

Public information campaigns are developed and targeted carefully in collaboration with our media buyer and use the best mix of media formats to ensure that the Department’s messages reach members of the public effectively, while ensuring value for money.

Digital and social media advertising form an important part of our Department’s communications and all DEASP digital advertising, as with all advertising by the Department, is developed to help inform the public as to our services and initiatives. Digital advertising includes programmatic adverts (across a range of media websites/news outlets), Video on Demand (VoD), sponsored digital inserts/pages, as well as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram advertising. Digital and social media adverts can be used to target specific customer cohorts which can be useful when undertaking campaigns such as the promotion of online applications for Maternity and Paternity benefit, or the promotion of location specific initiatives such as regional jobs fairs, for example the Dundalk jobs fair. All of the Department’s digital and social media advertising is targeted within Ireland.

There was no spending on digital advertising in the years 2012, 2013 or 2015. Digital advertising expenditure, inclusive of VAT, by campaign purpose, for the years 2014 and 2016-2019 are outlined in the following tables.

2014

Campaigns which included digital advertising	Digital advertising costs (incl. VAT)
Promotion of Educational Fair	€1,845
Promotion of Educational Fair	€554
Total:	€2,399

2016

Campaigns which included digital advertising	Digital Advertising Costs (incl. VAT)
Launch of Paternity Benefit	€29,520
Total:	€29,520

2017

Campaigns which included digital advertising	Digital Advertising Costs (incl. VAT)
Promotion of MyGovID	€40,590

Questions - Written Answers

Launch of Treatment Benefits for the self-employed (April 2017)	€28,055
Awareness-raising campaign on welfare fraud	€16,627
Promotion of Paternity Benefit	€22,588
Advertising for the Blanchardstown Job Fair	€813
Promotion of Jobs Week 2017	€2,521
Launch of Invalidity Pension for the self-employed	€9,768
Promotion of additional Treatment Benefits [optical & dental] (October 2017)	€3,449
Awareness-raising of changes to the National Minimum Wage	€7,380
Total:	€131,791

2018

Campaigns which included digital advertising	Digital Advertising Costs (Incl. VAT)
Promotion of Jobs Week 2018	€2,126
Advertising for the Dundalk Jobs Fair	€984
Advertising for the Blanchardstown Jobs Fair	€369
Awareness-raising of false self-employment & the Department's role in determining employment status	€14,896
Awareness-raising of changes to the National Minimum Wage	€7,366
Total:	€25,741

2019 (to-date)

Campaigns which included digital advertising	Digital Advertising Costs (Incl. VAT)
Launch and promotion of the MyWelfare.ie online service	€24,600
Promotion of Jobs Week 2019	€3,502
Awareness-raising campaign of changes to employment legislation (Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act)	€4,485
Advertising of the Cross-Border Job Fair	€1,599
Promotion of the Working Family Payment*	€23,493
Promotion of JobsIreland.ie*	€12,291
Promotion of MyWelfare.ie: Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance*	€14,521
Promotion of MyWelfare.ie: Maternity/Paternity Benefits*	€30,705

Total:	€115,196
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I trust this settles the matter for the Deputy.

*Please note that this is budgeted spend. Invoices have not yet been received.

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

779. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a community employment scheme placement will be extended in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry. [29427/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Requests for extending participants on Community Employment Schemes are only considered by this Department at the request of the Project Sponsor; however, a request for an extension for this participant has not yet been received by the Project Sponsor to date.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

780. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if arrears of exceptional needs or rent supplement payment will issue to help cover arrears of rent in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29431/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned made an application for rent supplement in September 2018. The Community Welfare Officer requested documentation to support their application; as the documentation requested was not provided, and the application for rent supplement was disallowed.

The person concerned was informed of this decision in October 2018.

My Department has not received an enquiry or application for an exceptional needs payment in relation to rent arrears or a rent supplement from the person concerned. An exceptional needs application form has been sent to the customer on 3rd July 2019 and a decision will be made once the application has been received.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Bereavement Grant

781. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of restoring the bereavement grant. [29432/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): It is worth noting that there are a range of supports available for people following bereavement which provide more significant support than the grant. These include weekly-paid widow's, widower's or surviving civil partner's (contributory and non-contributory) pensions, which are based on contributions or a means test, and a once-off widowed or surviving civil partner grant of €6,000 where there is a dependent child. A number of social welfare payments, including

State pension, continue in payment for six weeks following a death. In Budget 2016, the Government increased the payment after death period to 12 weeks for carer's allowance. Guardian payments are available where someone cares for an orphaned child. A special funeral grant of €850 is paid where a person dies because of an accident at work or occupational disease.

Under the Supplementary Allowance scheme, the Department may make a single exceptional needs payment (ENP) to help meet essential, once-off expenditure which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet from their weekly income, which may include help with funeral and burial expenses. This is a more targeted and efficient manner of assisting people with bereavement expenses. In 2018 ENPs were made in respect of 2,812 funerals at a cost of €5.317m and 69 burial expenses at a cost of €140,674.

The number of bereavement grant claims in 2013 was 23,716, and this represented an increase of approximately 4% on 2012. Based on a similar yearly increase each year since 2013, it is estimated that the number of bereavement grant claims that might arise in 2020, were the scheme to be reintroduced, would be in the region of 31,200, and the number would be expected to increase in future years. Accordingly, if there were 31,200 such grants made in 2019, at a rate of €850 each, the cost would be approx. €26.5 million. Any decision to reinstate it would have to be considered in the context of overall budgetary negotiations.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Expenditure

782. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the costs paid to companies (details supplied) for projects for which each was engaged by her Department in the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason each was engaged; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29442/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department did not engage any of the companies in question for a capital or ICT project in respect of the years in question. The companies were engaged to provide consultancy services and other services required in the day to day running of the Department. Details of any payments made from 2015 to date are set out by year in the following tables. There were no payments made to A&L Goodbody or Davy for the years in question.

Tables:

2019

Company	Project - reason	Expenditure
PWC	Data Specialist	€97,150

2018

Company	Project	Expenditure
Mazars	GDPR and Accounting advice for Social Welfare and Civil Registration Bill 2017.	€115,721

2017

Company	Project	Expenditure
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KPMG	Actuarial Review of the Social Insurance Fund	€235,870
Mazars	Internal Audit Services, GDPR Analysis	€224,784

2016

Company	Project	Expenditure
Mazars	ICT Internal Audit Services	€15,074
Arthur Cox law firm	Settlement to Solicitors.	€17,048
2015	Nil to report	

Expenditure on projects, including consultancy services is closely monitored and companies are only engaged for essential work, following a rigorous assessment of need. Since 2016, in accordance with FOI guidelines all contracts awarded over €25k are published quarterly on www.welfare.ie. In addition, since 2011, details of expenditure on IT External Services Provision, eGovernment and Consultancy subheads are published annually on www.welfare.ie.

Early Childhood Care and Education Staff

783. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of early years sector staff that signed on to the live register for the summer months each year for the past five years; the cost of such claims for each year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29456/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised by my Department that it is not possible to provide the information requested by the Deputy, as Early Years Education workers are not separately identifiable from other Education Sector workers on the Live Register.

Departmental Staff Data

784. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of staff working within the State pension section; the number in each area within the section; and when staff were last taken on in the section. [29491/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Irish state pension schemes are centrally administered from the Department's office located at College Road, Sligo. Staffing figures as at the end of June are set out in the table below; there are two figures provided; one for the full-time equivalent staffing number (FTE) and the other for the number of staff on site (comprises full-time staff and staff availing of shorter working weeks).

The staffing needs for all areas within the Department are continuously reviewed, taking account of workloads, management priorities and the ongoing need to respond to new increasing demands in a wide range of services. This is to ensure that the best use is made of all available resources with a view to providing an efficient service to those who rely on the schemes operated by the Department.

Main Business Area	FTE	Staff Count
State Pension Contributory	151.41	165

Widow's, Widower's and Surviving Civil Partner's Contributory Pensions & Guardians' Payments	40.03	45
State Pension Non Contributory	79.24	82
Household Benefits (incl Free Travel and Fuel Allowance)	58.77	63
Widows Non-Contributory, Blind Pension, Deserted Wives Allowance, Deserted Wives Benefit	11.00	11
Total	340.45	366

In addition to the above there are a number of staff who provide support services such as scanning and postal work to the pensions area. Temporary resources were recruited to the pensions area on a phased basis since September 2018 to carry out a specific pension review and these staff will be released as the review work progresses to completion.

The most recent recruitment of staff to the State Pension schemes occurred in July 2019.

Carer's Allowance Applications

785. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied). [29520/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

Once claims are in payment, the Department periodically reviews them to ensure that there is continued entitlement.

It is a condition for receipt of CA that the applicant's means are less than the statutory limit.

Following a review of the claim, the claim was terminated as the means of the person concerned were found to be excess of the statutory limit.

The person concerned was notified on 30 April 2019 of this outcome, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

The person concerned requested a review of this decision and submitted additional evidence in support of her claim. The outcome of the review is that the original decision is confirmed.

On 28 May 2019 the person concerned was notified of this outcome and of their right of appeal.

The person concerned has appealed this decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO). A submission in support of the decision is being prepared and will shortly be forwarded along with the file to the SWAO for determination.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Expenditure

786. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the costs paid to a company (details supplied) for projects on which each was engaged by her Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason it was engaged; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29551/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Details of the total payments made by year to the company in question are set out in the following table. The expenditure relates to all payments made from 2015 to date, primarily for technical external service delivery assistance on a variety of ICT projects and also for some consultancy services.

Year	Expenditure
2019 to date	€3,165,965
2018	€7,443,240
2017	€7,219,294
2016	€5,507,793
2015	€4,042,665

Expenditure on ICT projects, including consultancy services is closely monitored and companies are only engaged for essential work, following a rigorous assessment of need. Since 2016, in accordance with FOI guidelines all contracts awarded over €25k are published quarterly on www.welfare.ie. In addition, since 2011, details of expenditure on IT External Services Provision, eGovernment and Consultancy are published annually on www.welfare.ie.

Carer's Allowance Applications

787. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29607/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's Allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

An application for CA was received from the person concerned on 28 June 2018. This application was disallowed as their weekly means were found to exceed the statutory limit.

The person concerned was notified on 27 November 2018 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

The person concerned appealed this decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO). The outcome of the appeal is that the original decision was upheld and the appeal was disallowed. The appeal's office decision is final in this matter and can only be reviewed in light of new evidence or facts not previously considered.

It is always open to the person concerned to re-apply for the scheme if her means decrease in the future. The person concerned may also wish to consider making an application for the stand alone Carer's Support Grant and Homemakers Scheme.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

788. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29609/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 11 March 2019. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 20 June 2019 and the case has been referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

789. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29610/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an oral hearing of the appeal of the person concerned took place on 25 June 2019 and that the Appeals Officer is now considering the appeal in the light of all of the evidence submitted, including that adduced at the oral hearing. The person concerned will be notified of the Appeals Officer's decision when the appeal has been determined.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

790. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when an application for a disability allowance will be processed for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29612/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): This lady was awarded disability allowance (DA) from 3 January 2018 to 28 August 2018 when she transferred to the state pension contributory (SPC) payment.

Arrears of allowance due have issued to the person concerned.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

791. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29613/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

An application for CA was received from the person concerned on 24 April 2019. The application is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

792. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29614/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

An application for CA was received from the person concerned on 25 March 2019.

It is a condition for receipt of CA that the person concerned must be providing full-time care and attention and it is a further condition that the person being cared for must require full-time care and attention.

The evidence submitted in support of this application was examined and the deciding officer decided that this evidence did not indicate that either of these conditions was satisfied.

The person concerned was notified on 6 June 2019 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

The person concerned has contacted by department on 21 June 2019 to request additional time in order to gather further information before requesting a review.

To date no request formal request for same has been received by my Department.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

793. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social

Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29618/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence including that adduced at the oral hearing, decided to disallow the appeal of the person concerned on 21 May 2019. Under social welfare legislation, the decision of an Appeals Officer is generally final and conclusive and may only be reviewed in the light of additional evidence or new facts.

I am advised that the person concerned has submitted additional evidence and that the Appeals Officer is currently reviewing the case. The person concerned will be contacted when the review of his/her appeal has been finalised.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

794. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for carer's benefit by a person (details supplied) County Kildare will be expedited in view of the circumstances; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29633/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's benefit (CARB) is a PRSI based payment, made to a person who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

An application for CARB was received from the person concerned on 23 May 2019. The application is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

795. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29637/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who has decided to hold an oral hearing in this case on 17 July 2019. The person concerned has been notified of the arrangements for the hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

796. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29638/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 25 February 2019. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 30 May 2019 and the case has been referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

797. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29639/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an oral hearing of the appeal of the person concerned took place on 19 June 2019 and that the Appeals Officer is now considering the appeal in the light of all of the evidence submitted, including that adduced at the oral hearing. The person concerned will be notified of the Appeals Officer's decision when the appeal has been determined.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Fraud Data

798. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of allegations of social welfare fraud that were investigated in 2017 and 2018; the number of such allegations that were unfounded; the savings arising from allegations which were upheld; and the cost in staff hours of pursuing such cases. [29650/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Re-

ports from members of the public on their suspicions of social welfare fraud or wrongdoing are an important element in my Department's overall efforts to prevent and detect fraudulent activity. Welfare fraud can be reported in a variety of ways. The Department provides a dedicated service on its website to enable reports to be made. A concerned member of the public can also write to the Department or telephone with information.

The Department is not able to make use of all the information it receives, for example where insufficient information is provided to identify a person or the person might not be in receipt of a social welfare payment. In addition, there are many situations where the information provided about a person may not constitute fraud and may already be known or may be permitted under the terms of a particular scheme.

The number of allegations of social welfare fraud recorded as received in the Department in the years 2017 and 2018 and the number referred for investigation is set out in the following table.

TABLE: Reports of suspected social welfare fraud from members of the public received and referred for investigation 2017-2018

Year	Reports Received	Of reports received - number referred for investigation
2017	21,223	14,363
2018	14,822	9,791

Each report receives a preliminary examination for relevance and to identify the persons concerned and if they are in receipt of a social welfare payment. Where a person can be identified and sufficient information is provided to warrant a further examination, the report is referred to the relevant scheme area in the Department, to a Social Welfare Inspector for further investigation or to the Special Investigations Unit for more serious allegations.

A payment is not suspended or stopped on the basis of the report received – instead this happens when evidence of wrong-doing has been ascertained by the appropriate scheme area.

All reports are received on an anonymous and confidential basis. The report received provides a 'trigger' for the instigation of a review of a specific entitlement and further investigation if that is considered to be warranted. Given the hearsay nature of the reports, they are excluded from the statutory decision-making process and do not form part of any evidence when the case is considered. Accordingly, I am advised that the Department does not track the outcome of the individual allegations of wrongdoing received. For this reason, the cost in staff hours cannot be disaggregated. These activities form part of the control work which is a core function of all officers of my Department.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

799. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made on an application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29654/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

(Deputy Finian McGrath): I can confirm that my Department received an application for disability allowance (DA) from this gentleman on 5 April 2019.

On 5 July 2019 the person concerned was requested to supply supporting documentation required by the deciding officer in order to make a decision on his eligibility. On receipt of this information a decision will be made on his DA application and the person concerned will be notified of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Reviews

800. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a review of an invalidity pension claim by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will be expedited in view of their illness benefit ceasing in August 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29659/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The lady referred to has been awarded invalidity pension with effect from 20 December 2018. Payment will issue to her nominated bank account on 25 July 2019. Any arrears due from 20 December 2018 to 24 July 2019 (less any overlapping social welfare payment) will issue in due course. The lady in question was notified of this decision on 08 July 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

School Meals Programme

801. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the provision of a third school meal being provided to schools in Ballymun can be extended to include schools (details supplied) in response to the closure of clubs in the schools. [29673/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The school meals programme provides funding towards the provision of food to some 1,580 schools and organisations benefitting 250,000 children at a total cost of €57.6 million in 2019 representing an increase of €3.6 million over the previous year. The objective of the scheme is to provide regular, nutritious food to children who are unable, due to lack of good quality food, to take full advantage of the education provided to them. The programme is an important component of policies to encourage school attendance and extra educational achievement.

The scheme provides funding for a breakfast or snack for all children and lunch for up to 90% of children in DEIS schools for the entire school year from September to June. Funding, for third and subsequent clubs, can only be considered where a historical entitlement exists. Where funding is provided for a third club, it is capped at the same level as previous years.

The three schools identified by the Deputy are DEIS schools and are currently being funded for a breakfast/snack for all children and a lunch for up to 90% of children based on the enrolment figure provided by the Department of Education and Skills. No food clubs funded by the department have been closed.

Changes to increase the funding of the scheme, to provide a third food club in DEIS schools, would have to be considered in a budgetary context.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Employment Rights

802. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to recent studies which highlight the bogus self-employment of pilots operating for airlines registered here; if her attention has been further drawn to the fact that an association (details supplied) estimates that the use of self-employment contracting by airlines here costs the State in the region of €15 to €16 million per year in employer PRSI contributions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29675/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am on record as stating very clearly that I am committed to tackling the issue of false self-employment. I believe the deliberate mis-classification of a worker as a self-employed contractor, in a situation where they are actually working as an employee, is wrong. It is wrong for three reasons.

Firstly, it denies the worker full protection under the Social Welfare Act, which means he or she is deprived of entitlements such as short-term illness and disability benefits.

Secondly, it deprives the worker of protection under labour law which means the a worker is left without any redress if they are unfairly dismissed, made redundant, or are not paid minimum wage rates, for example.

Thirdly, this form of non-compliance by employers deprives all taxpayers in the form of reduced returns to the Social Insurance Fund.

I have assigned my officials the task of modernising the Code of Practice on employment status. This is a vital tool for employers and employees so they can be clear when a worker is genuinely self-employed or alternatively when they should be recorded as an employee under full PRSI. A new manual – the Guidance on Employment Status – is almost finalised and I have said that I will be circulating it to ICTU and IBEC before it is published to get their input.

The new Guidance will be put on a statutory footing, to ensure it becomes central to the decision-making process in employment status cases.

I believe that enforcement of PRSI compliance is paramount and I want strong enforcement activity to complement the new Guidance provisions. My Department's inspectors have commenced a campaign of increasing the level of employer inspections nationwide. I have established a new Unit of inspectors, specifically trained and dedicated to the detection and tackling of false self-employment in particular.

Anyone who has a query or concern about how their employment has been classified by an employer to contact Scope Section of my Department. Scope Section will commence an investigation, which can involve referral of the matter out to a Social Welfare Inspector, and ultimately decide on the appropriate employment status.

A good deal of progress has been made by my officials in developing a number of legislative proposals that strengthen the protections for workers in situations of false self-employment. These include providing anti-penalisation provisions for workers who will be able to take a claim to the WRC if they are victimised by an employer for raising a query regarding their status. I also wish to increase penalties for employers who deliberately mis-classify employees as self-employed.

There is no easy solution to the issue of deciding employment status – if there were, the Courts would have ruled on it years ago. There are complex legal aspects to it and each case rests on its own facts. I also need to be mindful of the constitutional rights of employers and workers to manage their business and freely choose their employment status.

Work is ongoing to finalise the Guidance document and the legislative proposals and I hope to progress these as soon as possible.

I am advised that case involving an airline was investigated and decided upon and it is currently on appeal with the Social Welfare Appeals Office. It would therefore not be appropriate for me to comment on the likely outcome of this case.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Jobseeker's Transitional Payment

803. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated amount it would cost to extend jobseeker's transition from when the youngest child is 14 to 18 years of age. [29756/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department provides a number of options for income support to lone parents once their entitlement to the One-Parent Family Payment (OPF) ceases. These include the Jobseeker's Transitional Payment (JST) payment where the youngest child is aged 7-13 years (inclusive) and the Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) payment which may be paid to lone parents where the youngest child is aged 14 or over. The Working Family Payment (WFP), is also available to lone parents who are working 19 or more hours per week. Lone parents who move to WFP may also apply for the Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD).

The cost of increasing the age limit for a qualified child for the jobseeker's transitional payment (JST) until the youngest child reaches 18 years of age is not easily estimated as there are significant barriers to undertaking such an exercise. For example, customers may no longer be within the welfare system, while others could seek to move from alternative payments such as Jobseekers Allowance (JA), the Working Family Payment (WFP) and the Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD) back to JST. I am advised that it would be difficult for my Department to estimate the magnitude of this flow into and between schemes with any degree of accuracy.

Likewise, the number of young people 18 years of age (and over) who are still in secondary education, and the proportion of those who are the children of lone parents in receipt of benefits is not readily available or easily estimated. As these unknown factors are critical to providing a reliable costing my Department is not in a position to provide the costing requested.

Working Family Payment

804. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated amount it would cost to reduce working family payment qualification criteria of 19 hours to 15 hours a week. [29757/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Working Family Payment (WFP) is an in-work support which provides an income top-up for employees on low earnings with children. WFP is designed to prevent in-work poverty for low paid workers with child dependants and to offer a financial incentive to take-up employ-

ment. The estimated expenditure on WFP in 2018 is approximately €430 million and as of May 2019 it is currently paid to almost 53,000 families in respect of approximately 119,000 children.

For low income workers with less than the minimum hours of employment for WFP and working on a casual basis (that is, up to and including 3 days per week) the Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) scheme provides in-work income support through daily disregards and tapered withdrawal of payments.

Apart from the jobseeker schemes if a person cannot meet the 19 hours WFP threshold or if their hours vary significantly from week to week, the Department offers a number of other schemes which can provide income support that can be combined with earnings from employment, subject to each individual's circumstances. These include One-Parent Family Payment (OPF) and the Jobseeker's Transitional Payment (JST), and the Part-Time Job Incentive (PTJI) scheme

Further reducing the "hours worked" requirement would have potentially significant expenditure implications which are difficult to quantify. The number of families working between 15-18 hours and are earning below the relevant WFP thresholds is currently unknown. Therefore, I am advised that my Department has no way of accurately estimating the cost of reducing the numbers of hours worked required to access WFP from 19 to 15 hours.

It is crucially important that WFP does not inadvertently subsidise unsustainably low earnings or encourage employers to offer minimal hours of employment. The longer term goal of WFP, as an incentive to take up and remain in work, could be compromised if the nature of the work taken up is not sustainable.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Direct Provision System

805. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated amount it would cost to introduce a weekly allowance for children living in direct provision in line with the rate for a qualified child including the higher rate for children over 12 years of age. [29758/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): In Budget 2019, I was pleased to increase the rate of Daily Expenses Allowance to the rates recommended in the McMahon Report on Improvements to the Protection Process. This included a €8.20 per week increase (to €29.80) in the payment for children.

The estimated full year cost of increasing the weekly payment for children living in direct provision in line with the rate for a qualified child payment, €34 for children under 12 and €37 for children aged 12 and over, would be €0.4 million.

Any such increase would need to be considered in a budgetary context.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Jobseeker's Transitional Payment

806. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated amount it would cost to allow those on jobseeker's transition to receive both the

jobseeker's transition payment and the working family payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29759/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department provides a number of options for income support to lone parents once their entitlement to the One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) ceases. These include the Jobseeker's Transitional Payment (JST) payment where the youngest child is aged 7-13 years (inclusive), and the Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) payment which may be paid to lone parents where the youngest child is aged 14 or over. The Working Family Payment (WFP), is also available to lone parents in receipt of OFP who are working 19 or more hours per week. Lone parents who move from JST to WFP by increasing their working hours to 19+ per week may also apply for the Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD).

The concurrent payment of JST and WFP contradicts the policy goals of the changes to the OFP scheme, which are to tackle long-term social welfare dependency - and its associated poverty risks - through a tapering of income supports and a more active engagement process offering enhanced educational, training and employment supports. Concurrent payment of JST and WFP may also introduce a steep financial "cliff" for lone parents when their youngest child reaches 14 years of age and they potentially move to Jobseeker's Allowance.

It would be very difficult to estimate the cost of such a proposal with any accuracy as the Department would have to consider the potential inflows into WFP where JST lone parents increase their working hours to 19 per week or more in order to qualify for both payments, and also the numbers of lone parents already on WFP that would become eligible for receipt of JST as well. Lone parents on WFP and in receipt of BTWFD would lose their BTWFD if they recommenced receiving JST along with their WFP.

Child Benefit Eligibility

807. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated amount it would cost to reinstate child benefit for children living in direct provision. [29760/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): It is estimated that the full year cost of introducing child benefit for children who live in direct provision is €2.84 million.

Any introduction of child benefit for children living in direct provision would have to be considered in the overall budgetary context.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Jobseeker's Allowance

808. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated amount it would cost to restore the full adult rate to persons under 26 years of age on jobseeker's allowance. [29761/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The estimated full year cost to pay the full adult rate of €203 per week to persons under 26 years of age on Jobseeker's Allowance is €59.9 million. This costing includes increasing the €112.70 qualified adult rate to €134.70 per week.

Young jobseekers who participate in an education, training or employment programme currently qualify for the maximum weekly rate of payment. Age-related reduced rates of payment also do not apply in certain circumstances, such as when the claimant has a dependent child, or transferred to Jobseeker's Allowance from Disability Allowance, or was in State care during the 12 months prior to applying for Jobseeker's Allowance.

It should be noted that any change to the reduced rates of Jobseeker's Allowance would need to be considered in a budgetary context.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

809. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated amount it would cost to link income and the income and earning disregard means test to the income of national minimum wage for social protection payments that have an income and earnings disregard. [29762/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The information requested by the Deputy is currently being compiled by my officials and will be provided to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Departmental Expenditure

810. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the years 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by inquiry, tribunal or commission; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29833/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): There were no commissions of investigation or statutory inquiries in the period of time outlined by the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Payments

811. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance payment for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29856/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Firstly, may I offer my condolences to the person and his family on the loss of a loved one.

The carer's support grant (CSG) is an annual payment for carers who look after a person in need of full-time care and attention. The payment is made regardless of the carer's means but is subject to the same caring conditions as carer's allowance (CA).

CA recipients automatically qualify for the Carer's Support Grant, an annual payment of €1,700, which is not means-tested or taxed, on the first Thursday in June each year where they have an entitlement to CA.

The person concerned was in receipt of CA for his mother up until 24 April 2019. This in-

cluded the 12 weeks after the death of the person he was caring for. As the person concerned was not in payment on the first Thursday in June this year there is no entitlement to the 2019 CSG grant.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Pension Provisions

812. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to address the concerns raised by former ESB workers in relation to pension issues (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29864/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Deputy will appreciate that I am unable to comment or intervene on issues relating to a particular pension scheme.

My Department has no role in setting the level of pension increases received by members of occupational pension schemes. Pension increases are entirely a matter for the scheme trustees and the sponsoring employer. Matters directly related to the ESB Group come under the remit of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

Trustees of occupational pension schemes have duties and responsibilities under the Pensions Act 1990, as amended, under trust law and under other relevant legislation. The duties of pension scheme trustees include administering a scheme in accordance with the law and the terms of the trust deed and rules as well as ensuring compliance with the requirements that apply to these schemes. Trustees must act in the best financial interests of the scheme members, whether active, deferred or retired, and must serve all beneficiaries of the scheme impartially. If there is a conflict of interest then a person's duty as a trustee must take precedence over other interests.

Any questions relating to access to the State's industrial relations mechanisms is a matter for the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory)

813. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of pensioners contacted to date in relation to pension changes applied in 2012; the number that received arrears; the number that have seen their pensions increase; the number that have seen no increase in their payments; when she expects all pensioners will have been contacted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29865/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Since late September 2018, my Department has been examining the social insurance records of approximately 90,000 pensioners, born on or after 1 September 1946, who have a reduced rate State pension contributory entitlement based on post Budget 2012 rate-bands. These payments are being reviewed under a new Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to pension calculation which includes provision for home-caring periods.

Reviews commenced from 13 February 2019, the day after I signed the necessary Regulations which, together with provisions in the Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registra-

tions Act 2018, allows the increased payments to be made. As at 4 July 2019, 77,193 reviews have been completed. Of these, 32,307 pensioners received an increase in their rate of payment and 44,886 are remaining on their existing rate of payment.

Where an increase is due, the person's rate of payment is adjusted without delay and arrears issued backdated to 30 March 2018, or the person's 66th birthday if later.

Outcomes will continue to issue to individuals as soon as their reviews are completed. It will take a number of months to complete the reviews due to the numbers involved and the individual nature of social insurance records. It is anticipated that this work will be completed at the end of September 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

JobPath Programme

814. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will report on the supervision over services operated by Seetec; if quality assessment is carried out by her Department; if she will report on reviews carried out of customer experience; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29876/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): There are a number of key features which enables my Department to monitor all aspects Seetec's performance and ensure contract compliance.

Every participant is provided with a service guarantee - a baseline level of service covering frequency of engagement, personal progression planning, geographic accessibility and in-employment support.

On-site inspections are carried out as part of the monitoring of JobPath contractor performance. As at end of June 2019, a total of 50 on-site inspections have been carried out at Seetec service delivery locations around the country and these will continue for the duration of the JobPath contract. Inspections may be notified or un-notified and can focus on specific matters of interest or can be general oversight, as required.

The inspections monitor compliance with the service level agreement and the contract generally, including, for example, the suitability and standard of accommodation, staffing levels, Irish language compliance, customer service and customer feedback, checking the client's Personal Progression Plan, Review Meetings compliance, the checking of Job Sustainment Fee Evidence Types and Exit Plans.

As part of their contractual obligations, the provider is required to have a comprehensive Complaints Process and this is advertised in all Seetec office locations. The process contains various levels of escalation, allowing complaints to be dealt with at a level appropriate to the concern.

Should a customer remain dissatisfied having exhausted the contractor's Complaint Process, they can request my Department to carry out a review. In this way it can be established if the complaint has been fully dealt with, and in a fair and reasonable manner. If the customer remains dissatisfied following a review, they have the option to refer the matter to the Office of the Ombudsman.

As at end of June 2019, approximately 126,000 Jobseekers have engaged with the service

provided by Seetec, with 311 complaints received in total, 0.25 per cent. I am advised that my Department is not aware of any complaint referred to the Office of the Ombudsman.

To ensure that services are being delivered satisfactorily from the customers perspective, my Department has commissioned regular Customer Satisfaction Surveys, the latest of which was completed at the end of 2018. Since the surveys began in 2016, some 3,000 Seetec customers have responded to the surveys, which are conducted over the phone. The results have been overwhelmingly positive with overall satisfaction ranging from 76% to 81% satisfaction versus only 5% to 8% dissatisfaction over the 3 years. All of the evidence available to my Department indicates that the experience of customers who have engaged with the JobPath service to date has been quite positive. The results of the Customer Satisfaction Surveys are published on my Departments website www.welfare.ie.

It is important to note that underperformance identified through audits and inspections or resulting from client feedback and satisfaction with the level of service offered by the Contractor or as a result of ongoing quantitative assessment of actual performance as compared to the base level commitment, may result in the reduction in fees paid of up to 15%. Where the Contractor does not address the issue that gives rise to use of retention fees to the satisfaction of the Department, the Department has the right to terminate the contract. There has been no instance where retention fees have been applied.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Benefit Applications

815. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Sligo will receive a decision on their application for an extension to carer's benefit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29878/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's benefit (CARB) is a payment made to insured people who leave the workforce to care for a person(s) in need of full-time care and attention.

A person can be considered to be providing full-time care and attention where they are engaged in employment, self-employment or on training courses outside the home for a maximum of 15 hours per week, provided that they can show to the satisfaction of a deciding officer that adequate care has been provided for the care recipient in their absence.

CARB was awarded for a period 21 March 2019 to 3 July 2019. The person concerned has made a further application to extend her period of benefit.

In order to process some additional information was requested from the person concerned on 4 July 2019 in relation to leave periods from her employment with the HSE.

Once the information is received the application will be processed without delay and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Applications

816. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an illness benefit application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29931/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): An application for Illness Benefit from 13 December 2018 was received from the person concerned on 15 January 2019.

One of the qualifying conditions for Illness Benefit is that a person must have 39 weeks of PRSI contributions paid or credited in the relevant tax year (or 26 weeks of PRSI contributions paid in the relevant year and the tax year immediately before the relevant year), of which 13 must be paid contributions at class A, E, H or P.

According to the Department's records, the person concerned does not have any paid or credited contributions in the relevant tax year or in the year before the relevant tax year and therefore does not satisfy the contribution conditions for the receipt of Illness Benefit.

A decision letter issued to the person concerned explaining the position to him on 16 January 2019.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

817. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29932/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I confirm that an application from this lady for disability allowance (DA) was received by the Department on 21 March 2019.

The processing time for individual DA claims may vary in accordance with their relative complexity in terms of the three main qualifying criteria, the person's circumstances and the information they provide in support of their claim.

The application has been referred to a Social Welfare Inspector (SWI) for a report on the person's means and circumstances. Once the SWI has submitted his/her report to DA section, a decision will be made on the application and this lady will be notified directly of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

818. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29948/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I can confirm that my Department received an application for disability allowance (DA) from this gentleman on 16 April 2019.

On 5 July 2019 the person concerned was requested to supply supporting documentation

required by the deciding officer in order to make a decision on his eligibility. On receipt of this information a decision will be made on his DA application and the person concerned will be notified of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

819. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29949/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The application for disability allowance (DA) from the person in question was disallowed by a deciding officer (DO) who decided that he did not satisfy the medical condition for the scheme. Notification of this decision and the reason for it issued to the person on 8 March 2019.

The person in question has lodged an appeal with the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO). All the relevant papers requested by that Office have been prepared and were submitted by the Department on the 10 May 2019. The SWAO will be in touch with the person in due course in relation to the progress of the appeal.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

820. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a domiciliary care allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29950/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): An application for Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) was received from this lady on 20 May 2019. Applications received in late April 2019 are currently being finalised. The application will be considered by a deciding officer in due course and the decision notified to her as soon as possible.

I hope this clarifies the position for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

821. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29963/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I can confirm that my Department received an application for disability allowance (DA) from this gentleman on 8 May 2019. On completion of the necessary investigations on all aspects of the claim a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

The processing time for individual disability allowance claims may vary in accordance with their relative complexity in terms of the three main qualifying criteria, the person's circumstances and the information they provide in support of their claim.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

822. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29968/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The person concerned has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 6 March 2019. The first payment was made by his chosen payment method on 26 June 2019.

Arrears of payment due will issue as soon as possible once any necessary adjustment is calculated and applied in respect of any overlapping payments.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

823. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a domiciliary care allowance by a person (details supplied). [29973/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): An application for Domiciliary Care Allowance was received from the person concerned on 31 January 2019. The application was not allowed as the child was not considered to satisfy the qualifying conditions for the allowance. A letter issued on 27 March 2019 setting out the decision of the deciding officer to refuse the allowance.

A review of the decision which included a letter from Social Work Team Leader, Family Intervention Team was requested on 15 May 2019. The claim and all information provided will be re-examined by a deciding officer and a revised decision will be made if warranted. The person concerned will be notified of the outcome of the review as soon as possible.

Reviews are currently taking approximately 10-12 weeks to process.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Climate Change Policy

824. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics; the public bodies and agencies under her remit to which she has issued an instruction to cease the purchase and use of single-use plastics; when the instruction issued; the bodies which have confirmed that they no longer purchase and use single-use plastics, respectively; the bodies which have not provided such confirmation to date; when they will confirm; and if she will make a statement

on the matter. [29984/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the agencies under its remit are no longer purchasing single-use plastics.

The Department provides purchasing facilities for the Social Welfare Appeals Office, Social Welfare Tribunal and the Labour Market Council agencies whilst the Citizens Information Board and Pensions Authority have their own purchasing facilities and have confirmed, in writing, that they are no longer purchasing single-use plastics.

Disability Allowance Applications

825. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30019/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The person concerned was refused disability allowance (DA) on 4 July 2019. Their application, based upon all the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds as it was not found that this lady was substantially restricted in taking up employment.

She was notified of this decision which includes her right to a review of this decision or to appeal it to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

826. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a domiciliary care allowance by a person (details supplied); statement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30031/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who has decided to hold an oral hearing in this case on 17 July 2019. The person concerned has been notified of the arrangements for the hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

827. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a domiciliary care allowance by a person (details supplied); statement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30035/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred on 28 May 2019 to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

828. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance appeal by a person (details supplied). [30036/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The application for disability allowance (DA) from the person in question was disallowed by a deciding officer (DO) who decided that she did not satisfy the medical condition for the scheme. Notification of this decision and the reason for it issued to the person on 10 April 2019.

The person in question has lodged an appeal with the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO). All the relevant papers requested by that Office have been prepared and were submitted by the Department on the 9 May 2019. The SWAO will be in touch with the person in due course in relation to the progress of the appeal.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

829. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a pension by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30048/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 13 May 2019. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 6 June 2019 and the case has now been referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory)

830. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the pension of a person (details supplied) is under review; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30049/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Since late September 2018, my Department has been examining the social insurance records of approximately 90,000 pensioners, born on or after 1 September 1946, who have a reduced rate State pension contributory entitlement based on post Budget 2012 rate-bands. These payments are being reviewed under a new Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to pension calculation which includes provision for home-caring periods.

The person concerned was awarded a reduced rate State pension (contributory) in 2015. Following an assessment of a claim for state pension (non-contributory), their state pension (contributory) claim was withdrawn in favour of a more beneficial weekly rate of state pension non-contributory.

In June 2019, the person concerned submitted an application for HomeCaring periods, with the maximum permissible number of HomeCaring periods (1,040, as set out in legislation) being awarded. Following a review of their state pension (contributory) entitlement, they are now entitled to the maximum rate. A review outcome has issued to the person concerned, outlining details of their increase and arrears of payment backdated to 30 March 2018 have issued.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

EU Directives

831. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the statutory competent authorities with legal authority to make statutory determinations under directives (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29306/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The statutory competent authorities with legal authority to make statutory determinations under EU Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive) and EU Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (the Birds Directive) are a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, whom I understand has provided this information to the Deputy in reply to Parliamentary Question No. 771 of 25 June 2019.

Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU (the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive), states that a competent authority is the authority or authorities designated by the relevant Member State as responsible for performing duties arising from the EIA Directive. There are numerous consent systems in Ireland which incorporate EIA and which are governed by separate pieces of legislation that are the responsibility of different Departments. In each such piece of legislation, the competent authority is identified as the body responsible for examining the Environmental Impact Assessment Report prepared and for carrying out the EIA. The competent authority then makes its decision on whether to give development consent for the project, having regard to its assessment.

For example, the competent authority in respect of land use planning, pursuant to the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, is the relevant planning authority, or An Bord Pleanála as the case may be, while the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government is the competent authority in respect of consents under the Foreshore Act 1933, as amended. In effect, the responsibility as competent authority is appropriately assigned to a specified authority in the context of each relevant consent system.

As regards EU Directive 2001/24/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive), the Directive has been transposed into Irish law by two sets of statutory instruments: the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended, and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, as amended.

The former Regulations do not identify specific authorities as competent authorities, but rather specify that “competent authority” means the authority which is, or the authorities which are jointly, responsible for the preparation of a plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme pursuant to the Regulations.

The latter Regulations designate planning authorities as the competent authority for the preparation or variation of a statutory development plan or the preparation of a local area plan, and regional authorities are designated as competent authorities for the preparation of regional planning guidelines, where environmental assessment of the plan is required, in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations.

Property Registration Authority

832. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of a query (details supplied) lodged with the Property Registration Authority of Ireland that has been awaiting a substantive response for more than ten months; the reason for the delay in a response; his views on whether such waiting time for response is acceptable; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29517/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): A service for Oireachtas members was introduced in 2006 through which information can be obtained on the current status of applications to the Property Registration Authority (PRA), such as the case referred to in this question. This provides a speedy, efficient and cost effective system through which the PRA can address such queries. This service can be availed of by contacting reps@prai.ie.

Wind Energy Guidelines

833. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when guidelines for industrial wind farms will be published. [29888/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department is currently undertaking a focused review of the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines in line with the “preferred draft approach” which was announced in June 2017 by the then Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, in conjunction with the then Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment. The review is addressing a number of key aspects including sound or noise, visual amenity setback distances, shadow

flicker, community obligation, community dividend and grid connections.

As part of the overall review, a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is being undertaken on the revised Guidelines before they come into effect, in accordance with the requirements of EU Directive 2001/24/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, otherwise known as the SEA Directive. SEA is a process by which environmental considerations are required to be fully integrated into the preparation of plans and programmes which act as frameworks for development consent, prior to their final adoption, with public consultation as part of that process.

While the revised draft guidelines had been expected to be published in Quarter 1 2019, some delays to the planned schedule arose, due to the recent publication of updated World Health Organisation (WHO) noise standards and the need to focus on certain Brexit-related planning issues.

As part of the SEA process, there will shortly be an 8-week public consultation on the revised draft Guidelines, together with the comprehensive environmental report. Finalised Guidelines will be prepared following detailed analysis and consideration of the submissions received during the consultation phase, and the conclusion of the SEA process. My Department will aim to commence the public consultation later in Q3 2019.

When finalised, the revised Guidelines will be issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Planning authorities and, where applicable, An Bord Pleanála must have regard to guidelines issued under section 28 in the performance of their functions generally under the Planning Acts. In the meantime, the current 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines remain in force.

Solar Energy Guidelines

834. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of guidelines for solar farms (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29952/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): As is the case with the large majority of development types, there are currently no specific planning guidelines in place in respect of solar farms. Proposals for individual solar farm developments are subject to the statutory requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in the same manner as other proposed developments, with planning applications made to the relevant local planning authority and with a right of appeal to An Bord Pleanála. Within the wider national and local planning context, including the planning authority's Development Plan, planning authorities must make their decisions, based on the specific merits or otherwise of individual planning applications.

While I am satisfied that the planning code is sufficiently robust to facilitate the assessment of individual planning applications for solar farm developments, the matter is being kept under review, in consultation with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, who leads on renewable energy policy. Our two Departments are presently exploring the potential for enhancing national planning guidance on solar energy, taking account of solar energy projects being assessed by planning authorities and the scope for future development of the sector in the context of the ongoing development of renewable energy policy.

On foot of this on-going engagement between the two Departments, where the need for specific planning guidance for solar farms is identified, my Department will develop such guid-

ance as appropriate.

Traveller Accommodation

835. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the role of the county development plan in relation to local authority Traveller accommodation programmes 2014-2018. [29196/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, housing authorities have statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) in their areas. My Department's role is to ensure that there are adequate structures and supports in place to assist the authorities in providing such accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding.

The content of local authority development plans is governed by Section 10 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), which obliges plans to include objectives for, inter alia, the provision of accommodation for Travellers, and the use of particular areas for that purpose. Guidelines prepared by my Department to assist local authorities in the preparation of development plans state that the land-use aspects of adopted Traveller Accommodation Programmes should be reflected in the development plan. This should take the form of objectives that clearly set out the approach of the development plan in addressing the accommodation needs of Travellers and an indication of the specific locations of Traveller accommodation projects. The guidelines also advise that to support the identification of additional locations for such projects, zoning policies should be drawn up in a flexible manner to reflect the urgent need to secure additional Traveller accommodation over the lifetime of the development plan.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Grants

836. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if funding will be granted for works to a group water scheme (details supplied). [29207/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): On 8 February this year, I announced details of the measures being funded through my Department under the Multi-annual Rural Water Programme 2019-2021. Local authorities were invited to submit their bids for the funding of schemes or projects in their functional areas, with the deadline for receipt of proposals set as 14 March 2019.

Westmeath County Council has included the scheme in its application to my Department under the new Programme.

My Department is currently considering local authorities' bids for funding allocations. An Expert Panel has been put in place to support the evaluation process. In addition to providing an expert perspective, the Panel brings independence, openness and transparency to the bids evaluation process which is done on a national prioritised basis. The Expert Panel's membership includes Departmental, stakeholder and independent representation.

The Expert Panel will make recommendations to my Department on the suitability of schemes and projects for funding based on objective criteria which are set out in the framework document issued to local authorities when requesting proposals. My Department will then con-

sider the recommendations of the Panel, and based on these, will propose allocations for my consideration as Minister. I expect this process to be completed in the coming weeks.

Housing Assistance Payment Administration

837. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the position regarding HAP tenants who must pay a higher weekly rent if they receive half rate carer's allowance in addition to disability allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29215/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme is a flexible and immediate housing support that is available to all eligible households throughout the State. At the end of Quarter 1 2019, there were just over 45,900 households having their housing needs met via HAP.

HAP tenants are required to sign a rent contribution agreement to pay a weekly rental contribution to the local authority, in line with the local authority's differential rent scheme for social housing tenants more generally. As set out in the rent contribution agreement, this weekly rental contribution must be paid by them so that they remain eligible for the HAP scheme.

The right of local authorities to set and collect rents on their dwellings is laid down in section 58 of the Housing Act 1966. The making or amending of such schemes is an executive function and is subject to broad principles laid down by my Department including that;

- the rent payable should be related to income and a smaller proportion of income should be required from low income households;
- provision should be included for the acceptance of a lower rent than that required under the terms of the scheme in exceptional cases where payment of the normal rent would give rise to hardship; and
- appropriate local factors should be taken into account including the costs of the maintenance and management of the stock of rented dwellings and the adequacy of the rental income to meet such costs.

Each local authority has its own separate differential rent scheme or schemes in operation. As rent is calculated using each local authority's own formula, the schemes do vary in a number of ways from each other. This is particularly the case when it comes to what may or may not be considered as reckonable/assessable income for rent purposes e.g., disability allowance and carer's allowance.

Section 31 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 provides for the Minister to introduce a national rents framework for social housing tenants. Considerable work has been carried out by my Department in developing a draft of such a framework, which has as its main aim the harmonisation of local authority rents, to ensure that rent schemes are fair and sustainable, prioritise those on lowest incomes and avoid creating social welfare traps that may prevent people from either returning to work or to the private housing market. The general over-arching principle that rents should be related to incomes will be maintained.

This work is now being examined further in the light of the broader commitment given in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, to review the disparate systems of differential rent for social housing in place across local authorities. I expect that the review will be completed in the near future, at which point I will consider what proposals might

be brought to Government as part of a wider social housing reform package of measures, that would continue to ensure that housing support goes to those who need it most within a system that is responsive to people's changing needs and circumstances. I hope to finalise this matter by the end of Q3 2019.

Traveller Accommodation

838. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of a project (details supplied); and the number of permanent dwelling and demountable dwellings provided. [29262/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, housing authorities have statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) in their areas. My Department's role is to ensure that there are adequate structures and supports in place to assist the authorities in providing such accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding.

A proposal was received by my Department from Cork County Council to carry out upgrade works at the site concerned through the construction of 2 bungalows and 5 permanent halting bays. Following consultation, approval for these works was granted by my Department in June 2019.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Eligibility

839. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to change the tenant purchase scheme to allow tenants with only social welfare income to qualify for the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29264/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Housing (Sale of Local Authority Houses) Regulations 2015, provide the basis for the Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme for existing local authority houses. The Scheme is open to eligible tenants, including joint tenants, of local authority houses that are available for sale under the Scheme. To be eligible, tenants must meet certain criteria, including having a minimum reckonable income of €15,000 per annum and having been in receipt of social housing support for at least one year.

The minimum reckonable income for eligibility under the scheme is determined by the relevant local authority in accordance with the detailed provisions of the Ministerial Direction issued under Sections 24(3) and (4) of the 2014 Act. In the determination of the minimum reckonable income, local authorities can include income from a number of different sources and classes, such as from employment, private pensions, maintenance payments and certain social welfare payments, including pensions, where the social welfare payment is secondary to employment income.

The minimum income criterion was introduced in order to ensure the sustainability of the scheme. Applicants must demonstrate that they have an income that is long-term and sustainable in nature. This ensures that the tenant purchasing the house is in a financial position, as the owner, to maintain and insure the property for the duration of the charged period, in compliance with the conditions of the order transferring the ownership of, and responsibility for, the house

from the local authority to the tenant.

It should be noted that the financing of any house sold under the Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme is a separate matter from the eligibility criteria for the scheme. If the tenant is deemed eligible under the scheme, he or she may fund the purchase of a house from one, or a combination, of his/her own resources or a mortgage provided by a financial institution or a local authority house purchase loan.

In line with the commitment given in the Government's Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness, a review of the operation of the first 12 months of the Tenant Purchase (Incremental) Scheme has been completed and a full report has been prepared setting out findings and recommendations.

I intend to bring a comprehensive package of social housing reform measures to Government in the near future and the relevant recommendations made in the Review of the Tenant Purchase Scheme will be progressed as part of that process. Following consideration of a number of implementation issues arising, in that context, I expect to be in a position to publish the Review.

Approved Housing Bodies

840. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the steps he is taking to secure the reclassification of the approved housing body sector as off balance sheet; the number of meetings held by his officials; the number of meetings held with officials from the Department of Finance on the issue; the number of meetings his officials have had with the approved housing body sector since the EUROSTAT reclassification; and the details of these meetings by date and organisations met. [29343/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department is continuing its work on the issue of reclassification by EUROSTAT, of the majority of Tier 3 Approved Housing Bodies as part of the Government sector for accounting purposes.

It is engaging with the Departments of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, with technical support from the Housing Finance Agency (HFA) and the Housing Agency (HA), in order to ensure that AHBs can continue to fulfil their full potential in the delivery of the targets set out in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan.

My Department regularly meets with AHBs and AHB representative bodies where the issue of reclassification is discussed. Recently, my Department met with the ICSH on 11 June 2019 and a meeting is scheduled to take place on 24 July 2019 with the Housing Alliance. My Department has met with the Department of Finance twice for the specific purpose of discussing reclassification since the EUROSTAT decision was made.

The sector itself has engaged its own research on the matter, and has put forward its own proposals. My Department is evaluating these proposals as part of its ongoing consideration of the issue and with regard to their potential wider implications.

Notwithstanding the decision by EUROSTAT, the Government continues to see a central role for the voluntary housing sector in contributing to delivery of social housing under Rebuilding Ireland. It is committed to using all mechanisms and schemes, including through the AHB sector, to ensure that we maintain the momentum towards meeting the ambitious 50,000 social housing target under the Action Plan.

Legislative Measures

841. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the Marine Planning and Development Management Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29369/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The Marine Planning and Development Management Bill evolved from the Maritime Area and Foreshore (Amendment) Bill on foot of legal advice received from the Attorney General in November 2018. Revised proposals for a more comprehensive, holistic and robust approach to State consenting and development management in the Maritime Area are being developed jointly with my colleague, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment. It is intended to revert to Government with proposals for a revised General Scheme of the Bill shortly.

Local Authority Staff

842. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the local authorities which have appointed a dedicated vacant house officer, in tabular form. [29372/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): All 31 local authorities have designated vacant homes officers within their respective functional areas, some of whom may also perform other duties, as local circumstances require. My Department continues to engage on an ongoing basis with local authorities with a view to progressing measures to bring as many vacant and underutilised properties as possible back into residential use.

Vacant homes officers also act as a central point of contact and to provide information and advice for owners of vacant homes and also to deal with queries from members of the public in respect of private residential vacant properties in their administrative area.

A list of the contact details for each vacant homes officer is available on my Department's website at the following link: <https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/home-ownership/vacant-homes/vacant-homes-officer-contacts>.

Departmental Advertising Expenditure

843. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount spent on digital marketing in each of the past eight years; the items on which funds were spent; the criteria by which target audiences were selected; the amount of the digital spend targeted here; the amount targeted abroad; the amount that related to private companies; the amount that related to policy initiatives; and the purpose of the digital advertisements. [29395/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department has collated the information presented in the table below in relation to digital marketing and advertising. My Department uses digital advertising, across social media and other websites, to reach the public and different stakeholders in various information campaigns. This reflects the diverse media through which the public, stakeholders and businesses access information and advertising.

-	Purpose of the digital advertisements	Amount spent on digital advertising	Items on which funds were spent	Criteria by which target audiences were selected	Amount of the digital spend targeted at people in Ireland	Amount of the digital spend targeted at people abroad	Amount that related to private companies	Amount that related to policy initiatives
2019	To promote the schemes available to owners of vacant properties to bring them back into liveable use	€750.00	Facebook , Twitter and Irish Property Owners Association Ezines	The IPOA Ezine is the official newsletter for the Irish Property Owners' Association and the Residential Landlords' Association of Ireland Organisation. The target audience is owners of vacant properties.	€750	€0	€750	€750
	Promote awareness of the public consultation of proposed reform of the electoral modernisation process	€20,185.94	Website and online advertising; Twitter; Facebook; Search optimisation;	Premium media sites selected to reach public stakeholders	€20,185.94	€0	€20,185.94	€20,185.94
	Promotion of Met Eireann's new podcast series	€200	Facebook and Twitter		€200	€0	€200	€200
	Promotion of Department produced video on the referendum process in Ireland	€508	Facebook	Objective of informing the general public about how referendums are run in Ireland	€508	€0	€508	€508
	Promoted social media posts regarding short-term lettings	€422	Facebook and Twitter	Targeted at individuals living in Ireland aged 18-65	€422	€0	€422	€422
2019 Total		€22,065.94			€22,065.94	€0	€22,065.94	€22,065.94
2018	To promote fire safety messaging	€9,196.62	Facebook	Messaging targeted at all age groups	€9,196.62	€0	€9,196.62	€9,196.62
	Recruitment for specialist positions within Met Eireann	€447.66	Meteorologist and Hydrometeorologist job advertisements	Primary online portal in Europe for meteorological job vacancies	Not differentiated	Not differentiated	€0	€0
	Local Electoral Area Boundary Reviews	€6,509	Online advertising	Premium media sites selected to reach public stakeholders	€6,509	€0	€6,509	€6,509

Questions - Written Answers

-	Purpose of the digital advertisements	Amount spent on digital advertising	Items on which funds were spent	Criteria by which target audiences were selected	Amount of the digital spend targeted at people in Ireland	Amount of the digital spend targeted at people abroad	Amount that related to private companies	Amount that related to policy initiatives
	Register of electors awareness campaign	€13,665.84	Online advertising	General national awareness campaign	€13,665.84	€0	13,665.84	13,665.84
2018		€29,819.12			€29,371.46	€0	€29,371.46	€29,371.46
2017	To promote fire safety messaging	€8,487.00	Facebook, Twitter	Messaging targeted at all age groups	€8,487.00	€0	€8,487.00	€8,487.00
	Campaign primarily focused on landlords, aimed at: 1. Generating awareness for Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme and its advantages for landlords; 2. Encouraging landlords to contact HAP local authorities directly; 3. Through informing and engaging, help facilitate landlords to rent their properties through HAP.	€18,990.00	Advertising on Facebook, Twitter, Daft.ie and thejournal.ie	HAP digital media campaign focused on Dublin.	€18,990.00	€0	€18,990.00	€18,990.00
	Register of electors awareness campaign	€12,699.75	Online advertising	General national awareness campaign	€12,699.75	€0	€12,699.75	€12,699.75
	Information campaign aimed at property owners with vacant properties who wish to bring them back into use	€10,783.23	Social media advertising	Aimed at property owners with vacant properties who wish to bring them back into use	€10,783.23	€0	€10,783.23	€10,783.23
	Raise awareness of HAP	€8,265	Facebook, Twitter, Daft.ie and thejournal.ie	Raise awareness among the public	€8,265	€0	€8,265	€8,265
	Recruitment for specialist positions within Met Eireann	€1,045.50	Chief Hydrometeorologist and Senior Database Specialist job advertisements	At the recommendation of the Public Appointments Service (PAS)	Not differentiated	Not differentiated	€1,045.50	€0

9 July 2019

-	Purpose of the digital advertisements	Amount spent on digital advertising	Items on which funds were spent	Criteria by which target audiences were selected	Amount of the digital spend targeted at people in Ireland	Amount of the digital spend targeted at people abroad	Amount that related to private companies	Amount that related to policy initiatives
	Promotion of the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund	€3,690.00	Digital promotion of online content	Awareness raising of the fund	€3,690.00	€0	€3,690.00	€3,690.00
2017 Total		€63,960.48			€62,914.98	€0	€63,960.48	€62,914.98
2016	To promote fire safety messaging	€9,594.00	Facebook, Twitter, Instagram Stories	Messaging targeted all age groups	€9,594.00	€0	€9,594.00	€9,594.00
	Register of Electors awareness campaign	€11,712.68	Online advertising	General national awareness campaign	€11,712.68	€0	€11,712.68	€11,712.68
	Rebuilding Ireland	€4,797.00	social media advertising for launch of Action Plan; digital distribution of online content regarding Pillar 1 of Rebuilding Ireland	Awareness raising	€4,797.00	€0	€4,797.00	€4,797.00
2016 Total		€26,103.68			€26,103.68	€0	€26,103.68	€26,103.68
2015	To promote fire safety messaging	€2,337.00	Facebook, Twitter	Messaging targeted all age groups	€2,337.00	€0	€2,337.00	€2,337.00
	Register of Electors awareness campaign	€5,903.50	Online advertising (online awareness campaign, development of leaderboard)	General national awareness campaign	€5,903.50	€0	€5,903.50	€5,903.50
2015 Total		€8,240.50			€8,240.50	€0	€8,240.50	€8,240.50
2014	To promote fire safety messaging	€2,460.00	YouTube	Messaging targeted all age groups	€2,460.00	€0	€2,460.00	€2,460.00
	Register of Electors awareness campaign	€10,468.53	Online advertising (online adverts, design-works)	General national awareness campaign	€10,468.53	€0	€10,468.53	€10,468.53
2014 Total		€12,928.53			€12,928.53	€0	€12,928.53	€12,928.53
2013	Register of Electors awareness campaign	€16,208.94	Online advertising (online hosting, online campaign, creation of online ads)	General national awareness campaign	€16,208.94	€0	€16,208.94	€16,208.94
2012		€0			€0	€0	€0	€0

Social and Affordable Housing Eligibility

844. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason maintenance payments in divorce settlements are classed as disposable income (details supplied). [29418/19]

845. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason social housing assessment regulations place County Louth in band 2 of the maximum net income threshold at €30,000 (details supplied); the reason counties Meath, Kildare and Wicklow are placed with the Dublin local authorities in band 1 while County Louth is in band 2; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29420/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 844 and 845 together.

Applications for social housing support are assessed by the relevant local authority, in accordance with the eligibility and need criteria set down in section 20 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and the associated Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011, as amended.

The 2011 Regulations prescribe maximum net income limits for each local authority, in different bands according to the area concerned, with income being defined and assessed according to a standard Household Means Policy. The 2011 Regulations do not provide local authorities with any discretion to exceed the limits that apply to their administrative areas.

Under the Household Means Policy, which applies in all local authorities, net income for social housing assessment is defined as gross household income less income tax, PRSI and the universal social charge. The Policy provides for a range of income disregards, and local authorities also have discretion to decide to disregard income that is temporary, short-term or once off in nature. There is no provision in the policy to deduct any other regular outgoings, such as maintenance paid in respect of family members, from gross household income for the purposes of the income threshold.

The income bands and the authority area assigned to each band were based on an assessment of the income needed to provide for a household's basic needs, plus a comparative analysis of the local rental cost of housing accommodation across the country. It is important to note that the limits introduced at that time also reflected a blanket increase of €5,000 introduced prior to the new system coming into operation, in order to broaden the base from which social housing tenants are drawn, both promoting sustainable communities and also providing a degree of future-proofing.

Given the cost to the State of providing social housing, it is considered prudent and fair to direct resources to those most in need of social housing support. The current income eligibility requirements generally achieve this, providing for a fair and equitable system of identifying those households facing the greatest challenge in meeting their accommodation needs from their own resources.

However, as part of the broader social housing reform agenda, a review of income eligibility for social housing supports in each local authority area is under way. The review will also have regard to current initiatives being brought forward in terms of affordability and cost rental and will be completed when the impacts of these parallel initiatives have been considered.

Departmental Expenditure

846. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Gov-

ernment the costs paid to companies (details supplied) for projects in respect of which each was engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason each was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29446/19]

849. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the costs paid to a company (details supplied) for projects in respect of which each was engaged by his Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason it was engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29555/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 846 and 849 together.

Details of the costs paid to those of the companies concerned that have been engaged by my Department during the period in question, and the reasons for those engagements, are set out in the accompanying table.

PQ 29466/19 and PQ 29555/19

Year	Company	Costs Paid	Reason
2015	Arthur Cox	€20,766.73	Provision of legal advice
2015	Deloitte (Deloitte & Touche)	€28,939	Business Case Review for the Housing Assistance Payment
2015	Mazars Consulting	€27,075	Independent Review of Homeless Services
2017	A&L Goodbody Solicitors Ltd.	€23,985	Report on Water Abstractions.
2017	Arthur Cox	€33,070.27	Provision of legal advice
2018	Arthur Cox	€284,255.89	Provision of legal advice
2018	Mazars	€163,144.34	Provision of Accounting Audit of Financial Services
2018	KPMG	€49,721	Provision of corporate finance advisory services in relation to the establishment of the Land Development Agency
2019	Arthur Cox	€133,395.65	Professional Fees and provision of legal advice
2019	A&L Goodbody Solicitors Ltd.	€23,985	Report on Water Abstractions
2019	KPMG	€172,200	Provision of corporate finance advisory services in relation to the establishment of the Land Development Agency.

Rent Pressure Zones

847. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the fact that further to the announcement of additional rent pressure zone areas on 2 July 2019, the part of Carrigaline, County Cork not in the former Ballincollig-Carrigaline local electoral area is still not in a rent pressure zone; if the anomaly will be corrected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29477/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Ballincollig- Carrigaline Local Electoral Area (LEA) was designated a Rent Pressure Zone (RPZ) on 27 January 2017 under section 24 of the Residential Tenancies Acts (2004-2019).

New Local Electoral Areas and Municipal Districts were signed into law on 31 January 2019 for Cork City and County (which took into account the expanded Cork City boundary) for the May 2019 local elections. The new LEAs and Municipal Districts see the old Ballincollig-Carrigaline LEA being split, with Ballincollig becoming part of Cork City Council. Carrigaline and its hinterland are now contained within its own LEA and Municipal District, which is wholly within the remit of Cork County Council.

The areas within the new Carrigaline LEA which were designated as a RPZ under the old Ballincollig- Carrigaline LEA remain designated as a RPZ under section 24A(6) of the Residential Tenancies Acts, which provides that “Where a local electoral area is prescribed by order as a rent pressure zone and, subsequently, any local electoral areas are duly amended in a manner that affects the area of the local electoral area so prescribed, then the order shall continue to have effect as if the local electoral area concerned had not been so amended.”

Therefore, under Section 24A(6), areas already designated as RPZs will remain designated and areas that are not designated nor due to become part of Cork City Council will retain their current undesignated status. Areas within the new Carrigaline LEA that were not previously designated as a RPZ remain undesignated.

Under the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019 the expiry date of all deemed and designated RPZs is extended to 31 December 2021. The Act further provides that any area falling within the new Cork City Council boundary, which is not already within a RPZ, will be a RPZ from 31 May 2019.

The Housing Agency and the RTB will continue to monitor national rents and if the Carrigaline LEA meets the designation criteria it will be designated as a RPZ.

Rent Pressure Zones

848. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the person of body tasked with the enforcement of the rent pressure zones; the number of staff with the job of enforcement; the amount spent on enforcement; and the reason rent increases in the rent pressure zones are far higher than the cap. [29493/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019, enacted on 24 May 2019, introduces a number of measures designed to enhance the enforcement powers of the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) and underpin further the operation of the Rent Pressure Zone (RPZ) arrangements. The main provisions in the Act relate to :

- Making it a criminal offence for landlords to implement rent increases that contravene the law, that do not adhere to new definitions of a substantial change, failure to cooperate with an investigation, failure to register and update tenancies with the RTB.

- Providing powers to the RTB to investigate and sanction landlords who engage in improper conduct including non-compliance with the rent increase restriction in RPZs.

- Allowing the RTB to initiate an investigation without the need for a complaint to be made.

The exemptions from the 4% p.a. rent increase restriction in RPZs have been revised so to

apply only to the first rent setting, rather than to every rent setting, during the period of RPZ designation in respect of a new rental property, including a property that had not been rented in the 2 year period immediately prior to the commencement of a particular tenancy.

A definition is also provided to illustrate the type of works that qualify for the exemption from the rent increase restriction in respect of a substantial change in the nature of the rental property

There are a number of reasons why the average rent in RPZs may be higher than the 4% rent increase cap, such as exemptions for properties that are new to the market and/or properties that have undergone substantial change as well as possible non-compliance with the legislation. The introduction of the RTB's new powers of investigation and the related sanctions regime, which came into effect from 1 July 2019, will allow the RTB to investigate, sanction and enforce where non compliance is found. A number of authorised officers have been recruited and are now in place along with management and support staff. Additional resources will join the team following a recruitment campaign. The RTB are now accepting cases where improper conduct suspected.

Increased Exchequer funding of over €7m was secured for 2019 for RTB operational costs to provide for the rising demand for RTB services and the implementation of the new functions contained in the RTA 2019 Act. This is 60% higher than the 2018 provision of just under €4.4m.

The deployment of staff within the RTB to particular functions is a matter for the RTB itself. However, arrangements have been put in place to facilitate the provision of information by State Bodies to members of the Oireachtas and, in that regard, the RTB may be contacted at OireachtasMembersQueries@rtb.ie.

Question No. 849 answered with Question No. 846.

Housing Adaptation Grant Data

850. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of grants paid by each local authority to enable home adaptations to facilitate persons with disabilities or older persons live in or return to their homes from acute hospitals in each of the past three years; the average grant paid per local authority for each of the past three years; the average contribution per applicant; the length of waiting time from application to payment of grant in each of the past three years; if a panel of approved builders has been developed for each local authority; if so, the criteria for such approval; and if consideration will be given to establishing a working group with the Department of Health, the HSE, relevant non-government organisations and organisations (details supplied) to facilitate faster transfers of care from acute hospitals to homes in which physical environment adaptations are required. [29651/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department provides funding under the suite of Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability, to assist people in private houses to make their accommodation more suitable for their needs. Details on the number of grants paid and the amount spent for the past three years by all local authorities, are available on my Department's website at the following link: <https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/social-and-affordble/other-local-authority-housing-scheme-statistics>.

The average grant paid per local authority can also be obtained from this information.

The detailed administration of the grants including their assessment, approval and prioritisation, is the responsibility of the local authorities. My Department does not hold information in relation to the average contribution per applicant or the waiting times for individual local authorities. This information may be available directly from the local authorities.

A panel of approved builders has not been developed for each local authority, as responsibility for engaging tradespeople rests solely with the applicant. However, some local authorities have an informal list of local contractors who have completed grant related work. This list is not endorsed by local authorities and is merely intended to assist applicants if requested.

My Department has previously requested that all local authorities establish contact with the hospitals/convalescent homes in their area in relation to the administration of the grants and to prioritise applications from eligible applicants, whose discharge from hospital is dependent on the timely adaptation of their homes. My Department has also met recently with all local authorities where this practice was discussed and it is planned to develop this service further as a priority, in conjunction with other relevant stakeholders.

Local Authority Housing Funding

851. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if funding approval will be provided to Kerry County Council to purchase houses (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29658/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department has not received a request for funding to date from Kerry County Council for the purchase of either of the properties for which details are provided. The identification of suitable opportunities for the provision of new social housing is a matter for each local authority in the first instance and they must satisfy themselves as to the suitability of a property and its compliance with building regulations and other compliances.

Local Authority Staff Data

852. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of staff changes in each local authority in each of the years 2008 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [29819/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department gathers quarterly data on staff numbers in local authorities. Staffing numbers for the local authority sector are available on the Public Service Numbers databank which is hosted and maintained by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and is available at the following link:

http://databank.per.gov.ie/Public_Service_Numbers.aspx?rep=LA

The information sought is available broken down on a quarterly basis. The staffing levels for the end of Quarter 2, 2019 are currently being collated and will then be published on the databank.

Departmental Expenditure

853. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the years 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by inquiry, tribunal or commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29836/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Details of the amount spent by my Department on the Tribunal of Inquiry into Certain Planning Matters and Payments in the years 2009 to date are set out in the following table. This is the only tribunal, commission or inquiry relating to my Department in the period.

Year	Expenditure
2009	€5.910m
2010	€3.281m
2011	€4.137m
2012	€3.282m
2013	€5.321m
2014	€5.326m
2015	€4.740m
2016	€3.755m
2017	€11.443m
2018	€4.322m
2019 to-date	€0.246m

Water and Sewerage Schemes Grants

854. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the local authority water and sewer connection waiver and reduction scheme will be reinstated for low-income applicants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29877/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Since 1 January 2014, Irish Water has statutory responsibility for all aspects of the planning, delivery and operation of water and wastewater services at national, regional and local levels. Responsibility for the independent economic regulation of the water sector is assigned to the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU). These are responsibilities that are assigned to Irish Water and to the CRU and in respect of which I have no direct role as Minister.

I understand that the CRU, informed by a multi-stage public consultation process, published its decision on Irish Water's Connection Charging Policy on 18 December 2018, and the approved Connection Charging Policy came into effect on 1 April 2019.

Irish Water has established a dedicated team to deal with representations and queries from public representatives. The team can be contacted via email at oireachtasmembers@water.ie or by telephone on a dedicated number, 1890 578 578.

Traveller Accommodation

855. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the funding allocation to each local authority for Traveller specific accommodation for 2019; and the spend in each local authority to date. [29896/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, housing authorities have statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) in their areas. My Department's role is to ensure that there are adequate structures and supports in place to assist the authorities in providing such accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding.

Housing authorities submit funding proposals for individual Traveller-specific projects and developments on an annual basis. These projects are assessed on a case-by-case basis in my Department in advance of allocations being made. In addition, further funding may be considered by my Department throughout the year in the light of progress across the programme generally. There is regular contact between my Department and housing authorities in order to try to ensure maximum progress and drawdown.

The funding allocated in 2019 and drawn down to-date by housing authorities for Traveller-specific accommodation are set out in the following table:

LOCAL AUTHORITY	ALLOCATION 2019 €	Drawdown 2019 €
CARLOW	70,000	-
CAVAN	95,000	-
CLARE	635,000	326,000
CORK CITY	276,000	-
CORK COUNTY	258,000	167,000
DONEGAL	162,000	-
DUBLIN CITY	1,629,000	213,000
DUN LAOGHAIRE-R. DOWN	-	-
FINGAL	-	11,000
SOUTH DUBLIN	131,000	107,000
GALWAY CITY	-	-
GALWAY COUNTY	1,413,000	143,000
KERRY	77,200	-
KILDARE	1,000,000	-
KILKENNY	22,000	171,000
LAOIS	-	-
LEITRIM	178,000	-
LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY	1,015,000	582,000
LONGFORD	3,000	-
LOUTH	133,000	-
MAYO	-	-
MEATH	75,000	92,000
MONAGHAN	100,000	-
OFFALY	815,000	228,000
ROSCOMMON	253,000	-
SLIGO	1,436,000	310,000
TIPPERARY	26,000	-

LOCAL AUTHORITY	ALLOCATION 2019 €	Drawdown 2019 €
WATERFORD CITY AND COUNTY	170,000	54,000
WESTMEATH	100,000	-
WEXFORD	335,000	-
WICKLOW	105,000	-
TOTAL	10,511,000	2,404,000
RESERVE*	2,489,000	-
BUDGET	13,000,000	2,404,000

* Reserve for emergency replacement mobiles, caravan loan grants and first time buyers grant and new projects that arise throughout the year.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

856. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number, location and status of social housing projects in County Galway as part of the Rebuilding Ireland programme; the number of social homes delivered in the county since the beginning of the plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29901/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department publishes status reports on a quarterly basis, which list all social housing construction schemes for all local authority areas, including Galway County Council. The most recent of these reports covers the period up to the end of March 2019, and contains information on the progress of over 20,300 new social housing homes nationally, which are currently approved and progressing through planning, design and construction, as well as homes delivered to end March 2019. The report is available on the Rebuilding Ireland website at the following link:

<http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/minister-murphy-publishes-social-housing-construction-status-report-for-q1-2019/>.

Data in relation to social housing delivery overall, across all local authority areas, for the period 2016 to end March 2019, are published on my Department's website at the following link:

<https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision>.

Housing Adaptation Grant Funding

857. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if additional funding will be allocated to Galway County Council in respect of the housing adaptation grant for persons with a disability, housing for older persons scheme and mobility aids grant schemes respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29903/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I have allocated funding of €71.25m nationally in 2019 for the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability, in respect of private houses. This includes €2,655,162 for Galway County Council, comprising exchequer funding of €2,124,130 and €531,032 from the local authority, an increase of €296,352 over 2018.

Over the course of each year, my Department works closely with all local authorities to monitor spend and to achieve a full drawdown of the available funding. As the year progresses, any underspend by some local authorities, is redistributed to other authorities with high levels of grant activity who seek additional funding. Accordingly, if Galway County Council require additional funding in 2019, they can submit details to my Department in order to be considered for an increased allocation in the event of underspends elsewhere.

Climate Change Policy

858. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics; the public bodies and agencies under his remit to which he has issued an instruction to cease the purchase and use of single-use plastics; when the instruction issued; the bodies which have confirmed that they no longer purchase and use single-use plastics, respectively; the bodies which have not provided such confirmation to date; when they will confirm; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29988/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In 2018, my Department ceased the purchase of single-use plastic beverage cups, cutlery and drinking straws. This practice ceased well in advance of the requirement of the Government decision to do so after 1 January 2019.

This exclusion of single use plastic is in line with Irish Government policy & EU Directives and has also been included in a Request for Tender document that issued recently for a new catering contract in my Department's headquarters in the Custom House. This includes a requirement for the provision of effective solutions to encourage customers to minimise waste, for example to use reusable takeaway cups, environmentally acceptable hot food take away packaging etc. My Department is also purchasing reusable cups for staff, and a food waste policy will be discussed with the successful tenderer.

The timescale for public bodies to address the requirements in the Government decision is on a slightly deferred basis, with reports due to Ministers by end November 2019. My Department has contacted the bodies under the aegis of my Department, listed in the table below, in that regard. In addition, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment has notified the local authority sector through the Regional Waste Management Offices and has been in communication with the Local Government Management Agency about the decision and related matters with a view to working with the local government sector on the initiative.

The Environmental Management System at the Custom House, my Department's headquarters, is accredited to ISO 14001 standard. This is a systematic framework to manage the immediate and long-term environmental impacts of an organisation's products, services and processes. By completing ISO 14001 certification an organisation can assure stakeholders that its environmental management system meets international industry specific environmental standards. My Department has achieved this ISO 14001 accreditation every year since 2002, and this month achieved accreditation to the upgraded standard from 2018 to 2021, the only Government Department to have achieved this accreditation.

Arrangements have been put in place by each Agency to facilitate the provision of information directly to members of the Oireachtas. The contact email address for each agency is set out in the following table.

Agency	Email address
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An Bord Pleanála	Oireachtasqueries@pleanala.ie
Ervia, Gas Networks Ireland	oireachtas@ervia.ie
Housing Sustainable Communities Agency	publicreps@housingagency.ie
Housing Finance Agency	oireachtas.enquiries@hfa.ie
Irish Water	oireachtasmembers@water.ie
Local Government Management Agency	corporate@lgma.ie
Ordnance Survey Ireland	Oireachtas@osi.ie
Property Registration Authority	reps@prai.ie
Pyrite Resolution Board	oireachtasinfo@pyriteboard.ie
Residential Tenancies Board	OireachtasMembersQueries@rtb.ie
Valuation Office	oireachtas.enquiries@VALOFF.ie
Land Development Agency	oireachtas@lda.ie
Office of the Planning Regulator	oireachtas@opr.ie

Home Loan Scheme

859. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount drawn down under the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme to date; the number of applicants who have drawn down loans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29994/19]

861. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of applications for the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme; the number accepted, the number drawn down, the number refused and the number for which additional information was requested by local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29996/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 859 and 861 together.

My Department does not collect information on the number of Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan (RIHL) applications received by Local Authorities or the number of applications in respect of which additional information may have been requested.

However, the Housing Agency provides a central support service, which assesses RIHL applications on behalf of local authorities and makes recommendations to the authorities to approve or decline applications. I have asked the Agency to compile figures on the numbers of applications that it has assessed since the scheme began. The most recent figures, as at the end of June 2019, indicate that 4,427 applications have been assessed by it since the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan scheme launched in February 2018, of which 2,256 were recommended for approval and 2,171 recommended for decline.

In addition to this, my Department publishes information on the overall number and value of (i) local authority loan approvals and (ii) local authority loan drawdowns. Information up to the end of Quarter 1 2019, including in relation to the number and value of mortgage drawdowns, is available on the Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/house-prices-loans-and-profile-borrowers/local-authority-loan-activity>.

Home Loan Scheme

860. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the review of the future funding of the Rebuilding Ireland home loan; when a statement will be issued on the future funding of the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29995/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): When the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan (RIHL) scheme was initially being developed, it was estimated that the drawdown of loans would be approximately €200 million over three years. The RIHL has proven to be more successful than initially anticipated, with some €140 million drawn down to the end of March 2019. The first tranche of funding has not been exhausted.

My officials have been engaging with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform since October 2018 when higher lending and drawdown volumes were beginning to materialise. I informed the Dáil on 29 January 2019 of the scheme's success and of the need for additional funding and indicated that my Department was in discussions with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of Finance with regard to the allocation for 2019.

At all times, the scheme remained open and all local authorities were advised to continue to receive and process applications up to and including the issuing of loans.

My Department has consulted in detail with each Local Authority as to the anticipated demand in its area, and the likely level of approvals expected. This information has been submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with request for sanction for additional borrowing by the Housing Finance Agency. The HFA have an ongoing borrowing facility for when sanction is given so that they are in a position to proceed to borrow this second tranche of funding immediately.

The first tranche of funding has not been exhausted, the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan remains open to new applicants, and local authorities are to continue to receive and process applications and issue loans.

Question No. 861 answered with Question No. 859.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

862. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the affordable housing scheme; the number of units approved to date; the amount spent under the scheme; the estimated date of completion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29997/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Part 5 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 was commenced in June 2018 to provide a statutory basis for the delivery of affordable housing for purchase.

I signed regulations in respect of the making of Schemes of Priority on 12 March 2019 and these were issued to local authorities on 22 March 2019. The purpose of a Scheme of Priority is to set out the affordable purchase arrangements at local authority level. This includes the methodology that will be applied to determine the order of priority to be accorded to eligible households where the demand for such affordable dwellings exceeds the number available. All 31 local authorities have submitted draft Schemes of Priority to my Department and, to date, I have approved 16, which were adopted by their respective Councils. My Department is cur-

rently following up with the remaining local authorities to ensure that the remaining Schemes of Priority are finalised.

Further regulations are currently in development, specifically in relation to the assessment of eligibility of households for affordable housing and any income limits to be set. Once these regulations have been made, associated guidance will issue to local authorities.

To support the delivery of affordable homes to buy or rent the Government has committed €310 million under the Serviced Sites Fund (SSF), from 2019 to 2021 to provide infrastructure support for the delivery of over 6,000 dwellings. The first call for proposals under the SSF in June 2018 was specifically targeted at 11 local authorities, where the greatest affordability pressures exists. In December 2018, approval in principle was announced for funding for 10 infrastructure projects, in Dublin and Cork, with an allocated budget of €43 million. This will support the delivery of approximately 1,400 affordable homes. The overall cost and the timing of delivery for these projects is contingent upon the completion of planning and procurement in the first instance, and local authorities are working to achieve delivery as quickly as possible.

After this first call, local authorities were asked to complete further financial/economic assessments of each of their areas to assess whether provision of affordable homes is economically viable. A second call for proposals under the SSF issued on 9 April 2019 to 19 local authorities, based on the aforementioned economic assessments submitted. 31 responses were received from 15 local authorities under this call and, following the completion of the assessments of these, I intend to issue approvals in the coming weeks.

The SSF will also play an important role in making cost rental projects as affordable as possible. My Department is developing a national policy approach to Cost Rental. This is being informed by the learning from two pilot cost rental projects, one of which, at Enniskerry Road in Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown, is just commencing construction, with first homes anticipated to come on stream from 2021, with a second, at the former St. Michael's Estate in Inchicore, at an earlier stage.

My Department is also engaging with the Land Development Agency (LDA), which is examining the potential to deliver Cost Rental homes at scale from its land portfolio and the broader State land bank. The initial portfolio of sites that the Agency has access to will have the potential, over the short to medium term, to deliver 3,000 affordable homes in line with the Government policy of achieving 30% affordable housing on State lands generally.

There is also capacity to deliver up to 2,350 further affordable homes on mainly publicly owned lands supported through the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF). An additional c. 5,600 homes will benefit from a LIHAF-related cost reduction, some of which are already coming to market. Details of these LIHAF schemes and their locations are available on the Rebuilding Ireland website at

<http://rebuildingireland.ie/lihaf/>.

These schemes will complement other key Government affordability initiatives, such as the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan, and the Help to Buy Scheme, which have supported some 13,000 households.

Local Authority Members' Remuneration

863. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the final report on the independent review of the role and remuneration of local

authority elected members will be published. [29998/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): As a result of feedback from local authority elected members and their representative bodies regarding their current remuneration regime, my colleague, the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, and I agreed to the appointment in June 2018 of Ms Sara Moorhead SC to carry out a review of the role and remuneration of local authority elected members.

Ms Moorhead submitted an Interim Report to me at the end of November 2018, which is publicly available on my Department's website at the following link:

<https://www.housing.gov.ie/search/archived/current?query=Independent%20review%20of%20the%20role%20and%20remuneration%20of%20local%20authority%20elected%20members>.

In conducting the review, Ms Moorhead decided it was necessary to survey all local authority elected members and to seek financial information from all local authorities. In both cases, deadline extensions were granted to allow sufficient time for comprehensive responses to be made.

The drafting of the Final Report is at a very advanced stage and I expect to receive it shortly. Following the necessary consultation with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, I intend that the Review will be submitted to Government and published thereafter.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

864. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of rapid build units delivered in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30001/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Statistical information in relation to social housing delivery across all delivery streams, including rapid delivery, is published on my Department's website at the following link:

<https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordble/overall-social-housing-provision>.

At the end of 2018, 423 homes had been delivered under the rapid delivery programme, which includes 22 in 2016, 186 in 2017 and 215 in 2018. Since the programme's inception, some 40 projects have been added to the pipeline and will deliver over 1,100 homes out to 2021. While no new units have been delivered under this programme in Q1 2019, some 225 units are expected to be delivered this year.

My Department is working closely with all local authorities in relation to increasing and accelerating the delivery of a range of social housing programmes and supports including rapid build methodologies. My Department is also working specifically with Dublin City Council on the establishment of a Design Build Contractor Framework to deliver residential developments through the use of volumetric construction methods. This framework will shortly be available to all local authorities and will open up additional opportunities to deliver volumetric/rapid delivery apartments for social housing use.

Repair and Leasing Scheme

865. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the homes brought into use under the repair and leasing scheme; the number of applications and overall expenditure with regard to same by year and by local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30002/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Provisional data for the Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS) indicate that up to end Q1 2019, a total of 1,335 applications for the scheme had been received; 102 homes had been brought back into use and tenanted and 138 agreements to lease had been signed. Delivery under RLS is reported as part of Social Housing Leasing output and these figures are available on my Department's website at the following link (a detailed breakdown for RLS will be published shortly):

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision>.

RLS has both capital and current funding streams. The capital element funds the repairs to the property; the current element funds the lease payment to the property owner with the cost of the repairs being recovered from the property owner by offsetting it against the lease payment - annual payments include the ongoing cost of lease payments and costs of new properties brought into the scheme over the course of the year. A breakdown of the dwellings delivered under the scheme to end Q1 2019, by year and local authority, is set out in Table 1. Tables 2 and 3 set out the capital and current expenditure under the scheme in 2017 and 2018, by local authority.

Table 1: RLS Delivery 2017 to Q1 2019

Local Authority	Dwellings Delivered - 2017	Dwellings Delivered - 2018	Dwellings Delivered - Q1 2019
Carlow County Council	0	2	0
Cork County Council	0	0	1
Dublin City Council	0	1	0
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council	1	0	0
Fingal County Council	0	7	9
Kilkenny County Council	0	1	0
Limerick City & County Council	0	8	2
Longford County Council	0	6	0
Meath County Council	0	1	0
Monaghan County Council	0	4	0

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Local Authority	Dwellings Delivered - 2017	Dwellings Delivered - 2018	Dwellings Delivered - Q1 2019
Roscommon County Council	0	2	0
Tipperary County Council	0	1	0
Waterford City & County Council	6	35	1
Westmeath County Council	0	1	0
Wexford County Council	2	11	0
Total	9	80	13

Table 2: RLS Capital Spend 2017 and 2018

Local Authority	Spend - 2017	Spend - 2018
Carlow County Council	€0	€67,983
Dublin City Council	€0	€39,044
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council	€4,987	€0
Kilkenny County Council	€0	€24,000
Limerick City & County Council	€0	€207,174
Meath County Council	€0	€8,698
Monaghan County Council	€0	€25,000
Roscommon County Council	€0	€27,222
Tipperary County Council	€0	€33,789
Waterford City & County Council	€191,398	€1,106,739
Westmeath County Council	€0	€35,000
Wexford County Council	€0	€38,458
Total	€196,385	€1,613,107

Table 3: RLS Current Spend 2017 and 2018

Local Authority	Spend - 2017	Spend - 2018
Carlow County Council	€0	€2,270
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council	€8,809	€21,582
Kilkenny County Council	€0	€5,761
Limerick City & County Council	€0	€39,167
Meath County Council	€0	€18,940
Monaghan County Council	€0	€12,174
Offaly County Council	€0	€450
Roscommon County Council	€0	€7,145
Waterford City & County Council	€17,371	€103,150
Westmeath County Council	€0	€2,115
Wexford County Council	€4,009	€67,641
Total	€30,189	€280,395

Housing Data

866. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of units to be provided through the enhanced long-term social housing leasing scheme by county to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30003/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): A range of housing options are necessary to ensure a supply of accommodation to meet different types of social housing need. Harnessing the off-balance sheet potential of private investment in social housing is an important objective of the Government and the social housing targets set out in Rebuilding Ireland over the period to 2021 reflect the ambition in that regard.

My Department has introduced the Enhanced Long Term Social Housing Leasing Scheme in order to target newly built or yet to be built houses and apartments for long term leasing, and to target property developers and investors who are in a position to deliver housing at a reasonable scale in order to supplement delivery under Pillar 2 of Rebuilding Ireland.

The first call for proposals for the Enhanced Leasing Scheme was open from January to April 2018 and a total of 33 submissions were received. The second call for proposals closed on 25th October 2018 and a total of 22 submissions were received.

The first Agreement for Lease was signed by Dublin City Council in Q2 2019 for 23 new social housing homes, with expected delivery in 2020. A number of other proposals are currently in the due diligence or proposal stage.

My Department and the Housing Agency continue to work with local authorities and proposers in respect of the Enhanced Leasing Scheme, and the leasing schemes generally, in order to ensure maximum delivery of high quality leased properties to meet the needs of households on social housing waiting lists. To this end, the Enhanced Long-Term Social Housing Leasing Scheme is in full operation and accepting proposals, complementing the range of other delivery mechanisms operated by my Department, and it is expected that further Agreements for Lease will be signed by the end of 2019.

Fire Service Staff

867. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of retain firefighters being allowed in employment until 60 years of age if medically approved. [30004/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): A full time firefighter is required to retire at 55 under the Public Service Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004. The retirement age is set at 55 due to the physically demanding nature of the firefighter role. The retirement age for retained firefighters is 55, with provision for an annual extension up to 58 years of age, subject to a formal application process including a compulsory medical assessment.

International research indicates that a retirement age of 55 is the optimum age to ensure that firefighters are capable of satisfactorily performing the tasks expected of them. The retirement age of 55 was introduced because of health and safety considerations related to the job. Since the enactment of the Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act 1989, and underpinned by subsequent legislation, every fire authority, as an employer, has a statutory duty to avoid placing employees at risk.

A collective agreement was reached between the Local Government Management Services Board and the relevant trade unions in November 2002. The collective agreement provided, inter alia, for the appointment of an Expert Group which would advise on the retirement age for retained firefighters. The Expert Group's Report on Retirement Age recommended that the retirement age for retained firefighters remain at 55, with provision for an annual extension subject to medical assessment, up to 58 years of age. A circular was subsequently issued by my Department in November 2003 setting out the age requirements in relation to retained firefighters in line with the Expert Report.

In general any changes proposed by either management or trade unions are negotiated using the established industrial relations process. In this regard, the matter of increasing the age of firefighters was included as part of recent preliminary discussions on a wide range of issues at the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), between the Local Government Management Agency (representing the employers) and SIPTU representing firefighters.

Local Authority Housing Applications

868. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when a person (details supplied) will have full access to the Cork City Council choice-based letting system and be able to view and bid on houses in their area of preference. [30034/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The day-to-day operation of social housing allocations to eligible applicants, including applications under the Choice Based Letting system (CBL), is a matter for the relevant local authority.

I am advised by Cork City Council that CBL is the primary method of allocation in that area. I understand that applicants who were previously in areas of Cork County and, who following the boundary change, have transferred into Cork City, have been given user names and passwords to access the City Council's Choice Based Letting (CBL) system. In addition, the City Council has undertaken to facilitate any new users who require assistance in using the system.

Local authorities are by law (Section 63(1) of the Local Government Act 2001) independent in the performance of their functions. As Minister, I am precluded by Section 6 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 from intervening in relation to the decisions made by local authorities in the provision of social housing support in relation to any individual application whether through CBL or otherwise.

Planning Guidelines

869. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details of each change to planning rules affecting the size of proposed basements in the past three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30038/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): There are no specific provisions or recommendations in planning legislation or guidelines related to the size of basements.

However, the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018), issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development

Act 2000, allow for some internal storage space at basement level. Planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála, as appropriate, are required to have regard to the guidelines in the performance of their functions.

The Guidelines recommend, in section 3.32, that apartment schemes should provide storage for bulky items outside individual units (i.e. at ground or basement level). Secure, ground floor storage space allocated to individual apartments and located close to the entrance to the apartment block or building is particularly useful and planning authorities should encourage the provision of such space in addition to minimum apartment storage requirements. This form of storage may be used for equipment such as, for example, bicycles or bicycle equipment, children's outdoor toys or buggies. However, such storage does not satisfy bicycle parking requirements.

The Guidelines further recommend, in section 3.33, that where secure, allocated ground or basement level storage is provided, it may be used to satisfy up to half of the minimum storage requirement for individual apartment units, but shall not serve to reduce the minimum floor area required to be provided within each individual apartment unit, as set out in these guidelines. This is intended to enable greater flexibility in apartment design, whereby more living or bedroom space may be provided within the apartment unit in lieu of a portion of required internal storage space where such storage space has been provided elsewhere in the building.

The 2018 Guidelines are available to view on my Department's website at the following link:

https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/design_standards_for_new_apartments_-_guidelines_for_planning_authorities_2018.pdf

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

870. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a walk (details supplied) will open in Killarney, County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29310/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department has been granted €500,000 under the Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme in order to improve public access to Tomies Wood, including a new car park. It is expected that the tender for this work will issue from the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department in the coming weeks.

Plean Teanga

871. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cén uair a n-aontófar pleananna teanga do na bailte seirbhíse Gaeltachta atá taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht; an fáth go bhfuil an oiread moille le seo; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas in thatobh. [29336/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Tugann Acht na Gaeltachta 2012 feidhm reachtúil don phróiseas pleanála teanga faoina mbeidh pleananna teanga á n-ullmhú ag leibhéal an phobail i leith ceantair a bhféadfaí aitheantas a thabhairt dóibh mar Limistéir Pleanála Teanga Ghaeltachta, mar Bhailte Seirbhíse Gaeltachta nó mar Líonraí Gaeilge.

Tá Foras na Gaeilge freagrach faoin Acht as tacaíocht a thabhairt d'eagraíochtaí maidir le

hullmhú agus cur i bhfeidhm pleananna teanga sna Bailte Seirbhíse Ghaeltachta atá lonnaithe lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht.

Fearacht an chuid eile den phróiseas a bhaineann leis na Limistéir Pleanála Teanga Ghaeltachta agus na Líonraí Gaeilge go deimhin, is gá a aithint gur ag luas na bpobal ábhartha faoi leith is gá gluaiseacht ós rud é gur ón mbonn aníos agus ón mbarr anuas atá an próiseas.

Ní call a rá go bhfuil cistíocht curtha ar fáil ar bhonn bliantúil don Fhoras ó cuireadh tús leis an bpróiseas chun a chumasú dóibh cabhrú le hullmhú pleananna teanga. Ina theannta sin d'eisigh an Roinn **Treoirlínte Pleanála Teanga** in 2014 - a bhfuil an t-eagrán is déanaí díobh foilsithe le gairid ag an Roinn, mar áis dóibh siúd a bhfuil baint acu le hullmhú agus le feidhmiú pleananna teanga. Lena chois sin rinne an Roinn i gcomhar leis an CSO agus páirtithe leasmhara eile amharcóir mapa GIS a fhorbairt le go mbeidh teacht níos éasca ar fhaisnéis atá ábhartha don phróiseas lena n-áirítear torthaí Daonáireamh 2011 agus 2016. Tá fail ar an amharcóir mapa ar shuíomh na Roinne.

Chun tuilleadh dlús a chur le rudaí is fiú a lua gur cuireadh ciste bliantúil ar fiú €50,000 ar fáil don Fhoras ag tús na bliana chun go mbeidh sé curtha ar chumas an Fhorais feidhmeannach breise a cheapadh chun cabhrú leis an obair.

Ón tuairisc is déanaí atá faighte ón bhForas ina leith tá curtha in iúl don Roinn go mbeidh pleanann teanga curtha faoinár mbráid na Roinne chun críche faofa faoin Acht mar atá sonraithe thíos:

- Cathair na Gaillimhe, - fómhar 2019
- Leitir Ceanainn, Co. Dhún na nGall, - Nollaig 2019
- Cathair Chorcaí, - Bealtaine 2020
- Trá Lí, Co. Chiarraí, - Iúil 2020
- Dún Garbhán, Co Phort Láirge - Meán Fomhair 2020
- Caisleán an Bharraigh, Co. Mhaigh Eo - Nollaig 2020

Ní call a rá go leanfar ag tacú oiread is féidir leis an bhForas chun a gcuid dualgas maidir leis an bpróiseas pleanála teanga a chomhlíonadh.

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Payments

872. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if the delay in the processing of a compensation payment for a person (details supplied) will be investigated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29364/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): An application for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme has been received by my Department from the individual referred to in the Deputy's Question. With respect to 53 raised bog special areas of conservation sites, the qualifying criteria for the scheme are that:

- The applicant must have had a legal interest (ownership or a turbary right (right to cut turf)) in one of these sites on 25 May 2010 and must have had the right to cut and remove turf from the property on that date;

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- The applicant must have been cutting turf on the land in question during the relevant five year period (up to 25 May 2010 in respect of the 29 raised bog special areas of conservation nominated for designation between 1997 and 1999 and up to 31 December 2011 in respect of the 24 raised bog special areas of conservation nominated for designation in 2002);

- The turf resource on the site has not been exhausted; and

- No turf cutting or associated activity is ongoing on the property.

My Department has received the documents referred to by the Deputy and is examining the application, including these documents, in view of the qualifying criteria for the scheme.

Departmental Advertising Expenditure

873. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount spent on digital marketing in each of the past eight years; the items on which funds were spent; the criteria by which target audiences were selected; the amount of the digital spend targeted here; the amount targeted abroad; the amount that related to private companies; the amount that related to policy initiatives; and the purpose of the digital advertisements. [29388/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): With respect to expenditure on marketing, including digital marketing, between the establishment of the Department on 2nd June 2011 and December 2018, I would refer the Deputy to the answers provided to Dáil Question No 596 of 19th December, 2018 and Dáil Question No 349 of 11th July 2017.

The Table below summarises expenditure on Digital Marketing by my Department to date in 2019. This expenditure relates to the Creative Ireland Programme. A full breakdown of all costs in relation to these activities is published annually on the Department's Creative Ireland website.

Value for money is a critical consideration at all times in assessing whether external firms should be engaged to provide services of this nature.

Creative Ireland - Spend on Digital Marketing to date in 2019

Digital Marketing	Cost
Content Management (creation and management of website content, content strategy, managing translations, image sourcing, image editing, research and uploading, scheduling and publishing)	€23,216
Digital Copywriting (editing and proofing of text before publishing online)	€28,782
Social Media Content (research, image sourcing and scheduling of social posts)	€35,978

Toghcháin d'Údarás na Gaeltachta

874. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sé ar intinn aici toghcháin dhaonlathacha a athbhunú do bhord an Údaráis; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [29411/19]

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 1,011 ar an 11 Meitheamh 2019 maidir leis an ábhar seo. Mar a thug mé le fios sa bhfreagra sin, faoin socrú a tháinig i bhfeidhm faoin Acht in 2012, tá an bord reatha - a ceapadh anuraidh, comhdhéanta de chúigear comhalta a d'ainmnigh na hÚdaráis Áitiúla ábhartha a bhfuil ceantar Gaeltachta faoina gcúram acu, chomh maith le seachtar comhalta eile a roghnaíodh bunaithe ar chomórtas poiblí a eagraíodh faoi scáth na Seirbhíse um Cheapacháin Phoiblí.

Cinntíonn an córas faoina gceaptar ionadaíocht ó na hÚdaráis Áitiúla go mbíonn bunús daonlathach le bord Údarás na Gaeltachta agus oiread is féidir, cinntíonn ceapacháin na seachtar comhalta a thagann tríd an tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí, go bhfuil daoine cumasacha le saineolas agus scileanna ábhartha, cuí i réimsí gnímh an Údaráis á gceapadh.

Níor mhiste a lua chomh maith gur ionann líon an bhoird mar atá sé anois agus an líon a mholtar, de réir taighde idirnáisiúnta, ar chóir a bheith ar bhord den tsaghas seo.

Táim sásta, dá réir, go bhfuil an cur chuige reatha mar a bhaineann sé le struchtúr an bhoird ag feidhmiú go sásúil agus nach gcuireann sé aon bhac ar chumas an Údaráis feidhmiú mar is cuí.

Ar an mbunús sin, níl i gceist agam aon leasú a mholadh maidir le hAcht na Gaeltachta 2012 i ndáil le toghcháin a athbhunú do bhord Údarás na Gaeltachta.

Departmental Expenditure

875. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the costs paid to companies (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by her Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason each was engaged; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29439/19]

876. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the costs paid to a company (details supplied) for projects each was engaged by her Department in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; the reason it was engaged; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29548/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 875 and 876 together.

I am advised that the only payment made by my Department to any of the companies identified by the Deputy during the period in question was one of €13,592 made to Mazars in January, 2019 in respect of an audit conducted on the Aran Life Project.

Maoiniú d'Eagrais Ghaeilge

877. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Catherine Connolly** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cén dul chun cinn atá déanta maidir leis an iarratas atá curtha isteach ag Gaillimh le Gaeilge chun tuilleadh acmhainní a fháil; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [29594/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Cuireann an Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta maoiniú reatha ar fáil don eagraíocht: Gaillimh le Gaeilge chun tacú lena gcuid gníomhaíochtaí. Is €139,080 atá ceadaithe don eagraíocht i mbliana faoin **Scéim Tacaíochta Gaeilge** de chuid na Roinne.

Is é Gaillimh le Gaeilge, i gcomhar le Comhairle Cathrach na Gaillimhe, atá freagrach as plean teanga a ullmhú agus a fheidhmiú do Chathair na Gaillimhe faoin bpróiseas pleanála teanga. Táthar ag súil go gcuirfear an plean seo faoi bhráid na Roinne i mí Mheán Fómhair na bliana chun críche faofa faoin bpróiseas pleanála teanga.

Is i gcomhthéacs an allúntais reatha thuasluaite agus an phróisis pleanála teanga a ndéanfar an cheist faoi ghnóthaí airgeadais na heagraíochta don tréimhse atá le teacht a bhreithniú - tar éis plean a bheith faomhaithe agus soiléireacht níos fearr a bheith ann faoi na himpleachtaí féideartha airgeadais don chiste pleanála teanga trí chéile.

Heritage Projects

878. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if funding will be considered for a project (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29764/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My role, as Minister, with regard to the protection and management of our built and architectural heritage, is set out in the provisions of relevant legislation, as are the roles of local authorities and the responsibilities of owners as regards heritage assets.

The Historic Towns Initiative (HTI) is a joint undertaking between my Department and the Heritage Council. Capital funding totalling €1,000,000 was awarded to local authorities for six towns in 2019. The successful towns are Ballina, Boyle, Kilrush, Letterkenny, Navan and Nenagh. Matching funding of at least 20% of total project expenditure is required for each project funded. The relevant local authority has been awarded significant capital funding towards the project referred to by the deputy. Funding for current or operational expenditure is not, however, provided under the scheme.

The best advice for the group would be to contact the local authority directly; both the conservation officer and the heritage officer would be best placed to advise on the various types of additional funding that may be available. Alternatively, the Department of Rural and Community Development may be in a position to assist through some of their programmes including LEADER.

While there are no specific plans at present to revise the HTI, my Department recently engaged in a public consultation process on Heritage Ireland 2030, the Government's commitment to a revitalised and refreshed National Heritage Plan. Any revision or extension of this particular initiative will be informed by this process.

Gaeltacht Scholarships

879. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of scholarships provided to secondary school students wishing to attend the Gaeltacht during the school summer holidays in each of the years 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; the schools that participated in a scholarship programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29812/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): The Deputy may be aware that my Department provides a subvention - via Scéim na bhFoghlaimoirí Gaeilge (the Irish Language Learners' Scheme) aimed at indirectly sub-

venting the cost of attending any one of the Gaeltacht Irish summer colleges recognised under the scheme.

In 2018 approximately 26,000 students (both at post-primary and third-level) availed of this subvention to the value of €4.2m of exchequer funding in 2018 - is payable under the terms of the scheme to qualifying households (of which there are approx. 700), who provide accommodation to attending students.

The Deputy may also be aware that earlier this year, I announced the provision of a new scholarship fund: DEIS Gaeltachta, worth €50,000, to enable 50 students attending DEIS post-primary schools – to attend Irish college during the summer. This is the first time that such a measure has been initiated by my Department. The measure represents the outworking of the commitment made under action 2.16 of the Government's Plean Gníomhaíochta 2018-2022 don Ghaeilge (Irish Language Action Plan 2018-2022) , which was published in June 2018 following Government approval and is being implemented on an ongoing basis by relevant stakeholders including my Department.

The scholarship fund is being administered nationally by the Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) in conjunction with the Department. As a result of this practical measure, 50 students, who may not have this opportunity otherwise, are being provided with the opportunity to attend Irish summer college and avail of the language learning and enrichment opportunities this presents. I understand that the scholarship fund has been fully subscribed for this year.

In addition, and in overall support of providing learning opportunities for second-level students, my department provides specific grant-aid under the scheme by way of a further measure called: ÁRANN Gaeltachta. Under this measure - which is in operation since 2007, specific grant-aid is provided to qualifying households on the Aran Islands who provide accommodation for students attending one of the three island-based post-primary schools for an entire school-year. 40 students availed of the measure in 2017, while 30 students per year have availed of the measure in the intervening period - in line with the maximum number allocated under the terms of the measure.

I might also mention that I recently announced the provision of a new fund worth €250,000 which will facilitate new opportunities for third-level students to spend three months in the Gaeltacht. Under ERASMUS Gaeltachta, a subsidy worth €17 per day will be provided to enable third-level institutions to offer a semester in the Gaeltacht to their students. Similar to the other aforementioned measures, this subsidy is payable to those providing accommodation under the terms of Scéim na bhFoghlaimoírí Gaeilge. The fund is expected to accommodate up to 175 students and represents progress in relation to measures 2.13, 2.15 and 2.19 of the Action Plan.

In the interest of completeness, I should say that I am aware that scholarships are provided by various Irish language, cultural and sports organisations, as well as by several local authorities. I am also aware that some of the Irish colleges themselves offer part scholarships to students.

I am satisfied that these measures provide significant language-learning opportunities for young people; have the same or similar effect as scholarships; align with the key principles of social inclusion - as relevant; and generate substantial down-stream economic benefits for Gaeltacht regions.

880. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount spent on tribunals, commissions of investigation and statutory inquiries in each of the years 2009 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by inquiry, tribunal or commission; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29830/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I am advised that no expenditure has been incurred by my Department in respect of tribunals, commissions of investigation or statutory inquiries as described by the Deputy during the period specified.

Departmental Staff Recruitment

881. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the estimated cost of recruiting 30 additional district conservation officers and 30 additional wildlife inspectors; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29892/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I am advised that, based on current pay levels, the estimated cost of recruiting an additional 30 full-time District Conservation Officers and an addition 30 full-time Wildlife Inspectors would be €2,393,391 per annum.

Heritage Council Funding

882. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the estimated cost of increasing the budget for the Heritage Council by 6.5%; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29893/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I was pleased to announce increased funding of €6.588m for the Heritage Council in 2019, compared to €6.377m in 2018, an increase of 3.3%. The funding to be provided to the Heritage Council in 2020 will be decided in the context of the annual estimates cycle, which is currently underway, having regard to available finance and competing demands.

The cost of increasing the Heritage Council's budget by 6.5% would be €428,220.

The voted funding allocation to the Heritage Council each year is published in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's Revised Estimates Volume. The amounts allocated since 2015 are set out in the following table.

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

Climate Change Policy

883. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics; the public bodies and

agencies under her remit to which she has issued an instruction to cease the purchase and use of single-use plastics; when the instruction issued; the bodies which have confirmed that they no longer purchase and use single-use plastics, respectively; the bodies which have not provided such confirmation to date; when they will confirm; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29981/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department has ceased the purchase and use of single-use plastics in accordance with the Government Decision announced by Minister Bruton in January.

The introduction of these measures under the Government's plan for the reduction of single-use plastics, the prevention of waste and green public procurement was advised to those bodies and agencies and bodies under the aegis of my Department during the week commencing 7th January. In accordance with the plan they were required not to purchase single-use plastic beverage cups, cutlery or drinking straws after 31st March (except where public health or hygiene issues arise) and to report to me by the end of November on the measures they were taking to minimise waste generation and maximise recycling.

My Department will be in further liaison with those bodies under its remit in relation to progress achieved in advance of the end November reporting deadline on measures being taken to minimise waste generation and maximise recycling.

The bodies and agencies under the remit of my Department are:

The Arts Council

The Chester Beatty Library

An Coimisinéir Teanga

The Crawford Art Gallery

An Foras Teanga

The Heritage Council

The Irish Film Board

The Irish Museum of Modern Art

The National Archives

The National Concert Hall

The National Gallery of Ireland

The National Library of Ireland

The National Museum of Ireland

Údarás na Gaeltachta

Waterways Ireland

Hen Harriers Threat Response Plan

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884. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when the threat response plan for hen harrier areas will be completed; and her views on permitting afforestation in hen harrier areas. [30005/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The draft Hen Harrier Threat Response Plan is nearing completion and is currently being refined and updated as necessary in consultation with Departmental stakeholders. The Departments will meet with the Consultative Committee for the Threat Response Plan as soon as practical, and the plan will then go to public consultation.

Any afforestation proposals in Special Protection Areas designated under the EU Birds Directive require completion by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine of an Appropriate Assessment, in accordance with Article 6.3 of the EU Habitats Directive. As per European Union Guidelines for State aid, any afforestation within the SPAs must be agreed in advance by the Competent Authority responsible for designating Natura sites, that is to say my Department.