

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.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

8. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he will report on the town and village renewal scheme and the town and village pilot residential occupancy scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30222/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Town and Village Renewal Scheme is a key initiative under the Action Plan for Rural Development and forms part of a range of measures to support rural Ireland under the Government's Project Ireland 2040 Rural Regeneration Programme.

Since the scheme was introduced in 2016, almost €53 million has been approved for more than 670 projects across the country.

I launched the 2019 Town and Village Renewal Scheme on 16th April last. Local Authorities were invited to submit up to 12 applications to my Department for consideration under the scheme. The closing date for receipt of applications was 28th June. My officials will be assessing all of the applications received, and decisions on the applications will be made when the assessment process is completed.

The Action Plan for Rural Development includes a commitment to develop a pilot scheme to encourage increased residential occupancy in rural towns and villages. I launched this initiative last October and announced that six towns had been invited to participate in the initial pilot. The 6 towns which were identified for inclusion in the pilot are:

1. Boyle, Co. Roscommon
2. Callan, Co. Kilkenny
3. Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo
4. Banagher, Co. Offaly
5. Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan
6. Cappoquin, Co. Waterford

Funding of up to €100,000 each is being made available to these towns to develop proposals to encourage town centre living. This funding is being used by the Local Authorities to engage

with communities and local businesses to identify practical solutions to increase the number of people living in their town centres. It is envisaged that the solutions they identify could lead to the development of more substantive proposals for funding from the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund in due course.

The lessons learnt through this pilot initiative can help to inform our approach to supporting and investing in rural towns and villages in the future. I recently received interim progress reports from each of the relevant Local Authorities involved in the Pilot Scheme and anticipate receiving a comprehensive report in respect of the entire pilot initiative, before the end of the year.

Questions Nos. 9 to 11, inclusive, answered orally.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

12. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount of the rural regeneration and development fund allocated to date; and if a breakdown of spending in each of the categories to date will be provided. [30255/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund seeks to support ambitious and strategic projects which have the potential to transform rural economies and communities. The Government has committed €1 billion over 10 years to the Fund and €315 million is allocated to the Fund for the period 2019-2022.

In November 2018 and February 2019 I announced details of a total of 38 Category 1 projects (capital projects which were fully planning and consent ready) and 46 Category 2 projects (those needing further development to make them ready for delivery) which were successful under the first call from the Fund, providing €86m in support for projects worth a total of €117m.

Following the announcement of the successful projects, my Department engaged with each lead party to complete due diligence requirements. Contractual arrangements were also drawn up with the release of funding based on the achievement of key milestones in the projects.

I am satisfied that significant progress is already being made on the implementation of successful projects. A number of the projects have already met their first milestone and had funding released. To date, €1,722,043 has been drawn down from the Fund by seven separate projects. This is made up of €1,654,161 drawn down for five Category 1 projects to date and €67,882 for two Category 2 projects.

I expect that payments from the Fund will significantly accelerate over the coming weeks and months as further milestones are achieved across all the 84 projects.

Question No. 13 answered with Question No. 11.

Community Development Projects Funding

14. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if assistance will be provided to a centre (details supplied) to continue to provide essential community services in view of the fact that it is faced with significant costs for fire safety works and renovations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30090/19]

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Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department provides a range of supports to communities nationwide, helping people to participate in the development of their communities and providing funding to improve community facilities. I am aware of the current situation in Hartstown Community Centre and I know how important the centre is to the community there.

Community facilities are funded from a range of different sources across different Government Departments and agencies. In many cases, they also receive funding supports from the local authority, as is the case in Hartstown.

My Department funds the Community Enhancement Programme which funded capital projects to the total value of €12.5m in 2018 and can be used to contribute towards the renovation of community infrastructure such as community centres. There is an initial allocation of €4.5m nationally under this programme in 2019. The Programme is administered locally by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) in each Local Authority area. Fingal County Council has been allocated €163,310 in respect of the CEP this year.

Given my overall responsibility within Government for Community Development, I am looking at ways in which my Department might assist in finding a resolution to this particular situation. I understand the local authority concerned, Fingal County Council, is also engaging with the Centre.

Charitable and Voluntary Organisations

15. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he or his officials have been briefed by the board of Pobal in relation to its review of its charitable status; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30438/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Pobal is a *not for profit* company which was originally established by Government in 1992 as Area Development Management (ADM) Ltd. Charitable status was granted to the company by the Revenue Commissioners on the 20th November 1996. In 2005 ADM was re-named Pobal. In accordance with Section 40 of the Charities Act, 2009, Pobal was entered onto the Register of Charitable Organisations on 16 October 2014.

The basis for Pobal having charitable status is tied to the objects of the Company, which are specified in its Memorandum and Articles of Association. I am satisfied that Pobal is fully compliant with the relevant legislative requirements including those of the Charities Act, 2009.

On its own initiative, Pobal undertook a review of its charitable status and in that regard sought independent legal advice on the matter. The review has now concluded. The Board of Pobal met in May 2019 to finalise their discussions relating to the review. I understand that it was decided by the Board that it was appropriate for the company to retain its charitable status. An update on the review was provided to my officials at an Oversight Meeting in June. I am satisfied that Pobal have considered the matter thoroughly and have acted appropriately on the findings of the review.

Land Issues

16. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of his proposal to introduce an indemnity scheme for landowners in relation to the use

of their land for recreational purposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30083/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): As the Deputy will be aware, my Department has been working for some time to develop a scheme to indemnify private land owners, particularly in upland areas, with regard to the use of their lands for recreational purposes.

This is a complex issue and the legal rights of landowners must be respected, while trying to facilitate access to their lands for recreational users on a permissive basis. The introduction of such a scheme is a key priority for my Department to protect land owners and to support the continued provision of access to the countryside for recreational users.

My Department has been advised that an indemnity scheme such as the one envisaged will require legislative provision. In this context, my officials met with the Attorney General's Office recently to explore the various options open to the Department and to identify the precise legislation which would require to be introduced to implement such a scheme. It appears that a number of separate pieces of legislation could require amendment.

In light of the complexity involved, I am also considering other options that might be available to address the matter as an interim measure. My officials have been making enquiries into alternative options and will continue to work to find a solution that meets the concerns of landowners who provide access to their lands for recreational purposes.

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme Funding

17. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development further to Parliamentary Question No. 577 of 18 June 2019, if the funding available for disadvantaged urban communities will be increased in Budget 2020; if he is planning new initiatives in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30072/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Many Government Departments have responsibilities in relation to tackling urban disadvantage, through capital projects and income supports. My own Department has several programmes in place to assist disadvantaged communities both urban and rural, and in the forthcoming discussions on Budget 2020 I will be seeking to ensure that we can continue to provide supports to communities who need it most.

While additional funding is always welcome, it is important to acknowledge the great work that is currently underway with resources provided by my Department. For example, in Dublin, the SICAP programme will provide €9.7m in 2019, giving vital support to those community groups and individuals most in need. In addition, under the Community Enhancement Programme (CEP) my Department allocated €675k to the Dublin area in 2019 so that community groups could avail of small capital grants to improve facilities in their areas.

The Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) in each area manages the SICAP programme and administers the CEP at a local level to ensure the funding is targeted to address disadvantage. LCDCs play a key role in tackling issues in disadvantaged areas, bringing a more coordinated, whole-of-Government approach to local and community development. They are best placed to ensure that state funding is channelled to those areas and communities most in need.

My Department will continue to work with Local Authorities through the LCDCs to ensure that appropriate local plans are developed and available resources are targeted effectively to

support the development of vibrant and sustainable communities.

LEADER Programmes Administration

18. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the reason the allocation and processing of applications for LEADER funding is perceived as being slow; if there delays in this regard; if so, his plans to address same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30219/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The LEADER programme is very much driven at a local level by the Local Action Groups who administer the programme and approve projects in their respective areas.

The LEADER programme effectively commenced in the second half of 2016, following the signing of Funding Agreements with most of the LAGs. While there were some issues concerning the administrative requirements at the start of the programme, over the course of the last 2 years, I have implemented a series of actions to simplify the delivery of LEADER. These actions were developed in consultation with the Local Action Groups themselves.

I have previously highlighted the package of 31 actions I made to improve the programme. This package included:

1. A significant reduction in the number of checks that are carried out on project applications;
2. A standardised application form to assist applicants and streamline the approval process; and,
3. Revised and clarified procurement arrangements.

In addition, I have continued to make a number of additional changes, over and above the package of 31 actions, to further empower Local Action Groups to approve projects.

The impact of these changes is clear to see. 2,135 LEADER projects have been approved for funding of €75.8 million since the programme commenced. Almost 100 other Food and Co-operation projects have also been approved at national level, outside of the core budget available to the LAGs.

The amount of funding approved last year was over double that approved in 2017. This year alone, nearly 600 projects have already been approved.

While my Department will continue to examine ways to further enhance the programme, I am satisfied that changes already made have substantially improved the process for LEADER applicants.

LEADER Programmes Administration

19. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of progress on the roll-out of the new LEADER programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30221/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The current LEADER programme effectively became operational in the second half of 2016, following the

signing of Funding Agreements with most of the Local Action Groups (LAGs) who deliver the programme. Projects must be selected under the programme by the end of 2020, while payments will continue in 2021 and later years as necessary.

We are now making significant progress in the delivery of the LEADER programme. 2,135 project applications have been approved by the LAGs for funding of over €75.8 million. A further 383 projects seeking funding of €27.6 million are at earlier stages of the approvals process.

In addition, almost 100 projects have been approved at national level, outside of the core budget available to the LAGs, for Food and Co-operation projects.

The level of progress on the LEADER programme varies between each Local Action Group. However, on average, the LAGs have indicated that over 80% of their available project budget will be allocated by the end of 2019. This will place the LAGs in a strong position to allocate the full amount of funding available before the end of 2020.

Indeed, there is a growing demand for more LEADER funding to be made available in some areas. In this regard, I was very pleased to announce earlier this week that an additional €5 million will be shared between the LAGs that are most advanced in delivering the LEADER programme. This is further evidence of the huge progress made since my Department introduced a range of administrative improvements to the programme in 2017 and 2018.

Voluntary Sector

20. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his plans for the development of a national volunteering strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30084/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development (Deputy Seán Canney): The development of a National Volunteering Strategy is a key priority for my Department.

A Call for Input (CFI) paper was launched in December 2018, as a first step in the development of this strategy. The CFI was circulated to a wide range of stakeholders and was also posted on my Department's website www.drcd.gov.ie. This paper was designed to inform stakeholders about the proposed development of the strategy, to seek their views on what constitutes volunteering and what the strategy should contain.

Among the areas that stakeholders were asked to provide their views on were:

- a definition of volunteering;
- a shared vision for the future of Irish volunteering;
- the objectives of a draft volunteering strategy;
- the volunteering community;
- governance and funding issues;
- various challenges and opportunities that exist within volunteering today; and
- monitoring, measuring and evaluating the impact of volunteering in society.

The response to the CFI was presented to the a National Advisory Group on Volunteering

at its inaugural meeting, on 29th May 2019. The Group, which will advise on and oversee the development of the strategy, is made up of a range of stakeholders representing Government and the community and voluntary sector. It is chaired by Minister of State, Seán Canney.

It is anticipated that the draft strategy will be completed later this year, following which there will be a further opportunity for the public to provide input before the strategy is finally presented to Government for approval.

LEADER Programmes Administration

21. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the roll out of the LEADER programme as at the end of June 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30080/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The current LEADER programme effectively became operational in the second half of 2016, following the signing of Funding Agreements with most of the Local Action Groups (LAGs) which administer the programme and approve projects at a local level.

At the end of June 2019, 2,130 projects had been approved for LEADER funding of over €75 million since the commencement of the programme. A further 370 LEADER projects seeking funding of more than €27 million were at earlier stages of the approvals process. These figures have increased slightly since the end of June.

There were also close to 100 other LEADER Food and Co-operation projects approved for funding outside of the core budget available to the LAGs.

Overall, expenditure on the LEADER programme to end of June was over €53.4 million. This expenditure includes both project costs and the costs of the Local Action Groups who administer the programme and work with promoters to develop projects. Project expenditure will increase significantly this year as the works under the approved projects are completed and claims are submitted for payment.

The level of project approvals and the increase in expenditure since the start of 2018 shows that we are now making good progress in the delivery of the LEADER programme. However, I will continue to monitor the programme carefully to ensure that the budget available is fully utilised.

Community Development Projects Funding

22. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which he has sufficient resources available to meet requests for grant aid or other forms of assistance from both rural and urban areas nationally and County Kildare in particular; the extent to which he has allocated such funding to date in 2019; the extent or value of applications pending; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30440/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department funds a range of programmes and schemes that provide financial assistance and other supports to eligible community groups and organisations in urban and rural areas throughout the country, including in Kildare. These schemes provide much needed funding, support and assistance to communities at local level.

These include the €1 billion Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, the LEADER programme; the Community Enhancement Programme, the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme; the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP); the Town and Village Renewal Scheme; and the Community Services Programme.

My Department has been provided with a gross budget of €294.2 million for 2019 and I intend to ensure that this money is fully allocated through these and other schemes under my Department's remit.

I can confirm that, to date, more than €196 million of this budget has been allocated nationally, with in excess of €5.4 million allocated to projects and organisations in Co Kildare.

Requests for assistance under particular programmes can be made at the appropriate time in respect of the application period for each programme, and these details, along with eligibility criteria and other information, can be found on the Government's website, gov.ie.

The value of the applications pending will be determined following their assessment under the various schemes, later in 2019.

Walks Scheme

23. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of new mountain and other walkways funded each year since 2011 under the walkways scheme; his plans to develop this sector further; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30075/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Walks Scheme currently covers 39 trails, with payments made to approximately 1,960 private landholders to maintain those trails.

No new walks had been taken onto the scheme since 2010. However, the Programme for a Partnership Government includes a commitment to increase the number of walks covered by the scheme. In line with this commitment, funding for the scheme was doubled in Budget 2019 - from €2 million to €4 million - to allow this expansion to proceed.

In February of this year, I invited Expressions of Interest from Local Authorities and Local Development Companies for inclusion in the scheme of additional trails that meet specific qualifying criteria.

Interested trail management committees, community groups and other relevant bodies were invited to make contact with their Local Authority or Local Development Company to commence the process. To date, 14 Local Development Companies have submitted 46 Expressions of Interest to my Department.

Based on these submissions, I hope to be in a position to announce the first tranche of trails to be added to the scheme by the end of the summer.

There is no closing date for Expressions of Interest at this time, and interested parties can continue submit proposals for additional trails to be included in the Walks Scheme through their Local Authority or Local Development Company.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

24. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the rural regeneration development fund; the impact the fund will have on counties, for example, County Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30082/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund seeks to support ambitious and strategic projects which have the potential to transform rural economies and communities. The Government has committed €1 billion over 10 years to the Fund and €315 million is allocated to the Fund for the period 2019-2022.

Following the conclusion of the first call under the Fund in February 2019, a total of 84 successful projects had been announced, with funding of €86m provided from the Fund to support projects worth a total of €117m.

Amongst the successful projects was the development of a regeneration plan for the core area of Kinnegad, including plans for the development of a public library and educational campus and a park and community facility in the town centre. The project received €600,000 in funding.

The successful projects under the first call from the Fund were spread across a wide range of sectors – from tourism and enterprise development to heritage protection to community facilities. The projects are located across the country and I believe that their delivery will achieve significant benefits not just for counties but across regions.

I announced the second call for Category 1 applications - those with full planning and consents in place - in April 2019, with a closing date for applications at noon on Tuesday, 6th August 2019. Category 2 applications, relating to projects which need further development to be ready for Category 1 status, will be sought later in the year.

This is a 10 year Fund and I am asking that all local authorities, State agencies, LEADER Local Action Groups and other potential lead parties work with rural communities to identify and develop ambitious projects which will deliver significant regeneration and development to their areas. My Department will work with you to ensure the greatest possible impacts are realised by the support provided by the Fund in the years ahead.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

25. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of rural regeneration and development funding applications approved and payment has issued in regard to same in counties Cavan and Monaghan to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30074/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The first call for applications to the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund closed in September 2019. Following the conclusion of the first call to the Fund in February 2019, a total of 84 successful projects had been announced, with funding of €86m provided from the Fund. This funding supported a total investment of €117m by these projects in rural areas.

Of the 84 successful projects, 3 are located in County Cavan and 4 in County Monaghan. Total funding of €4.9 million was approved for the seven projects, €3.9m in Monaghan and €1m in Cavan.

Following the announcement of the successful projects, my Department engaged with each

lead party to complete due diligence requirements. Contractual arrangements were also drawn up with the release of funding based on the achievement of key milestones in the projects. To date, one of the 7 projects in Cavan and Monaghan, Cootehill Industrial Park in Cavan, has reached its first milestone and has drawn down €254,922 from the Fund.

I am satisfied that significant progress is already being made on the implementation of successful projects, in Cavan, Monaghan and elsewhere. To date, a total of €1,722,043 has been drawn down from the Fund. I expect that payments from the Fund will significantly accelerate over the coming weeks and months as further milestones are achieved across all the 84 projects.

Departmental Strategies

26. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his plans for the development of a national strategy to support the community and voluntary sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30085/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department is currently finalising a five-year strategy to support the Community and Voluntary sector in Ireland. The strategy addresses the need for an implementation plan for the 2016 *Framework Policy for Local and Community Development in Ireland*, as well as the *Programme for a Partnership Government* commitment to develop a strategy to support the Community and Voluntary sector.

The draft strategy has been co-produced with the Community and Voluntary sector, local government and relevant Government Departments. It describes a long-term vision for our communities and sets out a direction of travel for Government policy in relation to community development, local development and the broader Community and Voluntary sector.

The strategy will comprise high-level strategic objectives with associated actions to support communities and the community organisations that work with and support them. My Department will lead on its implementation, working collaboratively with relevant Government Departments, State agencies and Community and Voluntary stakeholders.

Development of the strategy was supported by a *Cross-Sectoral Group on Local and Community Development* and I intend to reconvene and expand this group to support implementation, monitoring and review. There will be periodic progress reports provided to the relevant Cabinet Sub-Committee and a formal mid-term review will also be carried out.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

27. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the drawdown in funding to date of the town and village renewal scheme since established. [30429/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Town and Village Renewal Scheme is a key initiative under the Action Plan for Rural Development and forms part of a range of measures to support rural Ireland under the Government's Project Ireland 2040 Rural Regeneration Programme.

I launched the 2019 Town and Village Renewal Scheme on 16th April last. Local Authorities were invited to submit up to 12 applications to my Department for consideration under the scheme. The closing date for receipt of applications was 28th June. My officials are currently

assessing all of the applications received and decisions on the applications will be made when the assessment process is completed.

Since the Town and Village Renewal Scheme was established in 2016, almost €53 million in funding has been approved for more than 670 projects across the country. As of the 8th July 2019, a total €28.105 million has been drawdown by Local Authorities for approved projects.

Mountain Access Schemes

28. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the progress made by his Department and predecessor Departments in relation to the promotion of mountain climbing and the mountain access scheme since 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30076/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The promotion of mountain climbing as an activity is primarily the responsibility of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and other bodies such as Fáilte Ireland. However, my Department is very involved in the promotion of access to the countryside for recreational purposes. In that regard Comhairle Na Tuaithe (The Countryside Council) was established in February 2004 as a non-statutory body with a primary focus on the priority areas of access to the countryside, developing a countryside code, and developing a countryside recreation strategy.

Under a Comhairle na Tuaithe initiative, in 2011, a Mountain Access Scheme to facilitate access to the uplands for hill walking and similar activities was developed in two pilot areas; one at Mount Gable in Connemara and the other in the MacGillycuddy Reeks in Co Kerry.

In order to help progress the Mountain Access Scheme, SLR Consultants with the support of the former Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, South Kerry Development Partnership and Fáilte Ireland, were tasked with assessing the potential for structured permissive access to the MacGillycuddy Reeks uplands and to identify the most appropriate management structure to ensure the sustainable management of the integral environmental and cultural heritage of the Reeks, while providing long term clarity on permissive recreational access to the mountains. I understand that the SLR report also suggested a set of Key Performance Indicators covering issues such as management, revenue, training & education, enterprise and communication.

On foot of the recommendations in the SLR report, a Management Forum, whose job it was to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the report, was established in the Kerry pilot area in 2014.

Comhairle na Tuaithe also established a Mountain Access Project Steering Group in 2014, which was tasked with reviewing progress in respect of the Mountain Access Pilots, developing signage for Mountain Access Pilot areas, and issues around a National Indemnity Scheme. During this time, tendering took place for the design of a mountain access logo, and mountain access signage and information panels for the two pilot areas, which are now in place.

On 6th June last, at its first meeting of 2019, I presented a new mandate to Comhairle na Tuaithe which will reinforce and strengthen its advisory role in relation to the sustainable development of the outdoor recreation sector in Ireland. At this meeting, I also announced the appointment of Dr. Liam Twomey as the new Chair of Comhairle.

I have also asked Comhairle to identify opportunities to develop rural enterprises based on outdoor recreation activity, and to consider the scope for the development of a new National

Strategy for Outdoor Recreation, taking account of recent developments and investments across the sector.

Also, as the Deputy will be aware, my Department has been working to develop a National Indemnity Scheme to indemnify private land owners, particularly in Mountain Access Scheme areas, with regard to the use of their lands for recreational purposes which when in place will further facilitate access to the countryside for recreational purposes, including mountain climbing.

Departmental Schemes

29. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the position regarding streamlining the criteria required for small grant applications, for example, LEADER; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30078/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department operates a number of schemes that can provide small-scale financial supports and grants to community groups and organisations.

These include the Community Enhancement Programme and the CLÁR Programme. The application processes for these programmes are reviewed before each call for applications is issued to ensure they are user friendly and fit for purpose.

Following a review of the criteria for the CLÁR Programme, my Department initiated a process for the 2019 programme whereby local authorities further assist communities by verifying information for applicants and ensuring that all required permissions, match-funding, etc., are in place so applications fulfil all the scheme requirements.

The Community Enhancement Programme is the result of a review of the Communities Facilities Scheme and RAPID programme and provides a more flexible, streamlined and targeted approach to providing small scale infrastructure funding of a regenerative nature to enhance facilities in disadvantaged communities.

My Department also offers information sessions and workshops for communities and groups on its funding programmes and schemes. This is done to help applicants understand the schemes, criteria which apply and with completing the application process.

I am acutely aware of the issues faced by some communities who wish to apply for funding, but are hampered in completing application forms in a satisfactory manner due to capacity issues.

To assist communities a series of regional 'Rural Opportunity' information sessions were hosted by my Department recently 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.

My Department also recently ran a series of 'Helping Hands' workshops designed to make groups more aware of grant programmes, and to provide guidance on how to make an application. The events were aimed at community groups that have had no success, or limited success, previously and aim to provide hints and tips on how to make a better application and how to identify local supports that community groups can draw upon.

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The LEADER programme, which comes under the remit of my Department, is delivered through Local Action Groups (LAGs) in each of the 28 sub-regional areas. I am committed to making the application process for LEADER as efficient as possible for all applicants.

My Department engages regularly with the Local Action Groups (LAGs) that deliver LEADER to identify potential areas for programme improvement. Following a forum held with the LAGs in May 2017, I have implemented a series of 31 improvements to streamline the LEADER programme. I will continue to closely monitor the implementation of the LEADER Programme to ensure the process is as streamlined as possible while being mindful of the EU Regulations governing the Programme.

I believe these efforts will see any administrative barriers that may exist reduced in order that our funding has the broadest possible reach and that all eligible groups have the opportunity to access available supports.

In addition, my Department is committed to keeping under review the administration of all our funding programmes and schemes to ensure they remain fit for purpose, targeted, can be accessed by those who need the supports most and are delivering benefits for communities across the country. I welcome feedback on our programmes and schemes from communities so we can continue to do this.

LEADER Programmes Expenditure

30. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount spent on LEADER funding in 2019 in counties Cavan and Monaghan. [30073/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The LEADER Programme is delivered in each County by the approved Local Action Groups.

The Cavan Local Action Group has approved 56 projects with a combined value of €3,171,877, since the beginning of the programme, from their core project budget. In addition, a further 13 applications seeking total funding in excess of €800,000 are at various stages of the approvals process.

In 2019, over €650,000 has been paid to project promoters in County Cavan, while over €130,000 has been paid in respect of the administration costs of the LAG including their engagement with potential promoters to bring forward applications.

The Monaghan Local Action Group has approved 41 projects with a combined value of €2,420,542, since the beginning of the programme, from their core project budget. In addition, a further 9 applications seeking total funding in excess of €1.1 million are at various stages of the approvals process.

In 2019, in excess of €447,000 has been paid to project promoters in County Monaghan, while over €170,000 has been paid in respect of the administration costs of the LAG, including their engagement with potential promoters to bring forward applications.

Question No. 31 answered with Question No. 7.

Rural Broadband Scheme

32. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the

discussions he has had with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment with regard to broadband provision in rural areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30428/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development (Deputy Seán Canney): As Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development, Natural Resources and Digital Development, I work across both the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. I also chair the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce which was established in 2016 to identify and overcome obstacles to mobile phone and broadband services. The Taskforce is a cross-Government initiative comprising senior officials from a number of Departments and State bodies.

I am keenly aware of the importance of access to high-speed, high-quality broadband services in rural areas and I engage regularly with my Ministerial colleagues in both Departments in finding ways to remove barriers to the rollout of telecommunications infrastructure.

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment has overall policy responsibility for the National Broadband Plan. However, the Department of Rural and Community Development works closely with that Department and with Local Authorities to help prepare rural communities for the roll out of high-speed broadband.

The Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce, which is co-ordinated by officials of the two Departments, has successfully addressed a number of complex issues over the last three years, many of which will facilitate the roll-out of the National Broadband Plan when the contract for the State Intervention Area is signed. Quarterly Progress Reports on the work of the Taskforce are published on the websites of both Departments, and on the Gov.ie portal.

The Department of Rural and Community Development also supports preparations for the roll out of the National Broadband Plan through the network of Broadband Officers located in each Local Authority. The Broadband Officers are co-funded by the Department and provide a vital point of contact for industry and the public regarding telecoms issues.

The Broadband Officers are also leading on the development of Digital Strategies for each Local Authority. These Digital Strategies will enable communities to make full use of digital technology in their daily lives, and will be particularly beneficial when the Broadband Plan is rolled out.

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme

33. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if his Department is involved with an interdepartmental taskforce to ensure that lower income urban areas grappling with serious issues of antisocial behaviour and crime will have adequate resources from crime prevention initiatives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30071/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department does not sit on any interdepartmental taskforce in relation to crime prevention initiatives to deal with antisocial behaviour and crime in lower income urban areas and has no direct involvement in crime prevention initiatives.

My Department's mission is to support viable, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland. While the Department's role is not specifically related to antisocial behav-

ious and crime, 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.

Action Plan for Rural Development Implementation

34. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the consultations taking place with stakeholders for the next phase of rural policy post-2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30079/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Government's Action Plan for Rural Development was published in January 2017 as a three-year plan to support the economic and social development of rural Ireland. The Action Plan runs to the end of 2019, and my Department has now commenced work on developing the next phase of rural policy, from 2020 onwards.

As part of this process, my Department held a series of consultation events throughout the country to obtain the views of stakeholders on the challenges and opportunities facing rural Ireland over the next five years.

Eight events have taken place, in Cavan, Donegal Town, Carlow, Thurles, the Aran Islands, Claremorris, Ennis, and Tralee.

The events which have taken place to date have been well attended by a wide range of stakeholders including local communities, State Agencies, local government, and central Government Departments. All of the contributions from these events will assist my Department in developing the next phase of policy for rural Ireland.

The new policy will build on the Action Plan for Rural Development. It will be forward-looking, and will seek to strengthen and build resilience in rural economies and communities. As is the case with the current Action Plan, the new policy will reflect a whole-of-Government commitment to rural Ireland.

My objective is to publish the policy at the start of 2020.

Departmental Schemes

35. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his plans to help those communities in need of assistance towards formulating proposals for funding under various programmes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30086/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department operates a number of schemes that provides small-scale financial grants and supports to community groups and organisations, these include the Community Enhancement Programme and the CLÁR Programme. The application processes for these programmes are reviewed before each call for applications to ensure they are user friendly and fit for purpose.

I know that there are some groups or community organisations that may not have considered seeking funding because they don't have the experience of submitting funding applications or lack understanding of the criteria in place. To help these groups, my Department held a series of six 'Helping Hands' events nationwide earlier this year, to make groups more aware of funding programmes, and to provide practical guidance on making applications. These events provided hints and tips on how to make a better funding application and how to identify local supports that community groups can draw upon.

The response to these events has been overwhelmingly positive and my hope is that individuals and communities will be encouraged to take their own ideas or projects forward. These events and other ongoing measures will ensure that our funding has the broadest possible reach and that all eligible groups have the opportunity to access available supports.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

36. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the drawdown in funding to date of the outdoor recreation infrastructure scheme for the allocations in 2017 and 2018. [30427/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) provides funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure and for the maintenance and promotion of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in rural Ireland.

The following table outlines the amounts allocated and drawn down to date under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) 2017 and 2018. Measure 2 of the 2017 scheme was announced and allocated in January 2018, as reflected in the table below. Measure 2 of the 2018 scheme was announced in January 2019 and is therefore not included in the following table.

Year	Allocation	Drawdown to Date	Percentage Paid to Date
2017			
M1 & M3	€9,385,416.00	€5,108,437.25	54%
2018			
M1 & M3	€9,961,525.56	€875,666.13	9%
M2 2017 (announced Feb 2018)	€2,124,279.79	€1,466,471.60	69%

Year	Allocation	Drawdown to Date	Percentage Paid to Date
TOTAL	€21,471,221.35	€7,450,574.99	35%

LEADER Programmes Data

37. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount spent to date under the 2014-2020 LEADER programme by project and administration costs; the amount expended to date on project costs by each LAG; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30425/19]

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) to cover the costs of delivering their LEADER Local Development Strategies. The remaining €30 million is available for thematic schemes to be funded outside of the core budget allocated to each LAG.

Total expenditure on the LEADER programme since it commenced is in excess of €54 million. This includes:

- €1.5 million for the cost of developing the LAG strategies (preparatory support)
- €28 million for expenditure incurred by the LAGs in administering the programme and supporting the project development process (administration & animation costs);
- €24.8 million for individual LEADER projects funded through the core budget available to each LAG.

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 from the LAGs' core budget. Project payments, in particular, will increase significantly as these projects are completed and submit payment claims

Table 1 below provides a breakdown of the project payments made to date by each Local Action Group.

The figures provided do not include payments made under the thematic schemes funded outside of the core budget allocated to each LAG.

Total LEADER Project payments by LAG as at 8th July 2019

Local Action Group	Project Payments
Name	Value
Carlow	€1,146,666
Cavan	€1,050,138
Clare	€858,357
Cork North	€733,003
Cork South	€323,496
Cork West	€250,656
Donegal	€2,989,845
Dublin Rural	€554,880
Galway East	€160,677

Local Action Group	Project Payments
Galway West	€227,665
Kerry	€1,742,039
Kildare	€211,422
Kilkenny	€788,707
Laois	€767,771
Leitrim	€461,622
Limerick	€1,472,572
Longford	€448,966
Louth	€574,640
Mayo	€1,143,999
Meath	€288,898
Monaghan	€779,385
Offaly	€1,377,419
Roscommon	€546,829
Sligo	€1,070,124
Tipperary	€1,021,837
Waterford	€1,805,619
Westmeath	€402,401
Wexford	€1,100,344
Wicklow	€460,650
Total	€24,760,629

Local Improvement Scheme Funding

38. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his plans to allocate more funding to the local improvement scheme. [30220/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Local Improvement Scheme, or LIS, is a programme for improvement works on small private or non-public roads in rural areas. The scheme is funded by my Department and is administered through the Local Authorities.

As the Deputy may be aware, there was no dedicated funding for this scheme for a number of years due to constraints on public expenditure. However, I was very conscious of the underlying demand for the scheme in rural areas throughout the country.

I reintroduced the LIS in September 2017 and allocated a total of €17.5 million to Local Authorities for LIS roads in 2017. In 2018, I allocated over €20 million for LIS roads in two phases, the second of which is currently being completed.

On 7th February last I launched the 2019 Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) and allocated a sum of €10 million to Local Authorities under the scheme. The number and location of roads to benefit from improvement works in 2019 is a matter for the relevant Local Authority. Funding allocations, on a county by county basis, can be found on the Gov.ie website at the following link:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/d309ea-local-improvement-scheme/>.

It is clear that there is a continuing demand for LIS funding in rural communities across Ire-

land. I will be closely monitoring the scheme over the coming months and will make decisions regarding any further funding in due course.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

39. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development when the reports of each of the six relevant local authorities in relation to the town and village pilot residential occupancy scheme will be published; when the pilot scheme will be completed; his plans to roll the scheme out nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30439/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I launched the pilot scheme to encourage increased residential occupancy in rural towns and villages last October, and announced that six towns had been invited to participate in the initial pilot.

The primary objective of the scheme is to encourage people to return to living in town centres. This is part of a wider range of measures being taken across Government to revitalise towns and villages and address the issue of vacant premises. The scheme is being led locally by the relevant Local Authorities, in close collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, and is overseen by my Department.

The 6 towns which were identified for inclusion in the pilot are:

1. Boyle, Co. Roscommon
2. Callan, Co. Kilkenny
3. Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo
4. Banagher, Co. Offaly
5. Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan
6. Cappoquin, Co. Waterford

Funding of up to €100,000 is being made available to each of these towns to develop proposals to encourage town centre living. This funding is being used by the Local Authorities to engage with communities and local businesses, and identify practical solutions to increase the number of people living in their town centres. It is envisaged that the solutions identified could lead to the development of more substantive proposals for funding from the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund in due course.

The lessons learnt through this pilot initiative can help to inform our approach to supporting and investing in rural towns and villages in the future. I have received interim progress reports from each of the relevant Local Authorities involved in the Pilot Scheme. It is anticipated that a comprehensive final report will be produced towards the end of the year and I will make decisions regarding the publication of that report and the further roll-out of the scheme in due course.

Defence Forces Remuneration

40. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the timeline for the implementation of priority actions related to technical pay arrangements in the Defence

Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30830/19]

69. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the actions taken on the previous review to the technical pay structure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30555/19]

70. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if his Department has examined whether some of the Permanent Defence Force in receipt of the security duty allowance do not receive the minimum wage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30556/19]

71. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he has examined if certain ranks of the Permanent Defence Force are not in receipt of the minimum wage when their hours worked is compared to their pay and allowances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30557/19]

79. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his views on whether overseas missions will be compromised with 57.8% of members stating that they intend to leave the Permanent Defence Force in the next two years as outlined in the Public Service Pay Commission report on the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30565/19]

81. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the way in which he will respond to the 84.5% of members of the Defence Forces that stated pay levels as a reason to leave in the Public Service Pay Commission report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30567/19]

90. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will implement a review undertaken by military management into technical grades 2 to 6 as recommended by the Public Service Pay Commission; the implementation timeline for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30576/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 40, 69, 70, 71, 79, 81 and 90 together.

At its meeting held on the 4th July 2019, the Government accepted, in full, the report of the Public Service Pay Commission on recruitment and retention in the Permanent Defence Force. The report contains a broad range of recommendations to deal with recruitment and retention challenges in the Permanent Defence Force.

The recommendations includes a 10% increase in Military Service Allowance, the restoration of the rates of certain allowances cut in the Haddington Road Agreement, and the re-introduction of the retention/loyalty bonus for Air Corp pilots.

These are immediate benefits. Future recommendations from this report include a review of technical pay and a review of pay structures in the Permanent Defence Force.

The Government also agreed an extensive implementation plan for the report. The plan sets out the actions to be taken and the timelines within which they will be taken.

In addition, the plan sets out an oversight process and my Department is putting in place the civil and military structures to support that process.

The report of the Public Service Pay Commission is being considered by the Permanent Defence Force Representative Associations and there will be further meetings in the coming

weeks to provide clarification of matters arising.

Departmental Functions

41. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if his Department requires approval by him for information issued from the Defence Forces press office; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30514/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): As well as being responsible overall for Defence matters, the Minister for Defence is head of the civil and military branches of the Department of Defence.

As has been long established practice, information matters, including media engagement, follow coordination between the relevant civil and military branches, under the authority of the Minister.

Defence Forces Operations

42. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the cybersecurity incidence response team is exclusively comprised of Defence Forces personnel; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30517/19]

43. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if there is an external procurement for the cybersecurity incidence response team; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30518/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 42 and 43 together.

As outlined in the Governments White Paper on Defence 2015, the issue of Cyber Security has very significant implications for governmental administration, for industry, for economic wellbeing and for the security and safety of citizens. Indeed Cyber Security is a standing item on the agenda of the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning, which I chair.

The response to cyber threats remains a whole-of-Government challenge, with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment taking the lead role, with inputs in the security domain from An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces. The Department of Defence and the Defence Forces are committed to participating, under the leadership of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, in the delivery of measures to improve the cyber security of the State.

Ireland's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), which is located in the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment provides a range of cyber security services to owners of Government IT infrastructure and Critical National Infrastructure. The NCSC is also home to the national Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT-IE), which acts as a national point of contact involving entities within Ireland, and as the point of contact for international discussions on issues of cyber security. The scope of CSIRT-IE's activities covers prevention, detection, response and mitigation services to Government Departments and State agencies and critical national infrastructure providers.

The Defence Forces provide seconded specialists to assist with the work of this team when resources allow. Also, as in any emergency/crisis situation, once the Defence systems are sup-

ported, the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces may provide additional support to the CSIRT-IE team in so far as resources allow.

Details regarding the specific establishment and composition of the Defence Forces Computer Incident Response Team (CIRT) cannot be provided for operational and security reasons. In addition, I am informed by the military authorities that there is no external procurement for the Defence Forces Cyber Security Incident Response Team. From time to time the Defence Forces does go to the market for security related services.

Defence Forces Personnel

44. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if there is additional vetting for civilians that join his Department from other public bodies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30519/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): All new entrant civil servants are subject to vetting and security clearance processes prior to being offered a post in the Department of Defence. Security vetting has a number of layers and is conducted in conjunction with An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces. Civil servants transferring to my Department from another Government Department will have been subject to the vetting process for all entrants to the civil service. Certain post holders are the subject of further clearance processes.

For operational reasons, it would be inappropriate to set out or discuss those detailed processes. Security is kept under ongoing review and my officials work closely with the Defence Forces in relation to such matters.

Cyber Security Protocols

45. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if networks in his Department have been subjected to cyberattacks in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30521/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Cyberattacks are a constant threat to organisations across the globe, including the Department of Defence. These attacks represent challenges that are constantly evolving and require vigilance and appropriate responses. The nature of any cyberattack and the potential impact also varies considerably depending on the approach and objective of those with malicious intent. Cybersecurity is multifaceted and my Department has implemented a defence-in-depth approach using best in class technologies to mitigate against such attacks. For security and operational reasons, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on such cyber security matters.

Cyber Security Protocols

46. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the Defence Forces networks are secured on a 24-7 basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30522/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I am informed by the military authorities that the Defence Forces networks are secured on a 24/7 basis.

From an operational and security perspective it would be inappropriate to comment further on the cyber and network security capabilities of the Defence Forces other than to say that there is on-going and continued development of these capabilities within the Defence Forces.

Air Corps

47. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if commandants in the Air Corps will be paid the duty allowance for the emergency aeromedical service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30524/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Conciliation and Arbitration (C&A) scheme for members of the Permanent Defence Force provides a formal mechanism for the Permanent Defence Force Representative Associations, that is PDFORRA and RACO, to engage with the Official side.

The payment of an allowance for Commandants in the Air Corps who perform emergency aeromedical service duties is currently being processed through the C&A scheme. As discussions under the C&A scheme are confidential to the parties involved, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the matter at this time.

Defence Forces Operations

48. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the level of preparedness of the Defence Forces to respond in the event of an attack; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30531/19]

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

At National level, representation on the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning by both the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces, ensures the fullest coordination and cooperation in the event of an emergency and that the command structure within the Defence Forces is compatible with the requirements in this area.

In accordance with the Framework for Major Emergency Management, primary responsibility for responding to emergencies such as severe weather events or terrorist attacks rests with the three designated principal response agencies, namely, the relevant Local Authority, An Garda Síochána, and the Health Service Executive. The Defence Forces provide the fullest possible assistance to the appropriate Lead Department in the event of a natural disaster or an emergency situation in its Aid to the Civil Authority and Aid to the Civil Power (ATCP) roles. Major Emergency Plans have been developed by local and regional authorities and these Plans identify the procedures for requesting assistance from the Defence Forces.

I also wish to assure you that the Defence Forces retain a wide range of specialist skills and equipment. The full spectrum of Defence Forces personnel and equipment are available for deployment in response to any emergencies that may arise. The Operations Directorate in Defence Forces Headquarters manages the necessary cross-service coordination in responding to requests for support. In this context, the security environment is kept under constant review. An Garda Síochána can request a broad range of specialist supports from the Defence Forces in-

cluding Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams and the Army Ranger Wing. These arrangements have proved effective in all emergencies encountered to date.

The acquisition of new equipment for the Defence Forces remains a clear focus for me. Future equipment priorities for the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service is considered in the context of the White Paper on Defence as part of the capability development and equipment priorities planning process and I wish to assure you that significant investment in equipment is taking place in the coming years in this context.

I am committed to ensuring that the personnel of the Defence Forces continue to be equipped and trained to best international standards and I can confirm that the Defence Forces keep their operational plans and response capabilities for dealing with a wide range of threats under constant review. I am satisfied that the Defence Forces are equipped and resourced to respond, as appropriate, to any such events were they to occur in this State.

Gender Equality

49. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the status of initiatives related to gender equality measures and the deployment of female personnel in peacekeeping missions as outlined in the White Paper on Defence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30532/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Government is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for men and women throughout the Defence Forces and to the full participation by women in all aspects of Defence Forces activities. This is underlined by a commitment in the Programme for Government to increase the level of female participation in the Defence Forces.

Unlike some other national armed forces, the Defence Forces have no restrictions with regard to the assignment of men or women to the full range of operational and administrative duties. Women, therefore, play a full and meaningful role in all aspects of Defence Forces operations at home and overseas on peacekeeping missions. In this regard, the Defence Forces participates on an international level in the sphere of Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Ireland's third National Action Plan on WPS renews Ireland's commitment to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, setting out how Ireland will continue to promote and implement the objectives of the agenda in its programme support activities, diplomatic advocacy and policy-making across the interrelated areas of peace, security and development. In relation to overseas deployment, a female Officer in the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, is currently serving as Advisor to NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security and a female officer in the Acting rank of Brigadier General has been appointed Deputy Force Commander in the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). In 2016 a female officer commanded a Defence Forces contingent in UNDOF on a six month tour of duty.

The participation by female personnel in all aspects of Defence Forces operations is further exemplified in the Defence Forces Equality Policy and the Defence Forces Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Statement and Action Plan, which outlines the Organisation's commitment to gender equality and its proactive approaches to recruiting females.

In line with these policies and commitments, a number of initiatives have been implemented to increase the level of female participation in the Defence Forces. For example:

- Special consideration is paid to women as a target group for recruitment and within the general recruitment framework.

- In order to extend the reach to the target demographic of 18-26 year old women, the Defence Forces has initiated a collaboration with Irish sporting bodies, commencing with the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU).

- The introduction of best practices in recruitment such as the adjustment of physical standards for female applicants and a balanced composition between men and women on recruitment and selection boards.

A Gender Advisor has been appointed to promote gender equality policies and training within the Defence Forces. The Defence Forces are committed to gender equality and employ a gender perspective in all policies and regulations. Gender Advisors are available to all Brigades and Services and trained Gender Focal Points are deployed with all overseas units and ships in order to promote a gender perspective in operations.

A Defence Forces Women's Network has been established with the aim of increasing the participation of female personnel at all levels of the organisation. The Network allows women to identify any actual or perceived barriers to participation, which then feed into wider HR retention policies. The Defence Forces were shortlisted for the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) Awards 2018, Diversity & Inclusion category, for its Women's Network initiative.

A number of family friendly overseas appointments for commissioned and enlisted personnel have been introduced, where the normal 6-month tour of duty can be 'shared' with another member of the Defence Forces resulting in a 3 month deployment.

The Defence Forces maternity policy includes measures such as Defence Forces personnel not being detailed for overseas/sea going service until a child has reached the age of two, to allow the mother to care for the child as part of a family friendly policy.

Over the course of the White Paper on Defence 2015, a ten year strategy, further initiatives and projects will be developed to encourage more women to apply for the Defence Forces and to increase female participation at all ranks. This will include a survey to identify any impediments to the advancement of women in the Permanent Defence Force, as well as the impact of the requirements of career courses and overseas service on female retention and advancement.

White Paper on Defence

50. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the status of the development of the new institute for peace support and leadership training as outlined in the White Paper on Defence; the educational and organisational partnerships the institute has made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30533/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The White Paper on Defence includes a commitment to evaluate the potential development of a new Institute for Peace Support and Leadership Training at the Defence Forces Training Centre in the Curragh. The Deputy will be aware that a formal feasibility study in this regard has been underway since January 2018. An interim report was presented to the project steering group in November 2018, and a final report is expected to be finalised in Q3 2019. This will inform the next steps to be taken, including potential educational and organisational partnerships should the proposed institute be deemed feasible.

White Paper on Defence

51. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the status of the review of the contribution of Ireland to UNSAS and the EU headline goal as outlined in the White Paper on Defence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30534/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The White Paper on Defence, published in August 2015, contains a commitment to carry out a review of Ireland's declared contribution to the United Nations Standby Arrangements System (UNSAS) and the EU Headline Goal in light of the changing security environment and the on-going modernisation and transformation of Defence Forces capabilities. The review is also to consider the potential deployability of the full range of Defence Forces' capabilities including Army, Air Corps and Naval Service capabilities and assets on peace support and crisis management operations.

The specific actions contained in the White Paper are being carried out on a phased basis over the period of the White Paper. Implementation on a phased basis is necessary in order to reflect Programme for Partnership Government and Strategy Statement commitments, the related nature of some projects and resourcing implications. This process is being kept under review and is subject to change as issues arise or other business dictates.

The review as envisaged in the 2015 White Paper on Defence has to a certain extent been overtaken by events. Since publication of the White Paper, the UN has replaced UNSAS with the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System (PCRS). PCRS is a new system for troop contributing countries to declare capabilities, over and above those already deployed, which a country would be prepared to make available to UN peacekeeping operations on request. The purpose of this system is to provide the UN with a dynamic up to date catalogue of trained and available forces to draw from when establishing or reinforcing a UN mission.

Ireland has pledged personnel and equipment capabilities under PCRS. In addition, in response to current and emerging uniformed capability requirements for UN peacekeeping, Ireland has pledged and delivered training in Ireland and overseas, for troop contributing country personnel deploying to UN missions.

Since the White Paper was published, we have also had an actual Naval Service deployment on an overseas operation. Between 2015 and 2017, the Naval Service deployed ships to 'Operation Pontus', a humanitarian mission in the Mediterranean, and between 2017 and 2018, the Naval Service participated in the EU mission, EUNAVFORMED, Operation Sophia also in the Mediterranean, which was primarily a security and surveillance mission.

Given current priorities, the finalisation of this project has been deferred to allow us to bed in the new UN PCRS system and also respond to the UN priorities for peacekeeping training where we are actively engaged in supporting Troop Contributing Countries in the Sahel as an additional tasking. The changing nature of demands and potential future mission profiles will also need to be considered in the context of the assets and capabilities which can be made available by the Defence Forces for overseas deployment, given existing operational demands at home and overseas.

Defence Forces

52. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the status of the development of the defence enterprise initiative and the establishment of the security and defence enterprise group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30536/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): In July 2011, the Government approved arrangements, whereby Enterprise Ireland supports the Defence Forces

capability development, by raising the awareness of, and engaging with, Irish-based enterprise and research institutes, including third level colleges that are engaged in relevant and related activities. This Defence Enterprise Initiative is achieved through the Defence Enterprise Committee overseen by the Defence Enterprise Co-ordination Committee. These committees comprise of personnel from the Department of Defence, the Defence Forces and Enterprise Ireland. All proposals are vetted and agreed by the Defence Enterprise Committee to ensure compatibility with the roles assigned to the Defence Forces by the Government and where collaboration with industry/ third-level institutes will support Defence Forces capabilities.

The Defence Forces, in turn, support Irish enterprise and research institutes, including third level colleges, through the provision of resources and expertise to areas of new technology or research, which have the potential to contribute to the development and enhancement of Defence Forces crisis management capabilities. Under this initiative, the Defence Forces are currently supporting a range of projects that cover research, training and innovation with Irish indigenous companies and Research Institutes.

In accordance with the Government approval, the primary focus of these engagements was in relation to projects under the European Defence Agency and civilian or dual-use security type projects under Horizon 2020.

Under the 2015 White Paper on Defence, three projects were launched in relation to the Defence enterprise and innovation. The establishment of the Security and Defence Enterprise Group forms part of these projects. A joint Civil Military Project Team has been established to progress these projects as part of an overall programme. A number of the essential building blocks have been put in place to support this project and the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces are now engaging with the Department of Business Enterprise and Innovation and with Enterprise Ireland in relation to best approach for engagement with industry and research institutes which includes the establishment of the Security and Defence Enterprise Group.

White Paper on Defence

53. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the progress of the review of high level command and control structures; if high level command and control structures operate using international best practices; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30538/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The White Paper on Defence gave a commitment that the Secretary General and the Chief of Staff would jointly undertake a review of the current high level command and control structures in the Defence Forces having regard to international best practice on military command and control and drawing upon external expertise. This review was also to include a review for managing joint operations and intelligence.

During scoping of the White Paper implementation programme 88 actions or projects were specifically identified. One of these is the review of high level command and control. This project was initiated in June 2016 and work has continued on this project including a review of high level command and control internationally. Stages completed so far include the stakeholder analysis of senior civil and military management, in-depth analysis and engagement with four international comparators, survey of EU and PIAG states, two engagements with the external consultant and the production of an interim and a supplementary report on work carried out during the analysis phase of the project. Further research is now being carried out prior to the commencement of the model development stage of the project. The Secretary General and

the Chief of Staff are the project sponsors which is indicative of the high priority for this project within the Defence Organisation.

As the project is still on-going and has yet to report to me it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the matter at this time.

Public Service Pay Commission Reports

54. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the retention rate of military personnel with advanced cybersecurity skill sets; the status of the development of strategies to retain military personnel with such skill sets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30539/19]

73. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the recommendation of family care and quality of life initiatives in addition to guaranteed training programmes which benefit career development will be implemented as recommended in the report of the Public Service Pay Commission on the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30559/19]

77. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the way in which he will address the low level of job satisfaction for the Permanent Defence Force as indicated in the Public Service Pay Commission report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30563/19]

78. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his views on whether there is a capability and security risk with 57.8% of members stating they intended to leave the Permanent Defence Force in the next two years as outlined in the Public Service Pay Commission report on the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30564/19]

80. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the way in which he will respond to the 73.6% of members of the Defence Forces that stated problematic staffing levels as a reason to leave in the Public Service Pay Commission report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30566/19]

82. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the way in which he will respond to the 47.2% of members of the Defence Forces that stated problems limited by their pension date as a reason to leave in the Public Service Pay Commission report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30568/19]

83. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the way in which he will respond to the issue of commuting pressure as outlined in the Public Service Pay Commission report as a driver to leave the Permanent Defence Force; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30569/19]

84. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the way in which he will respond to the issue of high burnout as a driver to leave the Permanent Defence Force in the Public Service Pay Commission report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30570/19]

89. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the timeline for a review for a supplementary pension scheme as recommended in the Public Service Pay Commission report; when the review will conclude; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[30575/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 54, 73, 77, 78, 80, 82 to 84, inclusive, and 89 together.

At its meeting held on the 4th July 2019, the Government accepted, in full, the report of the Public Service Pay Commission on recruitment and retention in the Defence Forces. The Government also agreed an extensive implementation plan for the report.

The implementation plan is arranged around three broad themes of valuing members of the PDF, retaining the best people and attracting the best people. The plan, agreed by Government, sets out the actions to be taken and the timelines within which they will be taken, i.e. immediate, short term, medium term and long term. The implementation plan complements a range of actions that are already underway in the Department and the Defence Forces, to enhance recruitment and retention in the PDF.

In addition, the plan sets out an oversight process and my Department is putting in place the civil and military structures to support this.

The report of the Public Service Pay Commission is currently being considered by the Permanent Defence Force Representative Associations and there will be further meetings in the coming weeks to clarify any matters arising.

Defence Forces Equipment

55. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if new armoured logistic vehicles were procured; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30540/19]

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

The acquisition of new equipment for the Defence Forces remains a clear focus for me. Future equipment priorities for the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service are considered in the context of the White Paper on Defence as part of the capability development and equipment priorities planning process. The principal aim over the period of the White Paper will be to replace and upgrade, as required, existing capabilities in order to retain a flexible response for a wide range of operational requirements, including response to security risks and other emergencies, both at home and overseas.

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

The White Paper on Defence provides that Ireland's ongoing active participation in a range of peacekeeping and crisis management missions is a key policy requirement. While each mission has elements of danger, it is the Government's position that all actions should be taken

to minimise threats to the safety of personnel. Armoured vehicles provide essential force protection and, in this context in accordance with the equipment planning process, the fleet of armoured vehicles is subject to regular review to ensure that it meets operational requirements both at home and overseas.

The White Paper identified the procurement of a small number of armoured logistics vehicles for overseas missions as a force protection requirement. A contract valued at some €6m (ex VAT) was awarded to an Irish company, Westward Scania, in 2017 for the provision of 10 new armoured logistic vehicles for the Defence Forces, in order to provide combat service support personnel with the requisite force protection to operate in a supporting role in high threat environments. The vehicles were delivered in 2018 and are in operational service. The procurement of these vehicles also enhances Ireland's ability to participate in integrated multinational deployments.

Further investment in armoured vehicles continues with a multi-year mid-life upgrade programme for the Army's fleet of eighty MOWAG Armoured Personnel Carriers which is underway, this programme of works will extend the utility of the fleet and provide greater levels of protection, mobility and firepower. Additionally, twenty-four 4 x 4 Armoured Utility Vehicles were acquired for the Defence Forces in 2017.

I am satisfied that the Defence Forces have the necessary resources available to them, including a modern and effective range of equipment which is line with best international standards in order to fulfil all roles assigned to them by Government.

Defence Forces Operations

56. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if air combat and intercept capability improvements have been made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30541/19]

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

The acquisition of new equipment for the Defence Forces remains a clear focus for me. Future equipment priorities for the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service are considered in the context of the White Paper on Defence as part of the capability development and equipment priorities planning process. The principal aim over the period of the White Paper will be to replace and upgrade, as required, existing capabilities in order to retain a flexible response for a wide range of operational requirements, including response to security risks and other emergencies, both at home and overseas.

The Air Corps' existing Pilatus PC9 aircraft provide a very limited air to air and air to ground intercept capacity. The White Paper provides for the consideration of the development of a more capable air combat/intercept capability as part of the White Paper update. The first White Paper update is nearing completion in my Department and will consider progress made to date and give consideration to any revisions required.

Defence Forces Personnel

57. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the optimal mix of civil servants, civilian and military personnel required to fill roles in the defence organisation has been determined and achieved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30542/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The White Paper on Defence, published in 2015, resulted from a comprehensive examination of Defence requirements over a ten year planning horizon and set out policy in respect of people capability development for the Defence Organisation.

My Department undertakes a workforce planning process in relation to the determination of civil service staffing requirements to ensure the discharge of the range of functions within the Department. The employment of Civilian Employees for military installations is provided to meet requirements identified by the military authorities. There are both civil servants and civilian employees providing a range of skills to the Defence Forces which are identified as part of ongoing engagement with the military authorities.

In terms of military requirements, the White Paper on Defence restated the current structure represents the most effective and efficient structure within the overall strength of at least 9,500 Permanent Defence Force personnel. Arising from the White Paper a wide range of projects were identified and are being undertaken to address the personnel requirements of the Defence Forces. Following the recent publication of the Public Services Pay Commission's report examining recruitment and retention issues in the Defence Forces, a high level implementation plan has been approved by Government which will further address skills and personnel requirements of the Defence Forces.

White Paper on Defence

58. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if a gap analysis of skill sets within the Permanent Defence Force has been conducted; the measures taken to address skill set gaps; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30543/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The White Paper on Defence (2015) identified the requirement to complete a gap analysis of skill sets within the Permanent Defence Force in order to identify the frequency of such gaps and appropriate measures to address them. Joint civil-military project planning is currently underway in relation thereto.

The requirement for such an analysis has also been outlined in the recent report of the Public Service Pay Commission and is captured in a High Level Implementation Plan which provides for the recommendations contained in that Report.

Defence Forces Strength

59. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence when the Defence Forces will reach the goal of 9,500 serving personnel; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30544/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The military authorities have advised that the strength of the Permanent Defence Force (Whole Time Equivalent), at 31 May 2019 was 8,751 personnel.

The Government remains committed to returning to, and maintaining the agreed strength of the Permanent Defence Force at 9,500 personnel as set out in the White Paper on Defence (2015).

There are a number of factors, some of which are hard to predict, which will impact on the timeframe within which this will be achieved. The report of the Public Service Pay Commission contains a broad range of recommendations which are aimed at enhancing recruitment and retention and restoring the strength level of the PDF. A High Level Implementation Plan has been agreed and is being progressed.

Defence Forces Reserve Review

60. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of personnel in the Army Reserves and Naval Service Reserves; the personnel numbers the Army and Naval Service reserves are from the target of 4,000 personnel; the status of steps taken to increase the number in the reserves; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30545/19]

61. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the retention rate in the Defence Forces Reserve; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30546/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 60 and 61 together.

As of 31st May 2019 the strength of the Reserve is as follows:

First Line Reserve: 290 personnel

Army Reserve: 1577 personnel

Naval Service Reserve: 124 personnel

I am very much aware that there continues to be a shortfall between the current strength figures and those of the establishment of the AR and NSR, which provides for 4,069 personnel. A key ongoing challenge for the RDF is to recruit personnel. A total of 66 new recruits have been inducted to the RDF to date in 2019. Supports being provided to maximise recruitment to the Reserve include the use of social media and outreach activities by RDF members. PDF recruit exit interviews now contain information on applying for membership of the RDF.

Under the current phase of implementation of White Paper actions, two White Paper projects have been identified which are important precursors to the establishment of a Specialist Reserve. A gap analysis of skills sets in the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) will identify potential roles for Reserve members who possess specialist skills. Options to develop the First Line Reserve are also currently being examined.

The assignment of responsibility of Director of Reserve Defence Forces to the Director of Combat Support and ISTAR has allowed for the provision of guidance, across all units and formations with RDF assets, in developing their capabilities. This is in line with the single force concept and the role of the Reserve as described in the White Paper on Defence. The focus will be to harness RDF skills and talent, maximising its development on the basis of mutual engagement with the PDF. Specific project areas will focus on training, regulation, recruitment, retention and promotions and will be supported through RDF and PDF reciprocal training, mentoring and education.

Departmental Meetings

62. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the structure of the quarterly meetings with the Secretary General of his Department and the Chief of Staff in each quarter since the start of 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30547/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The close working relationship between myself, the Secretary General and the Chief of Staff is a key ingredient to the effective management of all aspects of defence and one upon which I put particular emphasis. In this context, the Secretary General and the Chief of Staff have access to me individually and jointly in the conduct of their respective roles.

In the normal course of the business of the Department of Defence, I meet with the Secretary General and Chief of Staff in a variety of configurations, including trilaterally and, on occasion, by way of formal meetings attended by members of the Department's Management Board and the General Staff. These meetings are convened as necessary to oversee the broad range of security and defence matters having regard to the prioritised programme of work.

Defence Forces Training

63. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the status of joint civil military cybersecurity training initiatives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30548/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Defence Forces CIS Corps personnel participate in a range of training and education courses with recognised academic institutions. The CIS Corps personnel also participate in a number of military and civilian cyber exercises with approved partners.

From an operational and security perspective it would be inappropriate to comment further on the cyber and network security capabilities of the Defence Forces other than to say that there is on-going and continued development of these capabilities within the Defence Forces.

Defence Forces Expenditure

64. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if a review of the CRE has been completed; if so, the information the review provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30550/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The last Comprehensive Review of Expenditure (CRE) was undertaken in 2014 and covered the period 2015 - 2017. A new approach to reviewing Government expenditure was announced in 2017 in advance of Budget 2018, Minister Donohoe at the time stated "This year's spending review will examine a significant portion of the expenditure base for each department, with the remaining current expenditure to be examined over a three-year horizon". The intention of the spending reviews was to have a series of selective reviews that would cover the totality of day to day Government expenditure over a three year period.

The first spending review for the Department of Defence was carried out by staff in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and covered the Defence Vote Group. The second report was carried out by staff from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and staff

from the Department of Defence Finance Branch and covers Defence Forces pension expenditure. The third report in the series of three is currently underway with staff from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and our Civil Defence Branch and is covering Civil Defence.

The White Paper on Defence sets out the Government's defence policy framework out to 2025.

Defence Forces Personnel Data

65. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of persons who purchased their discharge from the Permanent Defence Force in each of the past five years in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30551/19]

66. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the amount collected from those who purchased their discharge in each of the past five years in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30552/19]

94. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence further to Parliamentary Question No. 73 of 8 May 2019, if the information requested will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30607/19]

95. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence further to Parliamentary Question No. 117 of 11 June 2019, if the information requested will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30609/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 65, 66, 94 and 95 together.

Statistics are currently being collated in order to provide a comprehensive response to these questions. Full data is not available in the timeframe set out for reply as the validation of some data requires a manual search of records which is being undertaken at the moment.

I will revert once the relevant data is provided to me.

Defence Forces Review

67. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the review of recruitment methods which will be implemented as recommended in the report of the Public Service Pay Commission on the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30553/19]

68. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he is satisfied that the report of the Public Service Pay Commission on the Defence Forces will address the recruitment and retention crisis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30554/19]

72. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he is adopting the international recruitment and retention measures identified in other countries in the Public Service Pay Commission report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30558/19]

74. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the recommendation of the introduction of a skills champion to tackle staff shortages and the establishment of specialist recruitment teams, in addition to retention payments in certain niche areas,

will be implemented as recommended in the report of the Public Service Pay Commission on the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30560/19]

75. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans for a renewed emphasis and prioritisation of talent management within all workforce planning frameworks which is required along with specific targeted responses including a focus on further developing retention policies in the Permanent Defence Forces; when this will be implemented as recommended in the report of the Public Service Pay Commission on the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30561/19]

76. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to introduce the use of a career and talent management system in addition to the proactive recruitment of female personnel as recommended in the report of the Public Service Pay Commission on the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30562/19]

86. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence when he will commence the review as recommended by the Public Service Pay Commission (details supplied); the timeline for such a review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30572/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 67, 68, 72, 74 to 76, inclusive, and 86 together.

I welcome the Public Service Pay Commission (PSPC) latest report and the recommendations, observations and comments contained therein.

The recommendations within the report have been distilled into specific actions, applying corresponding timeframes, within an approved High Level Implementation Plan. Work has commenced in advancing the actions contained in this plan.

I am confident that the implementation of the PSPC's recommendations, in tandem with pay benefits delivered by the Public Service Stability Agreement, will ameliorate current recruitment and retention challenges being experienced by the Permanent Defence Force.

Questions Nos. 69 to 71, inclusive, answered with Question No. 40.

Question No. 72 answered with Question No. 67.

Question No. 73 answered with Question No. 54.

Questions Nos. 74 to 76, inclusive, answered with Question No. 67.

Questions Nos. 77 and 78 answered with Question No. 54.

Question No. 79 answered with Question No. 40.

Question No. 80 answered with Question No. 54.

Question No. 81 answered with Question No. 40.

Questions Nos. 82 to 84, inclusive, answered with Question No. 54.

Defence Forces Training

85. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the way in which the Permanent Defence Force can manage the increased training requirements for re-

recruitment with ongoing operational deficits in certain units; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30571/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Formulation of recruitment plans by the Defence Forces is underpinned by their training capacity and their efforts to maximise that capacity.

The military authorities have advised that analysis is carried out to ascertain the instructor requirements for recruit induction training while taking account of existing operational commitments.

The military authorities have further advised that it is standard practice within the Defence Forces to augment Unit instructors with instructors from other Units within the Brigade, as and if required.

Question No. 86 answered with Question No. 67.

Air Corps Strength

87. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the way in which he will respond to the conclusion in the Public Service Pay Commission report that the Air Corps services are in jeopardy; his views on whether services are being compromised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30573/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): As provided in the White Paper on Defence (2015), the Air Corps provide a broad range of services in accordance with its primary security role and also undertakes a diverse range of non-security-related tasks on an 'as available' basis. I can assure the Deputy, that the Air Corps will continue to provide support and services on an 'as available' basis, having regard to available capabilities and its primary security responsibilities. I have also previously outlined particular challenges with vacancies in certain specialist posts in the Air Corps such as Pilots, Air Traffic Controllers and certain Technicians. These specialists can prove difficult to retain where, as in the current economic circumstances, there are on-going private sector and commercial semi-state sector job opportunities.

At its meeting held on the 4th July 2019, the Government accepted, in full, the report of the Public Service Pay Commission on recruitment and retention in the Defence Forces. The Government also agreed an extensive implementation plan for the report.

The implementation plan is arranged around three broad themes of valuing members of the PDF, retaining the best people and attracting the best people. The plan, agreed by Government, sets out the actions to be taken and the timelines within which they will be taken, i.e. immediate, short term, medium term and long term. The implementation plan complements a range of actions that are already underway in the Department and the Defence Forces, to enhance recruitment and retention in the PDF.

In addition, the plan sets out an oversight process and my Department is putting in place the civil and military structures to support this.

The report of the Public Service Pay Commission is currently being considered by the Permanent Defence Force Representative Associations and there will be further meetings in the coming weeks to clarify any matters arising.

Air Corps Strength

88. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the position regarding the serious impact on the military air traffic system as identified in the Public Service Pay Commission report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30574/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I have previously outlined particular challenges with vacancies in certain specialist posts such as Pilots, Air Traffic Controllers and certain Technicians. These specialists can prove difficult to retain where, as in the current economic circumstances, there are on-going private sector and commercial semi-state sector job opportunities.

At its meeting held on the 4th July 2019, the Government accepted, in full, the report of the Public Service Pay Commission on recruitment and retention in the Defence Forces. The Government also agreed an extensive implementation plan for the report.

The implementation plan is arranged around three broad themes of valuing members of the PDF, retaining the best people and attracting the best people. The plan, agreed by Government, sets out the actions to be taken and the timelines within which they will be taken, i.e. immediate, short term, medium term and long term. The implementation plan complements a range of actions that are already underway in the Department and the Defence Forces, to enhance recruitment and retention in the PDF.

In addition, the plan sets out an oversight process and my Department is putting in place the civil and military structures to support this.

The report of the Public Service Pay Commission is currently being considered by the Permanent Defence Force Representative Associations and there will be further meetings in the coming weeks to clarify any matters arising.

Question No. 89 answered with Question No. 54.

Question No. 90 answered with Question No. 40.

Naval Service Staff

91. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his views on the personnel welfare and safety concerns highlighted by the commanding flag officer with two Naval Service ships docked; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30577/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Last Friday, I received a full briefing from Military Management, including senior Naval Service personnel, about ongoing issues in the Naval Service. At the briefing it was reconfirmed that LÉ Eithne and LÉ Orla are in dock for planned maintenance and repair. During this period, the Flag Officer has used the opportunity to move personnel from these vessels to others. This is a prudent step to take.

I emphasised that as we deal with these issues, the safety of serving personnel must be the number one priority. A meeting of a joint civil and military team has been arranged to discuss the issues at hand and to plan ahead to ensure we maximise operational outputs.

The Government is fully mindful of the staffing and personnel issues that are facing the Naval Service and is focusing on returning the Naval Service to its full capacity.

Naval Service Vessels

92. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the two docked Naval Service ships have interfered or compromised service level responsibilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30578/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): As the Deputy will be aware, the Naval Service is the State's principal sea-going agency tasked with a variety of defence and other roles. While the main day to day role of the Naval Service is to provide a fishery protection service in accordance with the State's obligations as a member of the European Union, it also carries out a number of other non-fishery related tasks. The fleet is always managed to ensure maximum availability to meet operational requirements. In that context, there is a sub set of vessels on patrol within the Irish Exclusive Economic Zone at any one time.

The two vessels referred to by the Deputy are currently undergoing scheduled periods of maintenance and refit. The issue of their deployment post maintenance and re-fit is currently being considered in the context of overall operational requirements and resources available. A joint civil/military meeting will take place at the end of this week to review and plan ahead for the short and medium term. Any proposals developed will be done so in the context of ensuring the safety of serving personnel. The impact, if any, on service level agreements will be identified through the process.

I can assure the Deputy that the Naval Service will continue to carry out its various roles using available resources.

Cyber Security Protocols

93. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if it has had a cybersecurity breach in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30584/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My Department places a high priority on information security and cyber defence. In line with best practice and guidance from Ireland's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), which is located in the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment, my Department has implemented a defence-in-depth cybersecurity strategy that includes people, processes and market leading technologies to mitigate the risk of cyber breach as effectively as possible.

My Department implements a programme of continuous review in relation to ICT security in order to keep up-to-date with evolving threat levels and to respond appropriately.

For security and operational reasons, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on specific details in relation to cybersecurity.

Questions Nos. 94 and 95 answered with Question No. 65.

Living Wage

96. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the estimated cost of implementing a living wage €12.30 for all employees directly employed and-or in agencies under his remit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30768/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The information as requested by the Deputy is not immediately available, but is being compiled and will be sent to the Deputy at the earliest opportunity.

Defence Forces Personnel

97. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the status of the review regarding the difficulties for members of the Defence Forces to cast their vote in recent elections; if it will be published; when it will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30821/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The concerns raised by some members of the Defence Forces regarding difficulties in casting their votes in recent elections are being addressed by way of a review.

A key component of this review is liaison with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, who are responsible for the register of electors. A meeting has taken place recently between the Defence Forces and the staff of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

The military authorities will prepare a report based on the review and submit it to the General Staff for their consideration later this month. I expect to receive the report and the considerations of the General Staff shortly thereafter.

As I have stated previously, I expect the military authorities to take any necessary action on foot of the report, to ensure the right of military personnel to exercise their right to vote.

Naval Service Vessels

98. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the maintenance schedule and timeline for each Naval Service ship in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30822/19]

99. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the timeline of the maintenance period for each ship in the Naval Service in each of the years 2013 and 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30823/19]

101. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the timeline of each period each ship of the Naval Service was in dry dock in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30825/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 98, 99 and 101 together.

Naval Service ships are required to complete drydock maintenance, survey and inspection, twice during each ship five (5) year cycle. An intermediate drydock is carried out between two and a half (2.5) and three (3) years. A full drydock is carried out at five (5) years.

Naval Service ships which are beyond their originally projected 30 year asset life, are dry-docked for inspection every year, in order to manage ageing hull risk.

In addition to the planned maintenance (drydocking and refits) carried out on all vessels,

there is a requirement to upgrade and refurbish vessels having regard to emerging operational requirements and changes in technology. This is referred to as a Mid-Life Extension Programme and these works aim to extend the life of a vessel and address obsolescence. The Mid-Life Extension Programme of LÉ Róisín commenced in March 2019, with an initial dry-docking phase, followed by an extended period of equipment upgrade and refit works. LÉ Niamh's extension programme is due to commence in 2020.

Notwithstanding this capital maintenance programme, Naval Service Ships are required to undertake planned routine and non-routine maintenance on plant and machinery every day, 365 days a year, regardless of whether the ship is on patrol, undertaking Maritime Defence and Security Operations or alongside the Naval Base off patrol.

These works are carried out to ensure the operational capability of the Naval Service is maintained to the greatest extent possible so that they can carry out their roles as assigned by Government.

Detailed maintenance and drydocking schedules have not been provided for operational defence and security reasons.

Defence Forces Operations

100. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if Defence Forces networks are monitored on a 24 hour basis; the deficits in staffing numbers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30824/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I am informed by the military authorities that the Defence Forces Networks are monitored on a 24 hour basis. Staffing numbers involved in this area cannot be disclosed for operational and security reasons.

It would be inappropriate to comment further on the cyber and network capabilities of the Defence Forces other than to say that there is on-going and continued development of these capabilities within the Defence Forces.

Question No. 101 answered with Question No. 98.

Defence Forces Review

102. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the recommendations from the recent NATO review of the Defence Forces here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30826/19]

103. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the recent NATO review of the Defence Forces revealed capability gaps; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30827/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 102 and 103 together.

Ireland's relations with NATO are set within the framework of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) and Partnership for Peace (PfP), including its Planning and Review Process (PARP). The primary aim of Ireland's PfP participation is to enhance the Defence Forces' interoperability with other professional military forces for the purpose of engaging in UN autho-

rised peacekeeping and peace support operations led by the UN, EU or NATO.

Ireland participates in the Pfp Planning and Review Process (PARP), which is a mechanism for planning and capability development for Defence Forces deployment on peace support operations that allows for external review of defence capability and provision. PARP is based on a biennial cycle which defines priority areas, elaborates mutually agreed planning targets known as PARP goals, identifies the steps required to meet those targets and jointly reviews progress in implementing them. The cyclical nature of the PARP process along with the further assistance received from NATO in providing their experience to Defence Forces capacity and capability ensures on-going development in our Defence Forces based on the current and ever changing security environment. Ireland completed its PARP assessment process in June this year.

The PARP assessment is based on an analysis of a number of predetermined goals, of which some are now considered implemented with the capabilities being maintained, some are fully completed, and some are currently being implemented. Ireland's involvement in Partnership for Peace has delivered significant improvements for our Defence Forces in terms of capability development and operational capacity. This has enabled us to make a positive impact, particularly in undertaking more demanding international crisis management operations.

In tandem with the recent PARP review, given that this year marks the 20th anniversary of Ireland's participation in Pfp, a review of the scope and effectiveness of Ireland's engagement in Pfp has been initiated by the Department of Defence in association with colleagues in the Defence Forces and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The purpose of this review is to ensure that Ireland is getting full value from our Pfp engagement, including on interoperability and capability development, given the changing nature of the security environment and the threats faced. This review has included meetings at senior official level with NATO staff and a more expansive and in-depth engagement between the Department, the Defence Forces, and the NATO International Staff who conduct the biennial PARP reviews. It is expected that this review will be completed later this year.

The PARP assessment documents contain confidential information. The documents have not been published to-date and it is not my intention to depart from the standing practice of not publishing the PARP documents. A report and assessment on the feedback from the recent engagement with the NATO International Staff on the PARP process and on capabilities should be finalised in the coming months and I will consider the report and its conclusions at that stage.

Public Service Pay Commission Reports

104. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the Public Service Pay Commission survey on the numbers intending to leave the Defence Forces will compromise existing future peacekeeping deployment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30828/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): At its meeting held on 4th July 2019, the Government accepted, in full, the report of the Public Service Pay Commission on recruitment and retention in the Permanent Defence Force. The report contains a broad range of recommendations to deal with the recruitment and retention challenges in the Permanent Defence Force.

The Government also agreed an extensive implementation plan for the report. The plan sets out the actions to be taken and the timelines within which they will be taken.

The availability of personnel to undertake all roles assigned will continue to be carefully

monitored.

Departmental Data

105. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the different income streams directly paid by persons to his Department or agencies under his remit, such as motor tax; the number of persons making annual payments; the value of same; the number of payments made through staged or increment payments; the value of same; the additional income generated as a result of payments being made on an incremental basis; if incremental payments are not available, the reason for same; the corresponding figures for 1999 and 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30851/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My Department does not receive staged or incremental payments in the manner referenced in this question, however, certain individual receipts processed through normal financial or payroll channels are received as Appropriation's-in-Aid throughout the year.

Examples of Appropriation's-in-Aid received in the Defence Vote would include the following;

- Receipts from Occupation of Official Quarters - (Through Payroll)
- Receipts from Rations and other Issues on Repayment – (Through Payroll)
- Pension Related Deductions from Defence Sector Personnel (Through Payroll)
- Receipts for the letting of Land and Premises (Payment by Individuals).
- Receipts from Discharge by Purchase (Payment by Individuals)

Curragh Plains Representative Forum

106. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the progress being made with Kildare County Council on potential collaboration on addressing issues and identifying opportunities for the improved management and presentation of the Curragh Plains; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30863/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Officials from my Department have met with Kildare County Council to discuss collaborating on the future management and presentation of the Curragh Plains.

As the Minister with responsibility for Defence, I am the custodian and guardian of the Curragh lands pursuant to the provisions of the Curragh of Kildare Act, 1961. I believe it is important to bear this in mind, as under that Act, the Curragh Plains is recognised as a working environment for the state's Defence Forces as well as being a place of historical and cultural importance.

Both the Department of Defence and Kildare County Council are cognisant of the need to have in place a means of ensuring the conservation of this ancient landscape. My Department is considering the procurement with the Local Authority of a multi-disciplinary consultancy team to explore ways and find opportunities through which the area can be uniquely identified, and also scope out the development potential of the area as a high value visitor attraction.

The Curragh Plains comprise the central training facility for the state’s military forces; the centre of the Irish horse racing industry; and additionally are used by sheep owners who avail of long established rights of pasture on the lands. Any future plans must take account of the necessary military requirements of the Defence Forces use of Curragh lands and of these other stakeholders.

The Deputy is already aware new Land Staff were recruited earlier this year to enhance the Curragh team.

White Paper on Defence

107. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the progress being made on plans for a peace and leadership institute on the Curragh; the status of a feasibility study on the proposal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30865/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The White Paper on Defence includes a commitment to evaluate the potential development of a new Institute for Peace Support and Leadership Training at the Defence Forces Training Centre in the Curragh. A formal feasibility study in this regard has been underway since January 2018. An interim report was presented to the project steering group in November 2018, and a final report is expected to be finalised in Q3 2019. This will inform the next steps to be taken.

Project Ireland 2040

108. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the capital projects which have been delayed under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; when these projects will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30880/19]

109. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the capital projects which have commenced under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30916/19]

110. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if expenditure estimates for capital projects under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies match projected cost requirements in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30962/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 108 to 110, inclusive, together.

Project Ireland 2040 sets out the Government’s strategic infrastructure priorities for future growth and development. The National Development Plan 2018 – 2027, as part of Project Ireland 2040, allocated €541 million in Defence capital funding for the period 2018 to 2022.

The annual capital provision over the 2018 to 2022 period is outlined in the following table.

Defence Capital Allocations 2018-2022

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
€ Million	77	106	113	120	125	541

This level of capital funding will allow the Defence Organisation to undertake a programme of sustained equipment replacement and infrastructural development across the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service as identified and prioritised in the Defence White Paper and will ensure that the Defence Forces have the capabilities necessary to deliver on all the roles assigned by Government. Most Defence capital projects operate within a multi-annual timeframe and expenditure timeframes are dependent on the achievement of certain milestones.

The following major capital projects are currently being progressed:

- Mid-life upgrade of the Mowag Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) fleet;
- Procurement of Fixed Wing Utility aircraft (Pilatus) as replacement for Cessna aircraft;
- Procurement of replacements for the two CASA 235 Maritime Patrol aircraft;
- Mid-life refit of Naval Service Vessels and the ongoing planning for the acquisition of a multi-role vessel;
- Virtual Desktop Architecture (VDA) project for Defence Forces IT infrastructure;
- Equipment renewal and replacement programmes along with investment in further force protection, transport, communications and information technology, weapons and ammunition systems.

Investment in Defence Forces Built infrastructure, including the following specific projects -

- Replacement of secure storage facilities in the Defence Forces Training Centre, Curragh Camp;
- Upgrade of target range facilities in the Defence Forces Training Centre;
- Upgrade of accommodation facilities in the Defence Forces Training Centre;
- Construction of new Gymnasium at Sarsfield Barracks, Limerick;
- Construction of new Gymnasium at Stephens Barracks, Kilkenny;
- Upgrade and refurbishment of accommodation facilities in Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin;
- Upgrade and refurbishment of accommodation facilities in Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnel;
- Upgrade of catering facilities in Custume Barracks, Athlone;
- Upgrade of fuel storage safety system in the Naval Base, Haulbowline.

Within my Department, all capital expenditure projects/programme are subject to ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and, to date, there has been no significant delay or cost variation attached to any of the Project Ireland 2040 capital projects currently underway.

Defence Forces Medical Services

111. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if a psychiatrist has been appointed to the Defence Forces to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31058/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Deputy will be aware that, following previous unsuccessful attempts in 2018 to recruit a direct-entrant military psychiatrist and locum psychiatrist for the Defence Forces, sanction was sought from, and granted by, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to conduct a competition for a

contracted civilian consultant psychiatrist at pay rates equivalent to those available in the HSE. My Department, in conjunction with the Public Appointments Service, is currently working to finalise the necessary arrangements for this competition to be advertised. I am advised that the position is scheduled to be advertised in the coming weeks.

Capital Expenditure Programme

112. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of capital projects in excess of €5 million being undertaken by his Department; the final agreed tender price; the estimated cost of each capital project in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31072/19]

113. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the capital projects in excess of €5 million completed since 2010; the final agreed tender price for each project; the actual cost of each project; if the actual cost exceeded the tender price; the reason therefor in each case in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31088/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 112 and 113 together.

The specific information sought by the Deputy is not available in the format requested and it is not possible to prepare the material in the timeframe given. I will write to the Deputy with the information requested at the earliest opportunity.

Departmental Communications

114. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the oversight of his Department of directives, circulars, advice or requirements issued since 2016; if surveys have been carried out of compliance with these communications to date; the surveys carried out; the results of the surveys; the compliance rate; the actions taken by his Department following these results; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31322/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My Department does not issue directives, circulars, etc. which are effective outside of the Defence Organisation and as such, undertaking surveys of compliance has not been required.

Climate Change Policy

115. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the recurring weekly meetings attended by either him or the Secretary General of his Department in 2019 at which climate change and-or preparations within his Department to enact a climate plan has been an agenda item; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31338/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Department of Defence is currently examining the Climate Action Plan 2019 which was approved by Government and published on 17 June 2019. Implementation of policies impacted by the Climate Action Plan on the Organisation will be monitored through standing governance structures, including the Management Board that is chaired by the Secretary General and meets weekly.

The Department of Defence has, since 2007, been proactive in seeking to implement prac-

tices which will address climate change. Under the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP) the Department is committed to reducing its energy consumption and to improve energy efficiency by 33% by 2020 and meet net zero targets to 2050. By the end of 2017 (the latest date for which figures are available), the Department had reduced its energy consumption by 25%. In line with the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy 2017 an Energy Performance Officer has been appointed, at Assistant Secretary level, to provide leadership and accountability in reaching the NEEAP targets. The Department is also engaged in the OPW's Optimising Power at Work Scheme and has won a number of awards under this Scheme.

Most recently, the Department has been working on developing a Resource Efficiency Action Plan with the aim of achieving savings in water, materials and energy use and maximising recycling, in line with the Government Decision of 3 January 2019.

The Department is making every effort and will continue to strive to be more resource efficient to reach the ambitious 2020 and 2050 targets by continuing to implement existing initiatives in a proactive approach in order to improve efficiency. In addition its Green teams will continue to meet on a regular basis to devise and implement new resource efficiency saving initiatives and further support green procurement in order to reach climate change targets.

The implications of the Climate Action Plan will be also considered in the development of the Department's Capital Infrastructure Investment Programme, a key driver of Defence Forces infra-structural development.

Passport Applications Fees

116. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the reason from 15 July 2019 cash will no longer be accepted at the passport service public counters; if credit or debit card information presented on the application form will be accepted for means of payment without the card to hand at the counters; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30481/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): As part of the National Payments Plan objective to increase the use of secure and efficient electronic payments methods and reduce reliance on cash, from the 15 July 2019 cash will no longer be accepted at the Passport Service public counters in Dublin and Cork. Payments from that date onwards can only be made via Credit/Debit card, Postal order or Bank Draft. This decision was taken for a number of reasons including for staff security and safety, to improve efficiencies, to simplify account and record management, to reduce the risk of fraud, loss or error and to reduce costs.

Credit /Debit card information presented on the passport application form can only be accepted for means of payment if the customer has the card to hand at the counter appointment. This is because the card needs to be inserted into the chip and pin payment system to be correctly processed and for payment to be accepted. Cash will still be accepted as payment at post offices across the country for Passport Express applications.

Cyber Security Protocols

117. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if it has had a cybersecurity breach in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30588/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department has a robust monitoring system and an incident response plan in place to deal with cyber security incidents. The Department works closely with the National Cyber Security Centre to identify and understand risks and act accordingly, and systems are kept under constant review and updated regularly.

Foreign Policy

118. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to Parliamentary Question No. 35 of 18 June 2019, if he has met with the ESB to discuss issues regarding a mine (details supplied). [30652/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): As I have stated in previous answers to parliamentary questions on this matter, I am aware of the complaints that have been made by some non-governmental organisations regarding private sector activities in the Cerrejón mine and I am aware of the negative publicity concerning the mine. I continue to be concerned by reports of the detrimental impact of the mine on the environment and on local communities.

As the Deputy will be aware, matters relating to the ESB fall under the remit of my colleagues, Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment. However, as I have stated in the Dáil, as Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, I will look into this matter, and I intend to write to the Chief Executive of the ESB regarding this issue.

Our new Embassy in Bogotá has also been engaging on this important issue. While officials have not yet visited La Guajira, where the Cerrejón mine is located, they have been following the situation in the region closely. Officials have met with representatives of the mine and have discussed the human rights issues that have been raised by civil society groups in the area. Officials have also discussed the situation with partner organisations in Colombia that are involved in monitoring human rights in the area.

Embassy officials intend to visit La Guajira in the near future and meet with human rights defenders and civil society groups. Planning for the visit is advancing and the Embassy has engaged with relevant stakeholders to assess the most suitable and constructive time and to ensure the necessary conditions for the visit to take place. This effort requires thorough planning including liaison with EU and UN Missions in Bogotá, and a thorough security assessment to ensure appropriate security measures are in place.

The Embassy has also been engaging on this issue with the EU Delegation in Bogotá. The EU Head of Delegation has visited the Cerrejón mine in order to hear stakeholders' views on the allegations and to assess the situation on the ground.

I can assure the Deputy that we will continue to engage on this very important issue and will monitor developments closely. I will report to the Dáil with any further relevant information when I have raised the matter with the ESB.

Human Rights

119. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of his Department's work on the national action plan on business and human rights; the achievements to date; and the priorities for the rest of 2019. [30653/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I was pleased to launch the National Plan on Business and Human Rights (2017-2020) in November 2017 on foot of the Government's commitment to give effect to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The principle objective of the Plan is to promote responsible business practice at home and overseas by all Irish business enterprises. Ireland is one of only 21 countries worldwide that have adopted national action plans on Business and Human Rights.

The establishment of the Business and Human Rights Implementation Group was a key commitment of the National Plan. The Implementation Group, established in December 2018, is mandated to meet at least twice per year. I was pleased to be able to participate in the inaugural meeting of the Group on 16 January 2019. The Implementation Group went on to hold its first working meeting on 3 April 2019 and is scheduled to meet again in October.

A second commitment of the National Plan was a comprehensive baseline assessment of the legislative and regulatory framework for business and human rights in Ireland. My Department commissioned independent consultants to carry out this research in 2018, the final report of which is available on the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's website.

At its meeting in April the Implementation Group considered the findings of the baseline assessment and the establishment of three sub-groups, each tasked with prioritising and delivering key actions under the three pillars of the UN Guiding Principles, namely, the State duty to protect, corporate responsibility to respect and access to remedy. The composition and chair of these sub-groups has been considered by the Implementation Group and the establishment of the groups and the appointment of the chairs is a priority for my Department. It is anticipated that the sub-groups will be constituted and will begin work before the next plenary meeting of the Group in October 2019.

Passport Applications Data

120. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of persons who applied for an Irish passport in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30655/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): All passport applications are subject to the provisions of the Passports Act, 2008, as amended. The 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.

The following figures reflect the number of passport applications received through all channels for the years requested:

Year	No. of applications received
2014	647,134
2015	680,442
2016	746,917
2017	786,688
2018	855,283
2019*	567,141

* To 30 June 2019

Passport Applications Data

121. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of first time applicants from Great Britain and Northern Ireland who applied for an Irish passport in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30656/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): All passport applications are subject to the provisions of the Passports Act, 2008, as amended. The 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.

The numbers of first time passport applications received from applicants who were resident in Northern Ireland and Great Britain at the time of application for the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019 are detailed in the following table.

Year	First time applications from Great Britain	First time applications from Northern Ireland
2014	5,672	18,067
2015	6,011	20,325
2016	18,263	29,923
2017	31,675	40,089
2018	22,386	40,226
2019*	31,099	47,645

* to 30 June 2019

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.

Foreign Conflicts

122. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to Parliamentary Question No. 169 of 2 July 2019, and his acknowledgement that detention centres in Libya should close, the action which will be taken by the EU to close detention centres; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30657/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): As I have said repeatedly, Libya's system of detaining migrants is unacceptable and must end. Libya, like all other countries, must manage migration in full compliance with international law. This is a matter primarily for the Libyan Government, which bears the responsibility and has the presence on the ground, rather than for external actors such as the EU.

The EU is maintaining its political pressure on the Libyan authorities to end the system of detention centres. For example, when the EU High Representative met with the Prime Minister of Libya and the UN Special Representative for Libya in February, she raised conditions in detention centres. Ireland and the EU will continue to raise this issue at every appropriate opportunity.

The EU is also working to ensure that other options exist to provide humanitarian assistance

to refugees and migrants, by supporting the work of UNHCR and IOM, and I had the opportunity to discuss the situation in Libya today with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr Filippo Grandi. In December 2018, the Libyan authorities agreed to the opening of the UNHCR Gathering and Departure Facility, as a hub to help refugees and asylum seekers to be swiftly evacuated. This is only a temporary solution for particularly vulnerable groups, including those who have been evacuated from detention centres near conflict areas. The EU will continue to work with the UN agencies, the Libyan authorities and others to find sustainable alternatives to the system of detention.

Through our cooperation with the UN and the African Union, the EU has also helped over 45,000 migrants stranded in Libya to return voluntarily to their countries of origin, and has evacuated close to 4,000 persons in need of international protection. Since many more people remain at risk, the EU will continue to work with its partners to relocate them to safe places swiftly to receive assistance.

I welcome reports from UNHCR this week that the Libyan Government has decided to release migrants and refugees from Tajoura detention centre, which was struck in a horrific attack earlier this month. I understand that the majority of migrants and refugees decided to leave the detention centre, and are being provided with support by the UNHCR. This is a positive development, but of course it comes too late for those who lost their lives in the attack. I call on the Libyan authorities to continue to cooperate with UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies to empty all the migrant detention centres in Libya as soon as possible, and in line with their responsibilities under international law.

Efforts to ensure the wellbeing of refugees and migrants in Libya remain constrained by the current security and political situation there. Libya is in the midst of a civil war and conflict there has severely limited the capacity of the international community to monitor and influence events on the ground. The EU Delegation to Libya had to be relocated to Tunisia, and most EU Member States with Embassies in Libya had to close these, due to the growing security threat. There is also a governance vacuum in many parts of the country, and access for international organisations seeking to monitor and alleviate conditions for migrants is restricted in many areas. Governments need counterparts, if we are to exert pressure – counterparts which are actually in control of the territory where abuses happen.

Ultimately, bringing real improvements to the lives of Libyans and migrants and refugees in Libya will require restoration of political stability and an end to lawlessness in Libya. This requires the formation of a fully functioning and unified Government, and a return to order throughout the country. The UN Special Representative Ghassan Salamé is working to achieve this. The EU will continue to work with the UN and others to support and reinforce Libya's sovereign institutions. In the meantime, we will maintain pressure on all parties to ensure unhindered access for humanitarian organisations to improve conditions in detention centres, to increase alternatives to detention, and, ultimately, to put an end to the system of detention in Libya.

UN Security Council

123. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of Ireland's bid for a seat at the UN Security Council; the expenditure to date for the bid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30658/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): There are under eleven months remaining until the expected date of the election for the two available

seats in the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) on the UN Security Council for the 2021-2022 term. The campaign to secure a seat for Ireland is a priority across the whole of Government, which is taking the opportunity of all appropriate regional, multilateral and bilateral engagements to raise Ireland's candidature.

In addition to political level engagement, officials at my Department in Ireland, at our Permanent Representations in New York and Geneva, and across our entire diplomatic network, have been actively promoting our candidature and seeking support.

In making our case to the 192 other Members States of the UN, we are highlighting our consistent record at the UN throughout more than six decades of active membership. We believe that Ireland's record is recognised and respected, including in the areas of peacekeeping, sustainable development, humanitarian action, disarmament and human rights.

Representatives from more than 30 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) visited Ireland last month to participate in the annual Seafest/Our Ocean Wealth Summit. During their visit, the President, An Taoiseach, myself and a number of Ministers engaged with the representatives of the island nations and discussed Ireland's values and our shared commitment to the multilateral system. Such visits offer the opportunity to UN Member States to travel to Ireland and develop a greater understanding of our country and of our candidature.

Campaign costs to date have been approximately €650,000 including the launch event at UNHQ in New York, promotional materials and campaign related travel and subsistence. Total spending by the end of the campaign will be dependent on a range of factors, particularly the number of lobbying visits and attendance at key international events undertaken over the next eleven months.

Visa Agreements

124. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of Irish students who participated in the J1 visa programme from 2012 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30659/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The J1 visa programme for Irish citizens to work and travel in the US is managed by US based sponsors and their agents in Ireland under authority of the US Department of State's Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs. All figures related to the J1 programme are maintained by US authorities.

My Department, through the Americas Unit in Dublin and through our Embassy in Washington, D.C., liaises closely with the US authorities on matters of visas and immigration.

Figures shared by the US Authorities only show data from the most recently available full years, 2016, 2017 and 2018. These figures show that for the most popular category, the J1 "Summer Work and Travel" scheme, the numbers of Irish citizens availing were 4,347 in 2016, 4,190 on 2017 and 3,522 in 2018. For the next most popular category "Camp Counsellor" scheme, the figures were 1,384 in 2016, 1,683 in 2017 and 1,667 in 2018. As the J1 season is currently underway, figures for 2019 are not available.

Officials in my Department have met recently with the two J1 sponsors in Ireland, SAYIT and USIT. Officials specifically discussed the J1 programme and the decline in the number of Irish citizens availing of the programme in recent years. Our Ambassador in Washington and his colleagues regularly meet with the US-based sponsors.

We are actively looking at ways of working with US authorities, the J1 sponsors in the US and their agents in Ireland to improve the uptake of J1 places. My officials also worked closely with the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) this year to develop a J1 guide for Irish students. This guide offers practical advice for undertaking a J1 and staying safe when abroad, and it is available on the USI website. A key issue for all involved in the programme is how to ensure the welfare of participants and to remind them of the need to scrupulously respect the rules and regulations set out by the US authorities.

Diplomatic Representation

125. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the meetings attended in the United States of America by the special envoy to the United States since his appointment; the costs incurred as a result of this appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30660/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Taoiseach appointed Deputy John Deasy as Special Envoy to the United States Congress on the Undocumented Irish in June 2017. As the Taoiseach indicated at the time of the appointment, no additional remuneration is paid to the Deputy Deasy in his role as Special Envoy.

Deputy Deasy is supported, from a logistical perspective, by my staff in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The staff resources required are drawn from existing resources in relevant sections of my Department, as needed and on a case by case basis. Likewise, Deputy Deasy's travel and subsistence expenses are covered from within the existing resources of my Department, as and when he undertakes activities in connection with his role as Special Envoy.

In 2017, Deputy Deasy made four trips to the US in connection with his role as Special Envoy. In 2018, Deputy Deasy made ten trips, and he also had a series of engagements in Ireland with visiting US officials in the summer of 2018. To date in 2019, Deputy Deasy has made two trips to the US in connection with his role as Special Envoy.

The total costs for Deputy Deasy's flights, accommodation and subsistence in 2017 were €11,103.44. The cost in 2018 was €27,722.70 and the cost, to date, in 2019 has been €7,867.17. The total costs incurred by Deputy Deasy in connection with his role as Special Envoy amount to €46,693.31.

Over the last year, Deputy Deasy has particularly engaged with key US stakeholders on the issue of E3 visas for Irish citizens. In this regard, Deputy Deasy has met with senior officials in the US Administration as well as with key representatives from the US Congress in relation to this visa bill. Over St. Patrick's Day 2019, Deputy Deasy also accompanied the Taoiseach on some of his engagements in Washington, D.C. He also participated in the key elements of the visit of US Speaker Pelosi and her accompanying Congressional delegation in April, and more recently with a bi-partisan congressional delegation.

Global Footprint Initiative

126. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of Ireland's plan to double its global footprint by 2025; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30661/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Since

11 July 2019

its launch a year ago my Department has been working closely with the Department of the Taoiseach and a range of other Government partners to ensure the effective delivery of the ambitions set out in Global Ireland, Ireland's Global Footprint to 2025.

On July 8th, the Taoiseach and I hosted a summit in Dublin Castle to mark one year since the launch of the plan bringing together key stake holders from across Government and civil society to review progress to date and to set priorities for the year ahead. The year one detailed Progress Report was published concurrently with the summit and is available on www.gov.ie

To date new Embassies have opened in Wellington, Bogotá, Amman, Monrovia and Santiago de Chile, and new Consulates General in Vancouver, Mumbai and Cardiff. This brings to 88 the number of diplomatic Missions in the network. The expansion will continue this year to include new Consulates General in Los Angeles and Frankfurt. Embassies in Kyiv, Manila and Rabat will follow shortly thereafter.

Our new Missions are working to enhance Ireland's international visibility; promote our prosperity, build new community and political contacts; protect and advance Ireland's interests and values; and deliver on our commitments under Ireland's new policy for International Development 'A Better World'. We continue to make progress in increasing the number of officers in missions that currently have one or two officers.

We have sought to deepen our engagement with the multilateral system with the launch last July of Ireland's campaign for a seat on the United Nations Security Council. Officials from my Department both at home and abroad have been actively presenting Ireland's case and seeking support among the other 192 UN Member States. This has provided Ireland with an invaluable opportunity to build relationships and contacts across the world, which will stand to us long after the campaign has ended.

In October we obtained observer status at the Organisation of the Francophonie – an important step in increasing our engagement with the French speaking world.

More recently I launched a new strategy for the US and Canada and a White Paper on International Development Policy. Work is underway on strategies for Latin America and the Caribbean as well as the Asia Pacific Region. And a series of consultations are also underway for a new Diaspora policy.

A critical component of the Global Ireland programme is identifying new opportunities to diversify our markets in a post-Brexit world. €8 million was allocated in budget 2019 to support the expansion of Ireland's enterprise development network internationally. This investment will allow for a more targeted expansion of our State Agencies in both emerging and established international markets.

In my Department planning is underway for Ireland's participation at Expo 2020 in Dubai. Expo will showcase Ireland to a global audience, in a region with huge trade and investment potential and will support a 'Team Ireland' approach to promoting Ireland as a global partner for the development of new ideas and technologies, as well as an attractive location for business and investment.

Departmental Staff Data

127. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of staff in each embassy and consulate in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30662/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Ireland's diplomatic network of Missions around the world is critical to the achievement of our foreign policy and trade goals such as ensuring the efficient delivery of passport and consular services to our citizens, supporting emigrant organisations and outreach to the diaspora and other networks of influence.

Our Embassies and Consulates contribute directly to safeguarding our interests in negotiations on the UK exit from the European Union and they are helping to ensure that Ireland plays a full part in shaping the future development of the European Union.

The work of my Department in promoting a more just, fair, secure and sustainable world continues through mission engagement with multilateral institutions and agencies, including those of the United Nations, and via implementation of the Irish Aid programme in partner countries.

Our staff in Embassies and Consulates also make a strong contribution to job creation, exports, tourism and education in Ireland by assisting Irish businesses overseas in close cooperation with State Agencies.

Our capacity to deliver on these key goals will increase with the expansion of my Department's Mission network abroad under the Global Ireland Initiative. This includes the opening of Embassies in Wellington, Amman, Santiago, Monrovia and Bogotá, and the opening of Consulates General in Vancouver, Mumbai and Cardiff, Los Angeles, and Frankfurt. New Missions will open in Rabat, Kyiv and Manila by the end of 2020.

Our Missions are staffed by Departmental officers posted from headquarters; by staff seconded from other Government Departments in certain missions including the Permanent Representation in Brussels and visa officers seconded to missions from the Department of Justice, and by locally recruited staff.

Mission	Number of Staff 2016	Number of Staff 2017	Number of Staff 2018	Number of Staff April 2019
Abu Dhabi	12.5	13	15	13+2 Vacancies
Abuja	11	14	13	14
Addis Ababa	8	9	11	11
Amman	0	0	0	2
Ankara	11	12	12	10
Athens	6.3	8	7	7
Atlanta CG	3	3	4	4
Austin CG	3	4	4	4
Bangkok	8	9	10	8+2 Vacancies
Beijing	23	25	25	25
Berlin	13.6	20.6	21.6	18.6+3 Vacancies
Berne	5	5	5	5
Bogota	0	0	0	6
Boston CG	5	7	7	7
Brasilia	5	6	5	5
Bratislava	4	3	3	4
Brussels incl Brussels PFP	12	12	14	12+2 Vacancies
Brussels PR	91	99	97	98
Bucharest	6	7	7	7
Budapest	6	6	6	5+1 Vacancy

Mission	Number of Staff 2016	Number of Staff 2017	Number of Staff 2018	Number of Staff April 2019
Buenos Aires	6	5+1 Vacancy	5	5
Cairo	9	9	12	11+1 Vacancy
Canberra	10.6	11	11	11
Cardiff CG	0	0	0	2
Chicago CG	6.4	5.4	6.4	6.4
Copenhagen	5.9	6.9	6.5	6.5
Dar-es-Salaam	8	8	9	9
Edinburgh CG	4	3+1 Vacancy	5	5
Edinburgh BIC	1	1	1	1
Freetown	4	4	5	5
Geneva PMUN	15.5	16	16	17
Hanoi	9	10	11	11
Helsinki	5	5	6	6
Holy See	2.75	2.75	3.75	2.75
Hong Kong CG	5	5	5	5
Jakarta	8	7	7	7
Kampala	7	8	9	10
Kuala Lumpur	5	6	6	5+1 Vacancy
Lilongwe	7	7	9	9
Lisbon	6	6	6	6
Ljubljana	5	5	5	5
London	56.5	66.6	65.6	68.6
Lusaka	7	7	7	7
Luxembourg	4.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
Madrid	13.5	14	15	14+1 Vacancy
Maputo	7	11	13	13
Mexico	9	9	8	8
Monrovia	0	0	3	3
Moscow	17	18	18	18
Mumbai CG	0	0	0	2
Nairobi	3	9	8	7+1 Vacancy
New Delhi	14	14	15.6	16.6
New York CG	17.5	16.5	17	16+1 Vacancy
New York PMUN	17	17	28	23
Nicosia	4	4	4	4
Oslo	5	5	4	5
Ottawa	10	10	10	11
Paris	18	21.2	20.2	23.2
Paris OECD	4	6	7	7
Prague	7.5	7	7	7
Pretoria	10	13	13	13
Ramallah	6	6	6	6
Riga	3	3	3	3
Riyadh	9	10	9	9
Rome	13.3	13.42	14.72	14.72
San Francisco CG	6	6	9	9
Santiago	0	0	0	3

Questions - Written Answers

Mission	Number of Staff 2016	Number of Staff 2017	Number of Staff 2018	Number of Staff April 2019
Sao Paulo CG	4	4	4	5
Seoul	6	6	6	6
Shanghai CG	8	7	8	8
Singapore	6.5	6.3	6.3	6.3
Sofia	6	6	6	6
Strasbourg CoE	5	6	7	7
Stockholm	5.62	5.62	5.62	5.62
Sydney CG	5	6	7	6+1 Vacancy
Tallinn	3	5	3	3
Tel Aviv	5	5	6	5+1 Vacancy
The Hague	9	10.8	10.6	10.6
Tokyo	10	10	11	11
Valetta	4	4	5	5
Vancouver CG	0	0	3	5
Vienna	9	9	9	8+1 Vacancy
Vienna OSCE	4	4	6	6
Vilnius	4	4	5	5
Warsaw	8	8	10	10.5
Washington DC	20	18	18	18
Wellington	0	0	3	5
Zagreb	3	3	3	3
TOTAL	750.47	811.59	862.39	870.89

Emigrant Support Services

128. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if all recommendations from the report published on addressing barriers facing returning Irish emigrants have been implemented; if not, the outstanding recommendations; when he expects them to be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30663/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The Interdepartmental Committee on the Irish Abroad has dedicated its work stream over the past year and a half to evaluating and, where possible, implementing the thirty recommendations contained in the Indecon Economic Report on Addressing Challenges Faced by Returning Irish Emigrants.

Of the 30 recommendations, 20 have been addressed. Of the remaining 10 areas, 8 have been partially addressed or are pending further policy development. 2 recommendations were not accepted.

Perhaps the most beneficial among the recommendations that have been addressed is the development of a single window information service for returning Irish emigrants. This information is currently available on the Global Irish section on the website of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and will shortly be replaced by information on the website of the Citizens Information Board. This service allows returning Irish emigrants to plan more effectively for their move back home.

The work carried out to date to address the Indecon Report recommendations has resulted in an improved environment for returning Irish emigrants, although it should be noted that chal-

lenges still remain, including the need to ensure effective implementation of recent policy changes.

The Interdepartmental Committee on the Irish Abroad, at its meeting in July 2019, will discuss progress that has been made over the course of its work dedicated to addressing the recommendations contained in the Indecon Report. A summary of this progress will be made publicly available in the autumn.

Departmental Contracts Data

129. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the expenditure incurred since May 2016 and to date in 2019 on external consultant reports by report in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30664/19]

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 commissions external expertise where highly specialised skills are not available internally and in particular where ongoing independent evaluation of programmes and projects is required. During the course of their engagement, these consultants and experts may prepare reports and other documentation for the Department.

In-depth analysis of issues by external experts has informed, and continues to inform, the Department's policies, allowing for a more targeted use of resources and greater accountability in the allocation of budgets.

These services are procured by open competitive tendering processes in accordance with EU and national rules and comply with the overall value for money objectives.

A small number of consultancies are engaged directly by our Missions abroad from time to time and in some instances they prepare technical reports relating to Ireland's overseas development aid programme.

The following expenditure was incurred by my Department from 2016 to date in 2019:

Year of commission	Experts/Consultants	Report/Subject	Cost
2016	Right to Change	Planning of Irish Aid Country Strategy Programme Tanzania 2017-2022	€13,974
2016	Bronagh Hinds Debbie Donnelly	Midterm Review of the 2nd National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security	€15,506
2016	The Institute of International and European Affairs	Comprehensive study mapping that Ireland Japan relationship to mark the 60th anniversary of Ireland-Japan Diplomatic Relations in 2017	€22,000
2016	Grant Thornton	Audit Services	€100,000
2016	Emily Mates	Stocktake of Nutrition Engagement	€13,612
2016	Noel Casserly	UNFCC Reporting and Climate Finance Mapping 2015-2016	€25,370
2016	REEV Consult International	Evaluation of the CSF and the Partnership Fund	€25,000
2016	ASM	Audit of grants awarded under Emigrant Support Programme	€26,533

Questions - Written Answers

Year of commission	Experts/Consultants	Report/Subject	Cost
2016	Emmanuel Sulle	Land Rights Scoping Study / Consultancy	€7,500
2016	Ishihaka Mwandalima	Gender Based Violence scoping study	€3,750
2016	McQuillans	Accounting, Audit and Financial Services	€6,240
2016	PWC	Internal audit of Embassy, and external audit of selected projects/programmes	€75,000
2016	Dr Cornelius Chipoma	Review of the Irish Aid Zambia Education programme	€9,000
2016	Luiz Genedio Mendes Jorge	Review of the Supreme Audit Institution's report and opinion on the State Accounts 2014	€4,800
2016	Southern Cross Consulting	Review of Embassy of Ireland's approach to Fellowship in Tanzania	€11,430
2016	Willis Towers Watson	Study of Compensation Levels - Locally engaged staff in diplomatic missions (USA)	€3,150
2016	Mercer International	Study of Compensation Levels - Locally engaged staff in diplomatic missions (Irish Aid)	€13,200
2016	Eamon Brehony, Alais Nakuyukuyo Morindat	Review of Irish Aid support to Pastoralism in Tanzania	€10,450
2016	Centre for Law and Democracy	Analysis of anti-corruption legislation in Tanzania	€2,670
2016	CASE International	Consultancy to evaluate the Civil Society Fund	€49,800
2016	Ingrid Obery	Review of partner results and internal capacity building on results based Management	€25,000
2016	Anne Nolan/Janet Gruber	Review of Global Health and HIV AIDS	€39,535
2016	Technopolis	Review of Product Development partners	€19,375
2016	Caoimhe Hughes	Review of Annual Reports of Programme Grant Partners	€4,000
2016	Mr. Sean Mc Gearty	Review of Co-Operation Ireland	€14,188
2016	M Horizon (UK) Ltd	Analysis of recent recommendations issued by the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf	€1,788
2017	ASM	Audit of grants awarded under Emigrant Support Programme	€59,292(paid between 2017 & 2018)
2017	Tierney & Associates, Risk & Governance Consultants	Systems review of Emigrant Support Programme	€15,375
2017	Indecon Consultants	Economic Report on Addressing the Challenges Faced by Returning Irish Emigrants	€73,628(paid between 2017 & 2018)
2017	Ernst & Young (EY)	External Quality Assessment of Internal Audit	€18,450 (paid between 2018 & 2019)
2017	Amárach Research	Brexit Research: Understanding the likely demand for Irish passports from citizens in U.K	€21,000
2017	M Horizon (UK) Ltd	Continental Shelf NE Atlantic	€3,163
2017	Mary Brady	Overview of Humanitarian Mine Action	€4,500
2017	Noel Casserly	UNFCCC Reporting and Climate Financing Mapping 2016 – 2017	€25,537

Year of commission	Experts/Consultants	Report/Subject	Cost
2017	Rachael Twinem	Internal review of the management structure and roles in the DICE (Development and Intercultural Education) project	€5,721
2017	Mercer International	Study of Compensation Levels - Locally engaged staff in diplomatic missions (Irish Aid)	€19,188
2018	FitzPatrick Associates	Review of VIBE programme	€11,234
2018	FitzPatrick Associates	Review of ROR's approach to Fellowships in Palestine	€18,761
2018	MEPS Consulting	Feasibility Study on Gaza Solar Energy Proposal	€38,787
2018	Brian Casey	Review of the Humanitarian Programme Plan in Somalia	€9,591
2018	Brian Casey	Review of the Humanitarian Programme Plan in Burundi	€4,500
2018	Brian Casey	Review of External Quality Assurance HPP 2019-2021	€2,250
2018	Julia Lewis	Review of the Humanitarian Programme Plan in Cameroon	€9,383
2018	Niall Roche	Review of the Humanitarian Programme Plan in Tanzania	€8,548
2018	Sherry McLean	Review of IRC Strategic Partnership and IRC Kenya Country Programme	€13,925
2018	Mercer International	Study of Compensation Levels - Locally engaged staff in diplomatic missions (Foreign Affairs and Trade)	€38,376
2018	The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces / International Security Sector Advisory Team	Member States' Systems of Secondment to Civilian CSDP and Recommendations for Strengthening and Expanding Ireland's Participation.	€50,000 approx. (awaiting final invoice)
2018	Leading Edge	Giving effect to a commitment in the National Plan on Business and Human Rights, a tender was awarded to Leading Edge for the baseline assessment of the legislative and regulatory framework pertaining to business and human rights as it applies in Ireland.	€24,293
2018	ASM (B) Ltd	Audit of Grants awarded under the Emigrant Support Programme	€81,402
2018	National Centre for Research on Europe at the University of Canterbury	Undertake a benchmark analysis of how Ireland is perceived in New Zealand. The study is led by the National Centre for Research on Europe at the University of Canterbury and will take the form of surveys, media analysis and interviews with key stakeholders in New Zealand.	€13,500
2018	AECOM	External Services for the analysis of Rio Markers and Climate Finance in Irish Aid - Funded Programmes, 2017 to 2018	€3,000
2018	Deirdre Clancy	Ireland's engagement with Somalia	€11,782
2018	Mazars	Support to ICT Audit (ICT Security, ICT Governance, Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery)	€15,990 (paid in 2019)

Year of commission	Experts/Consultants	Report/Subject	Cost
2019	Red C	Perceptions of Ireland in Japan	€11,624 (co-funded with Tourism Ireland)
2019	Dr. Maria Gallo	Scoping research study on alumni engagement of Ireland's Diaspora.	€23,000
2019	Brian Casey	Review of the Emergency Response Fund	€11,850

Brexit Negotiations

130. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his European counterparts or representatives of EU member states have contacted his Department to discuss the way in which Ireland will protect the integrity of the Single Market in the event of a no-deal Brexit; if so, if he has responded to these communications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30729/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Brexit remains a priority issue for this Government, and the Taoiseach, my cabinet colleagues and I take every opportunity to engage with EU partners and the UK to advance Ireland's priorities.

Without the Withdrawal Agreement and the backstop, there are no easy answers. A no deal Brexit will have severe economic and political implications for Ireland, North and South. The process of engagement with the European Commission, with its twin objectives of protecting the integrity of the Single Market and Ireland's place in it and at least avoiding physical infrastructure at the border on the island of Ireland, continues.

I have spoken with my EU counterparts about this work, and made clear that in addressing the border, Ireland is committed to protecting the integrity of the EU Single Market and Ireland's place in it. Our place in the Single Market is a vital part of our economic model and crucial to Ireland's prosperity.

EU partners have repeatedly made clear the EU's solidarity with Ireland on this issue. The EU has been clear that it is determined to do all it can, deal or no deal, to avoid the need for a border and to protect the peace process.

Unfortunately, any such arrangements in a no deal scenario will be temporary and will be sub-optimal compared to the backstop. This is why the backstop is an essential part of the Withdrawal Agreement, and why we remain focussed on securing its ratification. As Michel Barnier has stated, it provides a "solution which preserves, on the one hand, the integrity of the United Kingdom and on the other, the Single Market, while respecting what we have committed to respect: the Good Friday Agreement."

The need to protect the Good Friday Agreement and the peace process will not disappear in a no deal scenario. We, with our EU partners, will insist that the issue of the border and protecting the Good Friday Agreement will need to be resolved as a condition for opening wider negotiations on the EU's future relationship with the UK.

Brexit Preparations

131. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

the status of plans to publish a new Brexit contingency plan; the date it is expected to be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30730/19]

133. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of planning for all Brexit scenarios, including a no-deal Brexit by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30756/19]

138. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the preparations in the event of a no-deal Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30932/19]

154. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to mitigate delays at ports and disruptions to supply chains in the event of a no-deal Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31359/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 131, 133, 138 and 154 together.

Let me state clearly at the outset that the Government remains firmly of the view that the best and only way to ensure an orderly Brexit is for the UK to ratify the Withdrawal Agreement, as agreed by the UK Government and endorsed by the European Council. However, given the ongoing political uncertainty in the UK, it is our assessment that there is a significant risk of a no deal Brexit on 31 October. While we continue to plan for all scenarios, work on no deal Brexit preparations has the highest priority across Government departments and State agencies.

Following its approval by the Government, the updated Brexit Contingency Action Plan was laid before the Oireachtas and published on Tuesday 9 July. Its contents will be debated in detail in this House today. The Contingency Action Plan reflects the extensive work which has taken place at EU level and on a whole-of-Government basis to prepare for a no deal Brexit, including by setting out the next steps to be taken between now and 31 October.

At EU level, there is agreement on a range of temporary contingency measures in key areas, including maintaining basic air connectivity and road haulage access between the EU and the UK in the event of a no deal Brexit. These measures have been undertaken in tandem with our ongoing engagement with our EU partners and with the European Commission, on key outstanding issues, including on potential supports for Ireland and affected sectors.

With regard to the Government's work to reduce delays at ports and disruptions to supply chains, additional infrastructure has been put in place to manage the necessary checks and controls on our trade with the UK on an east-west basis post-Brexit. Work at Dublin Port has involved nine projects across eight sites to deliver 13 new inspection bays, documentary and identity check facilities, office facilities and parking for up to 128 heavy goods vehicles. Plans are in place for a further 18 inspection bays. A 24-hour service will be provided at Dublin Port, and extended hours to match arrival times will be provided at Rosslare Port with on-call service provision outside these hours.

Revenue accelerated and expanded recruitment and training schedules to meet the 12 April 2019 deadline, with an additional 400 staff trained and ready by that date. Revenue will continue to build on this and will have 450 additional staff in place by 31 October. Additional staff recruited in preparation for Brexit are deployed across a number of functions, with approximately half on import and export trade facilitation activities. Revenue will continue to monitor the need for further recruitment, deployment and training.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) had approximately 190 staff ready to carry out import controls and export certification on 12 April 2019. Further staff will

be ready to carry out controls in the additional inspection facilities that will be available by 31 October.

The HSE had 59 staff trained and available to conduct no deal Brexit (import and export) activities in time for the 12 April deadline. The HSE is progressing recruitment for a further intake of staff before the end of October.

Revenue are confident that their IT systems will handle the increased transaction levels in a no deal scenario. DAFM's necessary IT systems were in place by March 2019.

As stated in the Action Plan, there should be no illusion - a no deal Brexit will be highly disruptive and will have profound political, economic and legal implications. Our need to prepare prudently is more pressing than ever. Citizens and businesses cannot assume that because a no deal Brexit was averted in March and April that the same will happen in October.

The time between now and the extended Article 50 deadline of 31 October must therefore be used wisely and effectively, by exposed businesses in particular, on increased preparedness measures. It is only by Government, business and citizens working together, both nationally and with our EU partners, that we can aim to mitigate, as far as possible, the impacts of a no deal Brexit.

We are determined to be as prepared as we can be, deal or no deal, for the changes Brexit will bring. We will continue this work as a fully committed EU Member State and with the unwavering solidarity and support of our EU partners.

State Visits

132. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on his recent trip to Germany; the discussions he had relating to Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30731/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I accompanied President Higgins and his wife Sabina on a State Visit to Germany last week, from 2 to 5 July.

The State Visit was a truly memorable event which highlighted the historic and contemporary links between our two countries. The success of the visit will, I believe, form a strong basis for further deepening and growing our already excellent bilateral relations in the years ahead.

The President's programme included engagements in Berlin, Leipzig, Würzburg and Frankfurt. I accompanied President Higgins to number of meetings where there were discussions on Brexit, including with the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier; the Chancellor, Dr. Angela Merkel; and the Minister of State for Europe at the Federal Foreign Office, Michael Roth.

In addition, I had a bilateral meeting with the Minister of European and Federal Affairs of the State of Hessen, Ms. Lucia Puttrich, where I briefed the Minister on Brexit issues. During the State Visit events, I also met with a number of Bundestag parliamentarians and took the opportunity to informally discuss Brexit with them as well.

I appreciate Germany's unwavering support in the Article 50 negotiations, including clear support for an operational and legally sound backstop to avoid a hard border. This solidarity was reaffirmed last week during the State Visit when President Steinmeier stated that Ireland's

core interests are and will remain the EU's core interests.

Question No. 133 answered with Question No. 131.

Living Wage

134. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the estimated cost of implementing a living wage of €12.30 for all employees directly employed and-or in agencies under his remit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30772/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The remuneration of the directly employed staff of my Department is sanctioned by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in line with Government policy.

The most accurate estimate of the cost per annum is in the region of €836,000 to €1,500,000 to include permanent and temporary staff. It is difficult to determine the exact cost of introducing an hourly rate of €12.30 for relevant employees of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as those affected by any change would include temporary clerical officers and this figure varies from year to year.

There are no State Agencies funded by my Department.

Departmental Data

135. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the different income streams directly paid by persons to his Department or agencies under his remit, such as motor tax; the number of persons making annual payments; the value of same; the number of payments made through staged or incremental payments; the value of same; the additional income generated as a result of payments being made on an incremental basis; if incremental payments are not available, the reason for same; the corresponding figures for 1999 and 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30855/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The principal income stream, directly paid by persons to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, is the payment of passport fees.

In this regard, there are no annual payments, staged or increment payments. For administrative and other reasons there is no proposal to introduce incremental payments.

Capital Expenditure Programme

136. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the capital projects which have been delayed under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; when these projects will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30884/19]

137. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the capital projects which have commenced under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30920/19]

140. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if expenditure estimates for capital projects under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies match projected cost requirements in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30966/19]

141. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of capital projects being undertaken by his Department; the final agreed tender price; the estimated cost of each capital project in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31076/19]

142. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the capital projects completed since 2010; the final agreed tender price for each project; the actual cost of each project; if the actual cost exceeded the tender price; the reason therefor in each case in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31092/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 136, 137 and 140 to 142, inclusive, together.

The total capital allocation for my Department in 2019 across its two Votes – Vote 27: International Co-operation and Vote 28: Foreign Affairs and Trade - is €21 million. The corresponding 2018 capital allocation, in the first year of Project Ireland 2040/National Development Plan 2018-2027 was €13 million.

The main focus of capital investment in 2019, as was also the case in 2018, is on the cost of constructing and maintaining State properties overseas under Global Ireland 2025, the on-going Passport Reform Programme, Ireland's participation at EXPO 2020 and the continuing investment in ICT to support the Department's global ICT network.

The projected breakdown of the 2019 capital allocation of €21 million, across the various areas referred to above, is as follows:

-	2019
State properties overseas	€8.5 million
Passport Reform Programme	€5.5 million
EXPO 2020	€4.0 million
ICT	€3.0 million
Total	€21 million

Insofar as the current and future budgets for State properties overseas is concerned, details of the major current projects follow. It is planned to complete building works in 2019 at the Permanent Mission to the UN in New York at a total cost of €5.6 million. This project will be completed on budget. Preliminary works continue to facilitate the construction of a new Embassy/Ireland House in Tokyo for which a site was purchased in 2017 for €7.7 million. This project is currently under tender for design and management with construction tendering expected to be completed in 2020. The estimated construction cost for this project is €16 million. Tendering for the construction of new Chancery and Official Accommodation buildings in Abuja, Nigeria, is expected to take place in 2020. In 2018, the Department purchased a building for €3.7 million for an expansion of the Washington D.C. Chancery. This project is still under development.

Under the on-going Passport Reform Programme, the main projects due for completion in 2019 will be the automated mailing project, the business process automation project, the bedding-in of the improvements to the on-line renewals service, on-going improvement to custom-

er systems, and the commencement of the Passport Integrated Processing System. The overall budget for the Passport Reform Programme of €21.4 million, for the period 2015-2021, is on target, in line with the business case.

An allocation of €4 million in 2019 is provided for building costs associated with Ireland's participation in EXPO 2020 in Dubai. Ireland's national Pavilion is being designed by the Office of Public Works. The total capital cost of the pavilion will be €5 million and is expected to come in on budget. EXPO 2020 is expected to attract some 25 million visitors. In a competitive global environment, participation will promote increased awareness of Ireland in the UAE and other key markets as a place to do business and as a destination for FDI post-Brexit. Ireland's presence will also aim to support trade and tourism opportunities for Ireland in the UAE and wider Gulf region.

For 2019 there are also smaller planned capital projects in respect of ICT Services comprising infrastructure upgrades, rollout of new business systems and improved communications technology. Provision is also being made for ICT services to new Missions under Global Ireland 2025.

Question No. 138 answered with Question No. 131.

Northern Ireland

139. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if talks will continue throughout the remainder of July and August 2019, if necessary, to reach agreement in the event of agreement not being reached shortly by the Irish and British Governments and the political parties in Northern Ireland to have the Assembly and Executive restored; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30933/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The continuing absence of the power-sharing Executive and Assembly in Northern Ireland and the North South Ministerial Council is of grave concern for the Government as it is for the British Government.

The Government will continue to do everything in its power, in accordance with its responsibilities as a co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement, to secure the effective operation of all of its institutions.

I have engaged extensively with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland throughout this latest talks process, to encourage the parties to reach an accommodation. That engagement continues and will do so in the coming weeks as we work to secure agreement between the parties.

Last week, the British Government introduced an amendment to UK legislation to extend the period for calling an Assembly election.

This step underlines the seriousness of the absence of the devolved institutions in Northern Ireland, and the urgent requirement for an agreement between the political parties on operating the institutions again.

All five political parties have engaged constructively throughout the talks process that the two Governments convened with the objective of getting the institutions operating again.

Progress has been made by the parties across a range of important issues. However, some key outstanding issues remain and finding final agreement on these issues will require genuine

and courageous dialogue between the party leaderships.

The awful murder of Lyra McKee and the outpouring of public feeling that followed demands a serious response at political level. People want to see real progress made. There is no patience for anything except urgent and determined progress, and an openness to new thinking.

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 as quickly as possible.

Questions Nos. 140 to 142, inclusive, answered with Question No. 136.

Human Rights

143. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the way in which he and his EU colleagues are responding to attempts by the Hong Kong authorities to apparently suppress the civil and political rights of the population to assembly and freedom of expression, in defiance of measures provided under Hong Kong's Basic Law; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31146/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Ireland and the EU have been consistent in its support for the full implementation of the Basic Law and the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle. This system provides Hong Kong with a high degree of autonomy, rule of law, an independent judiciary, democratic separation of powers, and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, including the freedom of assembly and expression.

As I have noted in this House in recent weeks in response to questions on developments in Hong Kong, public demonstration and protest are an important element of any democracy and the right to do so should not be curtailed. At the same time, these rights come with responsibilities and it is important that the demonstrators do so peacefully. It is equally important that security forces respond to demonstrations with full respect for citizens' rights and with the utmost restraint.

Since the initiation of the demonstrations in early June, Ireland has consistently encouraged all parties to refrain from any actions that may escalate tensions, and urged them to express views in a peaceful manner. We further encourage all parties to work for a constructive solution and to engage in dialogue on the matter.

The Spokesperson for High Representative Mogherini has issued statements in response to developments in Hong Kong, notably following the disturbances which took place on 12 June and 1 July. These statements reiterate the fundamental right of citizens to assembly and expression, as contained in Hong Kong's Basic Law, while calling for restraint on both sides.

Ireland's Consulate General in Hong Kong, along with the EU Office, and representatives of other EU Member States have been engaging regularly with the Hong Kong authorities with regard to developments. Furthermore, Ireland's Ambassador to Beijing met with Chief Executive Carrie Lam, during his visit to Hong Kong on 20 June.

Our Consulate General in Hong Kong, and officials in my Department, will continue to monitor the evolving situation in the Special Administrative Region, and will continue to engage with the local authorities on this issue.

Human Rights

144. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the further steps being taken by him and his EU colleagues to urgently bring to an end the repression of the Uighur community in Xinjiang by the Chinese authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31147/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Government continues to be concerned at the credible reports with regard to the treatment of Uighurs and other minorities in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

Ireland, along with our EU partners, continues to raise this issue directly in our bilateral context with China, and at multilateral levels. These interventions have placed a particular focus on our concern with the system of political re-education camps in Xinjiang, as well as the widespread surveillance and restrictions which is predominantly targeted at Uighurs. We have called on China to allow meaningful, unsupervised and unrestricted access to Xinjiang for independent observers, including for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and relevant UN Special Procedures mandate holders.

At a bilateral level, I discussed the subject with China's Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Wang Chao, during political consultations held in Dublin last year. Ireland's concerns about the situation in Xinjiang are also raised in our contacts with the Chinese Embassy in Dublin and through our Embassy in Beijing.

As I have noted in this House previously, the EU had a detailed discussion with China during the most recent EU-China Human Rights Dialogue in April 2019. During the discussion, the EU stressed that, while actions to counter terrorism are essential, such measures must respect the principle of proportionality, fundamental freedoms and international laws. The issue was also raised during the EU-China Summit in the same month.

In the multilateral context, the EU has consistently raised concerns about the situation in Xinjiang in recent sessions of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), including the 41st Session of the Council which is currently underway in Geneva.

Ireland and a significant number of EU Member States participated in China's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in November 2018. Ireland urged China to respect freedom of religion and belief and recommended that China grant access to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to all regions of the country, including Xinjiang.

We will continue to raise these issues in the future, in both bilateral and multilateral forums.

Dublin-Monaghan Bombings

145. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has had recent discussions with the British Foreign Secretary and with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on the need for the British Government to respond positively to the unanimous requests of Dáil Éireann concerning the Dublin and Monaghan bombings of 1974; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31154/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Last 17 May marked the 45th anniversary of the appalling attacks of the Dublin and Monaghan bombings in which 33 people were murdered. The Minister for Justice and Equality, Charles Flanagan TD, represented the Government at the remembrance ceremony in Dublin.

The Government stands in solidarity with all those who lost loved ones or were injured on that day, and who suffer still as a result of these bombings.

The implementation of the All-Party Dáil motions relating to the Dublin and Monaghan bombings is a priority for the Government, as highlighted in the Programme for a Partnership Government. The All-Party motion on the 1974 Dublin Monaghan bombings adopted by the Dáil on 25 May 2016 has, like those adopted in 2008 and 2011, been conveyed to the British Government.

These motions call on the British Government to allow access by an independent, international judicial figure to all original documents relating to the Dublin and Monaghan bombings, as well as the Dublin bombings of 1972 and 1973, the bombing of Kay's Tavern in Dundalk and the murder of Seamus Ludlow.

The Government is committed to actively pursuing the implementation of these all-Party Dáil motions, and has consistently raised the issue with the British Government, including at the British-Irish Inter-Governmental Conference, most recently on 8 May last.

I and Minister Flanagan made clear to our counterparts that the absence of a response from the British Government is of deep concern to the Government, and that there remains an urgent need for a response.

The Government will continue to engage with the British Government on this request, and pursue all possible avenues to achieve progress on this issue, consistent with the request made by this House and until a resolution is found.

The Government maintains a close and cooperative relationship with Justice for the Forgotten, as we continue work to seek the full facts of the appalling events of 25 May 1974 and of other attacks in this jurisdiction during the Troubles.

British-Irish Co-operation

146. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the steps he will take to protect, promote and enhance Anglo-Irish relations, particularly in the context of Brexit; if he has considered putting new formal structures for dialogue in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31192/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I and my Government colleagues have always been clear that we will seek to maintain the closest possible bilateral relationship with the UK post-Brexit. On a political level, we already cooperate closely through a number of institutions, most notably the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and the British-Irish Council, both of which are institutions of the Good Friday Agreement.

The British Irish Intergovernmental Conference was established to deal with “the totality of relationships” between these islands and to promote bilateral cooperation at all levels on all matters of mutual interest within the competence of the two sovereign Governments. It provides an important opportunity to consider the East West relationship and a forum to discuss important issues, as the agenda of the last meeting reflected, including political developments in Northern Ireland, East-West economic cooperation, security cooperation, issues relating to the legacy of the conflict in Northern Ireland, and issues of rights and citizenship. There have been three meetings of the Conference over the past year, in London last July, in Dublin in November and again in London on 8 May last.

For its part, the British-Irish Council brings together the Irish and UK Governments, the Devolved Administrations in Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh, as well as representatives of Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man. The Council continues to work on areas of shared importance, with the Taoiseach and Minister Bruton attending the most recent Summit meeting in Manchester two weeks ago.

There are also strong inter-parliamentary relations maintained and developed through the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA), which brings together elected representatives from the Oireachtas, the UK Parliament, the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Scottish and Welsh devolved Assemblies, as well as the representative assemblies for the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. Three of the four BIPA Committees have carried out inquiries into the consequences of the UK exit from the EU for various sectors across this island, meeting with practitioners and stakeholders to hear evidence and further the discourse around this issue of primary importance.

However, notwithstanding the important work of these Institutions, there is a real danger that, post-Brexit, our two countries could lose the habit of cooperation that we have developed working side by side in EU institutions since 1973. Therefore, we will need to work hard to protect and develop our relationship as close neighbours and good friends.

That is why, at last November's British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, we discussed a joint paper outlining a possible model to maintain and strengthen the high level of bilateral co-operation between Ireland and the UK post-Brexit.

As announced following the Conference, this model would include top level summits involving the Taoiseach and Prime Minister and senior Irish and UK Ministers. These summits would be supported by close bilateral work at both political and official levels.

This commitment was reaffirmed at the most recent BIIGC, held in May this year, and officials on both sides have commenced the process of turning these ideas into a detailed practical plan of work with a view to presenting a fully worked through proposal for future East-West cooperation.

The Embassy of Ireland in London remains our largest bilateral Embassy globally, and has had additional staff assigned to it since the Brexit vote to reflect the fact that our relationship with the UK is such a high priority. Our Consulate in Edinburgh continues to be very active, and our Consulate in Cardiff has reopened in recent months. Our Global Ireland policy contains a pledge to open an additional consulate in another British location post-2019. 'Team Ireland' also enjoys a significant footprint in Britain with our trade, tourism, and investment agencies continuing to make a positive impact.

I am therefore confident that these existing structures and proposed new arrangements will provide ample opportunity for positive engagement between our two Governments into the future.

Foreign Policy

147. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the areas being prioritised in terms of EU policy over the next five years aside from Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31193/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): In June, the European Council adopted a new Strategic Agenda 2019-2024 to guide the work of the Union over the next five years. The Strategic Agenda focuses on four overarching priorities:

protecting citizens and freedoms; developing a strong and vibrant economic base; building a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe; and promoting European interests on the global stage.

The new Strategic Agenda strongly reflects many of the key priorities identified in Ireland's National Statement on the European Union which was approved by the Cabinet in April. The National Statement was Ireland's contribution to the development of the new Strategic Agenda. It was laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas and was the subject of statements in Dáil Eireann just before the Easter recess.

The priorities set out in the National Statement include the completion of the Single Market, tackling climate change and the promotion of sustainable agriculture.

The European Council will discuss the follow-up to the Strategic Agenda in October 2019.

Diplomatic Representation

148. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to open new embassies and consulates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31194/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The launch of 'Global Ireland – Ireland's Global Footprint to 2025' in June 2018 set out the Government's ambitions for expanding and deepening our international presence, including through the opening of new Embassies and Consulates.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade plans to open 26 new diplomatic Missions during the lifespan of Global Ireland and will further deepen and strengthen the existing Mission Network.

To date new Embassies have opened in Wellington, Bogotá, Amman, Monrovia and Santiago de Chile, and new Consulates General in Vancouver, Cardiff and Mumbai. 2019 sees the opening of new Consulates General in Los Angeles and Frankfurt. Embassies in Kyiv, Manila and Rabat will follow shortly thereafter.

The locations for any possible new Missions are identified on the basis of where they would have the greatest impact and the greatest potential to deliver in terms of the State's Foreign Policy interests, as outlined in my Department's Statement of Strategy. The new offices address key gaps and are designed to support Ireland's People, Prosperity, Values, Place in Europe and Influence internationally.

In considering any further expansion of the Diplomatic Network a range of factors will be taken into account including our national, political, economic and trade priorities, as well as the availability of resources.

Foreign Policy

149. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the way in which Ireland plans to double its impact in the Asia Pacific region; the resources, financial and otherwise which will be committed to ensure that this target will be reached; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31195/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Asia Pacific region has grown significantly in importance and influence, and the Global Ireland strategy has set out clear goals and targets for how we meet the challenge posed by changes in the region, and the opportunity presented by greater trade, investment and tourism links. Central to our approach is the commitment to double our impact in the region by 2025.

In support of that ambitious target, significant work has already been undertaken, including the opening of Ireland's first resident mission to New Zealand in Wellington, which opened in November 2018, and Ireland's first Consulate General in Mumbai, India, which opened in March 2019. Further new Missions are envisaged to open under the strategy, including Ireland's first resident Mission to the Philippines in 2020, and a third consulate in China before 2025. These new Missions will take to 17 the number of Irish Embassies and Consulates in this fast-growing and important region, which is home to over 4 billion people.

In line with the expansion of our physical Mission network, there has been a drive to increase our human presence on-the-ground. Including both posted diplomats and local support staff, there has been an 8% increase in the headcount in our Embassies and Consulates in Asia Pacific between 2017 and 2018. This is expected to grow further as new Missions are opened, and further deepening of our existing network takes place. In addition to the work underway in my own Department, the State Agencies have also invested heavily in their Asia Pacific presence, both expanding their network with new offices in Shenzhen, Ho Chi Minh, Tokyo and Melbourne, and reinforcement of existing offices in the region.

In support of our aim to double our impact by 2025, we have also increased the money available to missions in the region through a doubling of the Asia Pacific Regional Fund (APRF) to €480,000 in 2019. The APRF focused on activities which build awareness of Ireland and promote our values, and for public diplomacy and visibility raising initiatives. Projects this year include a media and film industry trip to Ireland from Beijing, Bloomsday celebrations in Shanghai, a Women in STEAM event in Jakarta and research into perceptions and awareness of Ireland in Japan.

To guide and shape our future engagement with countries in the region, the Government will publish the whole-of-Government Asia Pacific Strategy in the Autumn. This strategy will detail how we will develop long-term strategic relationships, build stronger two-way economic partnerships, share our culture and engage our diaspora and increase our visibility in the region.

Consular Services Provision

150. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when his Department first learned of the case of a person (details supplied); the actions his Department has taken on this matter and to facilitate this person's return here; the progress made to date in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31196/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am aware of the case to which the Deputy refers. Appropriate consular assistance is provided to all Irish citizens abroad where this is possible. While our capacity to do so in a zone of conflict is necessarily limited, we will do what can and should be done to assist Irish citizens in distress or danger overseas, including helping them to return home. In the case in question, the presence and vulnerability of a young child in such circumstances is of particular concern.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Irish Missions in the region are pursuing options with State and non-State Actors. The Department is also coordinating with col-

leagues from across Government services as well as international partners.

Given the complex and delicate nature of the case, the Deputy will understand that I cannot go into specific details regarding what options may or may not be underway or comment on speculation about such options. To do so would not be in the interests of Irish citizens or of partner organisations with whom we are in contact.

Northern Ireland

151. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the outcome of recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on the need to deal with legacy issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31241/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I have engaged extensively with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and with the leaders of the political parties in Northern Ireland to seek the full implementation of the Stormont House Agreement legacy framework.

At the meetings of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and in our bilateral meetings, I have strongly emphasised to the Secretary of State the urgency of definitively moving ahead to a legislative phase to get the Stormont House bodies established.

The Government welcomed the publication of the summary of responses to the UK Government consultation on addressing the legacy of the Troubles through the framework provided for under the Stormont House Agreement

The main message from the vast majority of the 17,000 people and organisations who responded is that the current system needs to be reformed and that legacy issues need to be dealt with in a way that contributes to reconciliation and a better future.

Importantly also, there was broad support for doing this by implementing the Stormont House Agreement legacy framework.

The Stormont House Agreement provides for a comprehensive set of institutions to deal with legacy issues, in a way that can meet the legitimate needs of victims and survivors and support closure and reconciliation for those communities most affected by the Troubles.

The Government remains firmly committed to the implementation of the Stormont House Agreement, as does the UK Government.

It is essential that there is now a concrete step forward by the UK Government to get this legacy framework that was agreed in 2014 established in legislation, and up and running for victims and survivors, without any further delay.

The necessary implementing legislation is also being advanced in this jurisdiction.

On 28 June, the Minister for Justice and Equality announced the publication of the Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Bill 2019, following approval by the Government.

This legislation will enhance the co-operation that is being provided to ongoing Coroners' Inquests in Northern Ireland into troubles-related deaths. It will also further underpin the Government's commitment to full co-operation with the framework of institutions set out in the Stormont House Agreement.

The Government will continue to work to support the full and prompt implementation of the Stormont House legacy framework, to provide families with a way to access whatever truth and justice that is possible in their cases, and as a very necessary step in achieving a fully reconciled society.

Departmental Communications

152. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the oversight of his Department of directives, circulars, advice or requirements issued since 2016; if surveys have been carried out of compliance with these communications to date; the surveys carried out; the results of the surveys; the compliance rate; the actions taken by his Department following these results; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31326/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department continually monitors compliance with its relevant legislative, regulatory and internal procedural obligations. Adherence to compliance deadlines is monitored and evaluated throughout the year with regular reporting to senior management on performance. There are a number of compliance functions operating across key business units.

The civil service renewal plan sets out an ambitious programme of reform for all Government Departments and Offices. An important aspect is the need for strong governance. The Corporate Governance Framework (CGF) of my Department encapsulates the commitment to act with integrity and in the public interest meeting the range of legal, regulatory and Government policy obligations. The CGF captures the political and operational context, Departmental obligations and responsibilities, standards of conduct and accountability mechanisms. It defines the role of the Secretary General and senior management in ensuring effective corporate governance and it outlines the governance arrangements in place at Headquarters and across our network of Missions as well as the audit, assurance and compliance arrangements which underpin the Department's governance approach. The CGF was first published in 2016 and was most recently updated in 2018. It is kept under active review and amended as necessary to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

A Strategic Management Framework for senior managers, including Heads of Mission overseas, is under development. The Framework summarises management responsibilities and sets out key statutory and compliance obligations. It includes links to support and guidance available to assist Heads of Mission and their management teams in particular in meeting compliance responsibilities. The Framework includes a summary of cross-cutting issues arising from mission reviews, a description of compliance obligations by theme and a compliance calendar. Once finalised, it will foster greater clarity, consistency and enhanced communication between HQ and missions on management and compliance requirements.

Climate Change Policy

153. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the recurring weekly meetings attended by either him or the Secretary General of his Department in 2019 at which climate change and-or preparations within his Department to enact a climate plan has been an agenda item; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31342/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, along with the Secretary General from his Department, have been actively engaged in the preparation and development

of Ireland's national climate action plan. They have participated in and contributed to the relevant meetings and consultations organised by the Department for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment. The Tánaiste has also participated in Cabinet discussions relevant to the approval of the national climate action plan.

In line with the January Government Decision on Single Use Plastics, prevention of waste and green public procurement directed at Departments and Agencies, my Department is taking meaningful action to reduce its carbon footprint. The Secretary General has tabled this for discussion at a number of Departmental Management Board meetings, and just this week, the Tánaiste and Secretary General joined staff from across the Department in a roundtable event to propose actions and initiatives to reduce waste and introduce more sustainable practices. Further engagement is planned in the coming months with a view to rolling out ambitious targets and actions across the Department before the end of the year.

In addition and in recognition of the increasing threat posed by climate change the Government in its new policy for international development, A Better World, places climate action as one of its four main policy priorities. The policy commits Ireland to increasing its international engagement on climate change particularly with those most affected by its impact.

Question No. 154 answered with Question No. 131.

State Claims Agency Data

155. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the amount paid by each delegated State authority into the State Claims Agency in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the methodology used to calculate the amount to be paid by the delegated State authority; the amount received from scheme funds in the same period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30788/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The content of this response has been advised to me by the State Claims Agency (SCA) on the basis of information extracted from the National Incident Management System. The SCA is part of the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA), which is a body under the aegis of the Minister for Finance. The SCA have confirmed that this information is correct as of 30th June 2019 as it covers reimbursements from delegated State authorities for the years 2010 to end-June 2019.

In order to avoid breaches of data protection legislation, some delegated authorities have been merged, where appropriate, to avoid possible identification of individual payments. In relation to this, the following table only shows delegated authorities with payments above €200,000.

All other state authorities with payments made in the given years have been merged into the "Other" category. Delegated state authorities in this category are: Caranua - Residential Institutions Statutory Fund; Companies Registration Office; Criminal Assets Bureau; Department of Children and Youth Affairs; Department of Communications Climate Action & Environment; Department of Finance; Department of Public Expenditure and Reform; Department of the Taoiseach; Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission; Grangegorman Development Agency; Health Information and Quality Authority; Houses of the Oireachtas Commission; Houses of the Oireachtas Service; Labour Relations Commission; Legal Aid Board; Model Schools; National Assets Management Agency; National Gallery of Ireland; National Education Welfare Board; Office of the Attorney General; Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions; Property Registration Authority; Public Appointments Service; Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority; State

Examinations Commission; State Laboratory.

There may be slight variations in the data year on year due to financial adjustments and data improvements. For confidentiality reasons, total amounts paid below €50,000 per year are shown as '<€50,000'.

Location	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 YTD
Healthcare	€79,390,999	€82,111,336	€77,263,959	€119,382,197	€127,925,161	€208,149,453	€203,104,920	€254,864,978	€306,718,219	€166,665,273
Schemes	€2,763,818	€5,062,764	€1,846,968	€5,673,411	€1,671,820	€1,473,329	€13,015,777	€13,039,253	€6,873,065	€7,621,693
An Garda Síochána	€3,683,657	€3,616,652	€3,163,112	€4,526,723	€3,080,739	€3,650,026	€4,505,370	€4,552,566	€3,767,146	€1,105,268
Defence Forces	€2,598,300	€3,061,707	€2,673,734	€3,100,820	€2,841,130	€3,321,350	€3,126,530	€3,085,230	€6,043,989	€2,220,882
Irish Prison Service	€1,240,927	€1,337,837	€1,300,274	€2,302,192	€2,001,983	€2,307,170	€4,615,439	€3,648,639	€4,562,225	€1,478,705
Tusla	<€50,000	<€50,000	<€50,000	€81,338	€2,353,783	€871,386	€3,475,210	€3,930,680	€4,485,114	€2,408,557
Office of Public Works	€555,475	€541,665	€873,418	€392,854	€1,017,978	€870,489	€727,909	€867,792	€826,763	€1,796,299
Community & Comprehensive Schools	€377,759	€155,504	€624,650	€436,451	€276,333	€294,701	€901,176	€974,023	€941,245	€361,696
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine - Offices	€1,945,936	€214,811	€196,385	€273,925	€153,119	€164,686	€193,943	€301,211	€601,777	€262,851
Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection	€185,346	€72,758	<€50,000	€280,798	€230,593	€768,524	€394,715	€223,569	€284,715	€150,220
Residential Institutions	€643,988	€794,773	€484,896	<€50,000	€104,508	€81,451	<€50,000	€94,445	€100,797	<€50,000
Day Schools	€153,797	€71,284	<€50,000	<€50,000	€92,701	€660,115	€376,437	€572,161	€173,288	<€50,000
Revenue Commissioners	€73,174	<€50,000	€64,461	€304,990	€276,386	€346,262	€178,103	€185,597	€560,898	€106,981
Courts Service	€136,301	<€50,000	€85,124	€101,347	€287,782	€139,378	€83,404	€409,446	€403,779	€257,652
Department of Health	<€50,000	<€50,000	€55,836	€408,437	€129,522	€454,569	€169,352	€259,461	€173,442	<€50,000
Department of Justice and Equality	€88,849	<€50,000	<€50,000	<€50,000	€237,066	<€50,000	<€50,000	€270,173	€50,015	€811,826
Solas	€0	€0	<€50,000	<€50,000	€289,037	€98,583	€493,525	€248,991	€260,416	€52,219
Childrens Detention Schools	<€50,000	€109,484	<€50,000	€195,548	€108,737	€211,449	€175,486	€120,808	€340,039	€73,391
National Museum of Ireland	€260,617	€135,310	€0	€0	€405,002	€0	<€50,000	€385,833	€64,687	<€50,000
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	€89,944	<€50,000	€127,811	<€50,000	€87,931	<€50,000	<€50,000	€0	€56,169	€248,763
Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	<€50,000	<€50,000	€64,304	<€50,000	<€50,000	€116,601	€153,743	€171,048	€71,658	€51,354
Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport	<€50,000	€113,342	€89,644	<€50,000	<€50,000	€64,789	€101,041	<€50,000	€167,073	<€50,000
Department of Housing Planning & Local Government	<€50,000	<€50,000	<€50,000	<€50,000	€213,400	<€50,000	€104,085	€126,423	<€50,000	<€50,000
Department of Education and Skills	<€50,000	<€50,000	<€50,000	€84,348	<€50,000	€126,603	<€50,000	<€50,000	<€50,000	€57,942
Probation Service	<€50,000	€103,654	<€50,000	<€50,000	€0	<€50,000	<€50,000	<€50,000	€83,838	<€50,000

Questions - Written Answers

Location	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 YTD
Waterways Ireland	€0	€0	€0	€0	€0	<€50,000	€61,919	<€50,000	€149,399	<€50,000
Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation	<€50,000	<€50,000	<€50,000	€53,439	<€50,000	<€50,000	<€50,000	<€50,000	€144,256	€52,667
Department of Defence	<€50,000	<€50,000	<€50,000	<€50,000	<€50,000	€68,704	€78,917	<€50,000	<€50,000	<€50,000
Central Statistics Office	€0	<€50,000	€77,232	<€50,000	<€50,000	€53,547	€50,568	<€50,000	€0	€0
*Other	€88,591.82	€54,961.06	<€50,000	€134,849.52	€102,479.32	€164,679.66	€138,211.70	€117,460.02	€109,811.52	€171,085.27

It should be noted that the SCA amended its reporting methodology of reimbursement payments this year, to now recognise such transactions on payment date as opposed to transaction date. Therefore, year on year figures previously presented in PQ 4480/18 have adjusted slightly in accordance with this new reporting methodology.

The NTMA bills each delegated State authority on a monthly basis. This billing process is based on the amount paid out by the SCA in the previous month on all claims which are being actively managed and finalised and relates to damages, legal costs (agency and plaintiff) and other expert costs.

Under the NTMA, the SCA is responsible for making decisions in relation to the management of all aspects of the claims under their remit. Where the State is liable, the SCA endeavours to settle claims expeditiously and economically. In cases which involve contributory and/or third party negligence, the SCA endeavours to settle such claims on appropriate and reasonable terms. In cases where liability is fully disputed, claims are contested using appropriate resources e.g. State and expert witnesses, all relevant documents/records (i.e. training, checklists, photos, etc.).

The SCA, in accordance with Section 16 of the NTMA (Amendment) Act 2000, uses the Post Office Savings Bank to fund claims costs and expenses. As payments are made on claims for damages, legal costs and other expert costs, the SCA seeks reimbursements of these from each delegated State authority so it can in turn refund the Post Office Bank account.

In relation to the General Indemnity and Clinical Indemnity Schemes, the SCA does not retain individual claims portfolio funds.

Pensions Reform

156. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to extend the legal framework for approved retirement funds to allow pension schemes to provide ARFs under the regulation of the Pensions Authority. [31238/19]

157. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to allow pension schemes approved by the Pensions Authority to offer retiring members of defined contribution schemes, scheme controlled ARFs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31239/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 156 and 157 together.

As you are aware, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection's (DEASP) A Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018 – 2023 was published last year. While implementation of the Roadmap is primarily a matter for my colleague, Ms Regina Doherty T.D., the Minister

for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and her Department, the Interdepartmental Pensions Reform and Taxation Group (IDPRTG) was allocated a number of specific measures. The IDPRTG is chaired by the Department of Finance and includes representatives from this Department as well as from the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection, Revenue, and the Pensions Authority.

Strand 3 of the Roadmap is concerned with improving the governance and regulation of supplementary pensions to, among other things, achieve scale, improve standards, and simplify the provisions of pensions. The actions allocated to the IDPRTG under the Roadmap derive in the main from Strand 3, and the terms of reference of the Group reflects this focus.

Action 3.14 commits to ‘Undertake a broad review of the utilisation of the ARF option and consider whether regulatory oversight of this product is fit for purpose’. Officials from my Department have examined submissions from interested parties, as part of the IDPRTG’s work in reviewing the utilisation of the ARF product.

The IDPRTG’s work on the review of ARFs is still underway and the Group hope to finalise their work and report to me on these matters shortly.

Cyber Security Protocols

158. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance the cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if it has had a cybersecurity breach in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30587/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In relation to my Department, I wish to advise that ICT services are provided by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) under the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

My Department implements a multi-layered approach to cyber security and to protecting ICT systems, infrastructures, and services. On behalf of my Department, OGCIO implements a defence-in-depth security strategy which is achieved through the effective combination of People, Processes, and Technology to support the implementation of appropriate security measures and provisions. With the threat landscape constantly evolving, significant effort is expended to continually enhance and strengthen ICT security to mitigate against emerging threats, risks, vulnerabilities and cybersecurity issues. In terms of cyber security strategies, my Department, through OGCIO, works closely with the National Cyber Security Centre which is a division of the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment and encompasses the State’s national/governmental Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT-IE).

My Department has no evidence to indicate any cybersecurity breaches in the past 12 months.

Brexit Preparations

159. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance the number of additional customs officials hired to date; the number expected to be in place by the Brexit deadline of 31 October 2019; the estimated number required in the event of a no-deal Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30734/19]

160. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance the number of companies that applied for an authorised economic operator status in each of the years 2012 to 2018 and to date

in 2019; his views on the necessity of obtaining an AEO in the event of a no-deal Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30735/19]

196. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of businesses that applied for the key customs registration, the economic operators registration and identification number to date; the number of businesses with such a registration; the turnaround time for the Revenue Commissioners to process a registration application; the number of businesses the Revenue Commissioners estimate will require such a registration in the course of their normal business after 31 October 2019 in the event of a disorderly Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30983/19]

199. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the preparations undertaken to date by the Revenue Commissioners under each different Brexit scenario; the steps that will be taken by the Revenue Commissioners between 11 July 2019 and the end of October 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31030/19]

215. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance if all necessary ICT infrastructure will be in place by 31 October 2019 in the event of a no-deal Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31360/19]

216. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance the number of companies that have applied for an EORI number; the percentage of firms that do not have an EORI number but will require one in order to continue trading with the UK post-Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31361/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 159, 160, 196, 199, 215 and 216 together.

In relation to question 30734 and 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, to manage an orderly UK withdrawal. Following a Government Decision in December 2018, it was agreed to accelerate Revenue’s recruitment programme in preparation for Brexit.

In the period from 2017 to date, I am advised that 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 evolving business needs and to tackle any risks as they emerge. Revenue will continue to adjust its recruitment and training plans in response to business needs, including Brexit-related developments.

With regard to question 30735, I am advised by Revenue that the EU Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) programme, aims to enhance international supply chain security and to facilitate legitimate trade and is open to all Irish businesses who are involved in making Customs declarations.

There is no legal obligation for businesses to become an AEO in order to trade with the UK

post-Brexit. While there are benefits to AEO there are also obligations, so a decision to apply for AEO is a matter for careful consideration by each business based on a full assessment of its supply chain and operating model. Full details of the AEO programme are available on the Revenue website at www.revenue.ie.

I am advised by Revenue that in 2018, 30 of the 42 applications for AEO status were received by Revenue in the second half of that year and the increased interest in AEO has continued in 2019 with 82 applications to date.

The breakdown for each of the years 2012 to 2018 and to date in 2019 is as follows:

Year	AEO Applications	AEO Authorisations Granted
2012	22	22
2013	14	16
2014	16	14
2015	7	9
2016	13	10
2017	16	17
2018	42	21
2019 to date (09/07/19)	82	46

With regard to questions 30983 and 31361, Revenue identifies businesses that trade with the UK by analysing the VAT Information Exchange System (VIES) data.

I am advised by Revenue that it is currently analysing VIES data from 2018 which has identified approximately 92,000 businesses having traded with the UK in 2018. On further examination of the data, Revenue identified that approximately 70% (65,000) of these businesses do not currently hold an EORI number.

Details of the value of trade with the UK in 2018 for the approximate 65,000 businesses who do not have an EORI number is set out in the following table:

Value of Trade	Number of Businesses (approximately in each category).
>€1M	250
€100K-€1M	2,600
€50k - €100K	2,800
€5K – €50K	19,000
<€5K	*

* Revenue is continuing its analysis of data in order to establish the number of businesses that had only one transaction or a minimal level of transactions in the year.

Revenue pointed out that for businesses that may have had only a once off transaction or infrequent trade with the UK, it may be that such transactions and trade are not expected to arise post Brexit. It is a matter for each business to assess its supply chain in the context of Brexit and determine what steps it needs to take to be prepared.

Revenue advised that acquiring an EORI number is the minimum requirement for businesses that wish to trade with, or through, the UK when they leave the EU. It is a simple and free online process which is available on a 24-hour basis. Once a business is registered with the Revenue Online Service (ROS), the turnaround time for Revenue to process an EORI number

application is approximately 3 minutes.

Details of the number of EORI registrations applied for and issued since 2017 is as follows:

Year	Number of EORI Registrations
2017	2,595
2018	2,976
2019 to date**	7,128

**reflect figures up to 8 July 2019

Revenue continue to encourage businesses that have not yet applied for an EORI number and who will need one post Brexit to do so as a matter of urgency. In that regard I am advised that Revenue will be in direct contact with such businesses over the coming weeks. Once businesses have acquired an EORI number they need to continue their preparations to ensure they avoid significant delays in moving goods to, from or across the UK. At a minimum, every business should have the facility to make customs declarations or have plans in place for a customs agent to do so; know the origin and Commodity Code of their goods or products, and talk to the person who transports their goods or products to make sure they have the information they need to be able to move those goods or products.

In relation to question 31360 , I am advised by Revenue that it estimates that there will be an increase in customs declarations from current levels of approximately 1.6m per annum to over 20 million per annum post-Brexit. Consequently, a key priority for Revenue has been to upgrade the relevant IT systems to ensure that it can cater for this potential volume increase in the post-Brexit environment and to work with the relevant software providers in supporting their preparedness for Brexit.

In Budget 2017, I included provision for a €2 million investment in scaling up the Revenue customs IT framework. As a result of this, Revenue carried out significant work to increase systems capacity to cater for trade with the UK as a third country. I am advised by Revenue that robust stress and performance testing has taken place to ensure their systems will have capacity to cater for the volumes and the impact on the systems, particularly at peak times. This upgrading was completed prior to 31 March 2019 and I am advised by Revenue that it is confident that the IT systems will handle the increased declaration levels in a no-deal scenario.

I am further advised that Revenue has engaged directly with software providers and customs agents to ensure these key players are aware of the requirements in the post-Brexit environment.

Living Wage

161. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated cost of implementing a living wage €12.30 for all employees directly employed and or in agencies under his remit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30771/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I wish to inform the Deputy that the cost of implementing a living wage of €12.30 per hour for all employees directly employed by my Department would be approximately €82,000 annually.

Of the 17 bodies under the aegis of my Department, I am informed that 8 would incur no additional costs by implementing a living wage of €12.30 per hour. These are the Credit Review Office, the Credit Union Advisory Committee, the Credit Union Restructuring Board, the Disabled Drivers Medical Board of Appeal, the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation, the Irish

Financial Services Appeals Tribunal, the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council and the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland.

The cost of implementing a living wage of €12.30 per hour for all employees for the remaining 9 bodies is in the following table.

Body under the remit of the Department of Finance	Estimated cost of implementing a living wage of €12.30 for all employees in agencies
Office of the Comptroller and Audit General	€31,000
Central Bank (incl. Investor Compensation Company DAC)	€98,000*
Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman	€33,000
National Treasury Management Agency (incl. Home Building Finance Ireland and the National Asset Management Agency)	€4,500**
Office of the Revenue Commissioners	€4,450,000***
Tax Appeals Commission	€18,000

* This cost includes Interns with a maximum employment duration of 9 months per year. The Central Bank provides administrative and support services, including payroll services, to the Investor Compensations Company DAC.

** The total cost of implementing a living wage of €12.30 effective from 1st July 2019. All employees who are paid €12.30 as at 30th June 2019 are on fixed-term contracts and the cost is therefore calculated on the basis of 1st July 2019 to the end date of contract for each individual. The total cost is inclusive of employer costs (employer PRSI and pension). The National Treasury Management Agency provides administrative and support services, including payroll services, to Home Building Finance Ireland and the National Asset Management Agency.

*** This includes a cost of €700,000 for employees on temporary contracts.

Apple Escrow Account

162. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the loss incurred on the escrow account holding the money received from a company (details supplied) will be recouped from it; if the loss will be incurred by the State if the appeal is lost or by it if the appeal is won; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30789/19]

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). This represents the full amount of the alleged State Aid and no further such payments will be made into the Escrow Fund.

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 at the conclusion of the entire legal process, will be returned to Apple or paid to the State depending on the final determination over the validity of the Commission's Decision in the European Courts. As this process is expected to take a number of years, it is not possible to determine what the value of the Escrow Fund might be at that point in time.

Central Bank of Ireland Staff

163. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of open roles in the Central Bank by functional area and position; the time the role has remained unfilled in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30790/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Central Bank advises me that it currently has 47 open vacancies across the Bank at varying stages of the recruitment process.

A full breakdown of the number of vacancies in each functional area is detailed below. The current average time to hire for open roles is 9.6 weeks.

Pillar/Direc-torate	Director	Head of Division	Head of Function	Bank Profes-sional 1	Bank Profes-sional 2	Bank Profes-sional 3	Bank Ex-ecutive	Bank Officer	Security Guard	Grand Total
Central Banking			1	1	2	2	1			7
Corporate Affairs					1	1				2
Econom-ics and Statistics				1						1
Financial Operations						1				1
Financial Stability			1		1		1			3
Financial Conduct			2		2	2				6
Enforce-ment and Anti-Money Laundering					1	1				2
Policy and Risk			2		1	1				4
Operations	1	2			6	4	1	7	1	22
Chief Information Officer					6	3	1			10
Chief Op-erations Of-ficer Direct Reports	1	1				1		2		5

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Pillar/Direc-torate	Director	Head of Division	Head of Function	Bank Profes-sional 1	Bank Profes-sional 2	Bank Profes-sional 3	Bank Ex-ecutive	Bank Officer	Security Guard	Grand Total
Currency & Facilities Management		1							1	2
Graduate Programme 2019								5		5
Prudential Regulation	1	1		2	4	2	2			12
Asset Management & Investment Banking Supervisor				1	2		1			4
Credit Institutions Supervision				1						1
Graduate Programme 2019		1								1
Insurance Supervision	1									1
Prudential Analysis and Inspections					2	2	1			5
GRAND TOTAL	2	3	3	3	14	10	4	7	1	47

Central Bank of Ireland Data

164. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of licence applications made to the Central Bank between 2014 and 2018 and to date in 2019, by the type of financial services provider, that is, retail credit firm and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30791/19]

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

Reports on the Central Bank's Regulatory Service Standards Performance are published twice a year and are available on the Central Bank website at the link below. The available information includes details from January 2015 to December 2018.

<https://centralbank.ie/regulation/how-we-regulate/authorisation/service-standards>

Information for 2014 will be compiled and provided to the Deputy in line with Standing Orders.

Central Bank of Ireland Data

165. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of open licence applications with the Central Bank; the length of time these applications have remained open; the type of financial services provider; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30792/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I have been advised by the Central

Bank that the information sought by the Deputy is published on the Central Bank website at the link below. Reports on the Central Bank's Regulatory Service Standards Performance are published twice a year and are available at present up to the end of 2018.

<https://centralbank.ie/regulation/how-we-regulate/authorisation/service-standards>

The information specifically sought by the Deputy is set out below.

Funds and Fund Service Providers Authorisation

UCITS and RIAIF applications: of 676 Submissions 98% of initial submissions were assessed within 20 business days (98% of subsequent submissions assessed within 10 business days).

UCITS and RIAIF funds/sub funds (fast track) applications: of 1,117 Submissions, 99% of initial submissions were assessed within 10 business days (99% of subsequent submissions assessed within 5 business days).

QIAIF applications: of 216 Submissions, 100% were authorised within 1 business day.

Fund Service Providers Authorisation

UCITS Management Company applications: of 14 Applications, 100% were authorised within 6 months.

Externally managed AIFM applications: of 14 authorisations and 1 Registration, 100% were authorised/registered within 6 months.

Fund Administrator applications: 1 Application was authorised within 6 months.

Self-Managed Investment Companies, Internally Managed AIFs and Investment Managers Authorisation

Self-Managed Investment Companies: of 10 Submissions, 100% of initial submissions were assessed within 20 business days (subsequent submissions assessed within 10 business days).

Internally Managed AIFs (Authorised): of 2 Submissions, 100% of initial submissions were assessed within 20 business days (subsequent submissions assessed within 10 business days).

Internally Managed AIFs (Registered): of 1 Submission, 100% of initial submissions were assessed within 5 business days (subsequent submissions assessed within 3 business days).

Clearance of Investment Managers (EU authorised): of 32 Submissions, 100% were assessed within 1 business day.

Clearance of Investment Managers (Non – EU Authorised): of 197 Submissions, 100% of initial submissions were assessed within 5 business days (subsequent submissions assessed within 3 business days).

Investment Firms Authorisation

MiFID applications: of 8 Applications, 88% of initial submissions were assessed within 40 business days (final submissions assessed within 10 business days).

Regulated Disclosures - Prospectus Approval

Debt Prospectuses: of 1,607 Applications, 99.5% were assessed within 10 business days.

Closed-ended Funds Prospectuses: of 2 Applications, 100% were assessed within 10 business days.

Equity Prospectuses: of 47 Applications, 100% were assessed within 10 business days (20 business days for Initial Public Offerings (IPOs)).

Retail Intermediaries and Debt Management Firms Authorisation

For 211 Applications, 99% were acknowledged within 3 business days of receipt of application.

For 217 Applications, 98% had completed key information check within 10 business days of receipt of application.

For 70 Applications, 100% had assessment phase completed and outcome notified to applicant within 90 business days of commencement of assessment phase.

For 70 Applications, 99% had notification of decision phase completed and outcome notified to applicant within 10 business days of receipt of satisfactory response to issues set out in notification of outcome of assessment phase.

Moneylenders, Retail Credit Firms and Home Reversion Firms Authorisation

For 2 Applications, 100% were acknowledged within 3 business days of receipt.

For 2 Applications, 100% had key information check completed within 10 business days of receipt of application.

For 2 Applications, 100% had assessment phase completed and outcome notified to applicant within 90 business days of commencement of assessment phase.

For 1 Application, 100% had notification of decision phase completed and outcome notified to applicant within 10 business days of receipt of satisfactory response to issues set out in notification of outcome of assessment phase.

For 37 Applications, 100% of renewals of moneylender licences were completed prior to expiry of existing licence.

Payment Firms (Payment Institutions, Electronic Money Institutions, Small Electronic Money Institutions and Money Transmission Businesses) and Bureaux de Change Authorisation

For 40 Applications, 95% were acknowledged within 3 business days of receipt of application.

For 37 Applications, 100% had completed key information check within 10 business days of receipt of application.

For 1 Application, 100% had assessment phase completed and outcome notified to applicant within 90 business days of commencement of assessment phase.

For 1 Application, 100% had notification of decision phase completed and outcome notified to applicant within 10 business days of receipt of satisfactory response to issues set out in notification of outcome of assessment phase.

Insurance / Reinsurance Undertakings Authorisation

Of 9 complete Applications, 100% were processed within 3 months of completion.

Of 12 incomplete Applications, 100% were returned within 2 weeks of receipt.

Trust or Company Service Providers Authorisation

Of 2 complete Applications, 100% were processed within 3 months of completion.

Of 1 incomplete Applications, 100% were returned within 2 weeks of receipt.

Across all sectors, in H2 2018, 22 applications / submissions were withdrawn by the applicant; and 18 applications / submissions were deemed dormant.

Fitness and Probity PCF

For 99 Applications with an incomplete Individual Questionnaire, 98% had a response provided to the submitting entity within 5 business days.

For 202 Individual Questionnaires (IQ) Applications for Qualifying Investor Fund (QIF)/ Qualifying Investor Alternative Investment Funds (QIAIF), 98% were processed within 5 business days.

For 206 IQ Applications for individuals previously approved by Central Bank of Ireland or European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Services Regulator, 94% were processed within 12 business days.

For 510 “standard” IQ Applications – i.e. non QIF/QIAIF and/or individual not previously approved, 95% were processed within 15 business days.

Revenue Commissioners Staff

166. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of open roles in the Revenue Commissioners by functional area and position; the length of time the role has remained unfilled in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30793/19]

170. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number employed by the Revenue Commissioners each month since the start of 2016 by functional area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30797/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 166 and 170 together.

In the context of Revenue’s vote for 2019, Revenue is at its full complement of staff. Revenue currently has 6,424 FTE serving permanent staff, with an average weekly serving FTE of 6,366 in 2019 to date.

To date in 2019, Revenue has appointed over 600 staff from open and interdepartmental competitions across a range grades and areas including Audit, Tax, Accounting, Transfer Pricing, Economics, Law, Data Analytics, Information Technology, and Trade Facilitation. Revenue fills critical posts based on business requirements across all grades and functional areas and is currently recruiting at all levels. Revenue undertakes workforce planning and recruitment as an iterative process and recruitment plans are currently in place to fill all critical posts taking into account projected retirements and business requirements to the end of 2019.

For each of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 respectively, Revenue’s Vote provided for a

staffing complement of 5,924; 6,014; and 6,114 FTE and the average weekly serving FTE was 5,911; 6,008; and 6,085 respectively.

The FTE serving staff, by division, by month, in the period from January 2016 to the end of June 2019 is available at the following link:

[Revenue Vote]

Tax Appeals Commission

167. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of open roles in the Tax Appeals Commission by functional area and position; the length of time the role has remained unfilled in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30794/19]

171. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number employed by the Tax Appeals Commission each month since the start of 2016 by functional area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30798/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 167 and 171 together.

In response to Question 30794/19, the following table provides an outline of open roles in the Tax Appeals Commission by functional area and position as at 30 June 2019:

Position	Current Staff Numbers 30 June 2019	Recommended Staffing Numbers August 2018*	Additional Requirements	Timeframe for taking on Staff
Chairperson	0	1	+1	Projected Quarter 4. Amendment to legislation required before recruitment can commence.
Commissioners	2	2	0	
Commissioners (Temporary)	1	3	+2	Projected Quarter 3 - appointments in progress.
Principal Officer	1	1	0	
Assistant Principals	5	8	+3	Two APs will be appointed in August 2019. One further AP to be appointed Q3 into Q4.
HEO	2.5	5	+2.5	Two HEOs appointed via Internal Competition. One further HEO to be appointed by the end of Q3. 1.5 HEOs to be appointed through possible secondment by the end of Q3.
EO	1	5	+4	1 EO taking up a post in August 2 further EO's to take up their posts by end of Q3. Internal Competition to be held to make appointment to EO grade in Q3.

Position	Current Staff Numbers 30 June 2019	Recommended Staffing Numbers August 2018*	Additional Requirements	Timeframe for taking on Staff
CO	5	7	+2	Full complement of COs due to be in place by 22nd July.
Total	17.5	32	14.5	

The “Recommended Staffing Numbers August 2018 refers to the staffing complement as recommended in the independent Review of the Workload and Operations of the Tax Appeals Commission, conducted by Ms. Niamh O’Donoghue, which I commissioned in 2018. I have stated my full support for the report’s recommendations and have provided the necessary budget to the TAC for 2019 to support implementation of the recommendations.

In response to question 30798/19, the outline of the number of staff employed in the Tax Appeals Commission by functional area and position since March 2016 is available at the following link:

[Staff Employed]

Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman Staff

168. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of open roles in the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman by functional area and position; the length of time the role has remained unfilled in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30795/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Firstly, I must point out that the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman (FSPO) is independent in the performance of his statutory functions. I have no role in the day to day workings of the office or in the decisions which he takes.

The Office of the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman (FSPO) was established on 01 January 2018 to resolve complaints from consumers, including small businesses and other organisations, against financial service or pension providers. The establishment of the FSPO resulted from the merger of the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman and the Financial Services Ombudsman’s Bureau.

Under section 15(4) of the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman Act 2017 the Ombudsman may appoint staff to his office and determine their duties with the approval of the Minister for Finance and the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman (FSPO) commissioned a Workforce Plan 2019-2023 and submitted the Plan to my Department. This plan includes an analysis of the level of resources currently available to the FSPO against both current and predicted future demand for his services. It also addressed the large existing caseload which the Office inherited on 01 January 2018, along with the sustained pattern of increased demand which the office continues to experience.

Following consideration of the Plan I sanctioned an additional 35 staff for the Office as follows:-

	Assistant Principal	Higher Executive Officer	Executive Officer	Clerical Officer	Total
Additional Posts Sanctioned	5	11	15	4	35

These additional resources will allow the FSPO to deliver a better faster service for its customers, keep pace with the speed of change, tackle existing waiting times, and deliver the objectives in its Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021.

Recruitment campaigns were advertised in May 2019, for the grades of Executive Officer and Higher Executive Officer, and the recruitment processes for these campaigns are currently ongoing. Priority is being given to the filling of vacancies at HEO and EO levels within the following functional areas:

- Dispute Resolution/Mediation
- Investigation/Adjudication/Legal Services

Once the outcome of the current recruitment processes is clear, additional recruitment will be undertaken in Q3 and Q4 2019, which will also include competitions at the grades of Assistant Principal and Clerical Officer.

On the issue more generally, in 2018 and to date in 2019 the Ombudsman has informed me that vacancies which arose have been filled, either through existing panels where possible or else through the establishment of new panels by way of additional recruitment campaigns.

I should add that the post of Deputy Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman is vacant since April 2019 and work is currently underway to arrange the filling of this post.

Central Bank of Ireland Data

169. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number employed by the Central Bank each month since the start of 2016 by functional area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30796/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Central Bank has provided me with the following information in respect of the number employed by the Central Bank each month since the start of 2016:

2016

DIRECTORATE	JAN FTE	FEB FTE	MAR FTE	APRIL FTE	MAY FTE	JUN FTE	JUL FTE	AUG FTE	SEP FTE	OCT FTE	NOV FTE	DEC FTE
ECO-NOMICS	99.3	98.1	99.1	100.1	102.1	100.1	101.1	100.5	100.5	102.5	100.5	100.5
FINANCIAL OPERATIONS	77.8	85.2	87.2	77.2	82.4	77.2	75.2	78.2	77.2	76.2	74.2	75.2
RESOLUTION & CORPORATE AFFAIRS	125.8	117.8	115.8	124.1	126.3	134.1	140.1	143.8	145.8	148.2	147.2	145.2

Questions - Written Answers

SEM	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8	9	9	10	10	10	6
CENTRAL BANKING TOTAL	311.6	309.8	310.8	310.2	319.6	320.2	325.4	331.5	333.5	336.9	331.9	326.9
CONSUMER PROTECTION	89.3	89.3	91.3	92.3	91.7	92.7	94.7	94.9	94.9	92.9	89.9	89.9
CREDIT INSTITUTIONS SUPERVISION	192.6	193.6	188.6	191	190.8	190.2	187.8	186.8	186.8	192.8	197.8	197.4
ENFORCEMENT	79	77	79	79	85.4	85.2	85.6	86	87.2	92.2	100.2	104.2
INSURANCE SUPERVISION	115.8	120.8	127.8	128.1	130.1	133.1	133.1	132.1	129.1	130.9	128.9	129.9
MARKETS	159.8	159.8	157.9	156.6	157.7	157.7	160.7	156.7	154.7	155.7	158.7	154.7
POLICY & RISK	62.4	62.4	65.4	68.4	68.4	67.4	69.4	68.4	69.4	70.6	70.6	70.6
SEM	7	7	7	8	8	8	8	8	7	7	6	6
FINANCIAL REGULATION TOTAL	705.9	709.9	717	723.4	732.1	734.3	739.3	732.9	729.1	742.1	752.1	752.7
IMTD	102.8	103.8	106.8	104.6	110.4	110.4	109.6	109.6	109.6	115.7	117.7	114.9
CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER DIRECT REPORTS	84	81.5	84.5	85.5	84.5	88.5	91.1	93.1	90.3	92.3	92.3	93.3
CURRENCY & FACILITIES MANAGEMENT	250.9	248.9	249.3	250.7	246.7	241.3	240.3	238.3	240.1	240.3	240.7	242.3
GRADUATE PROGRAMME	13	14	13	13	13	13	12	12	9	9	9	9
HUMAN RESOURCES	61.6	61.6	59.6	59.6	60.6	57.8	61.8	62.3	61.8	60.8	58.8	55.8
SEM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
OPERATIONS TOTAL	512.3	509.8	513.2	513.4	515.2	511	514.8	515.3	510.8	518.1	518.5	519.3
GRAND TOTAL	1529.8	1529.5	1541	1547	1566.9	1565.5	1579.5	1579.7	1573.4	1597.1	1602.5	1598.9

2017 January - August (A pillar restructuring took place in Sept. 2017)

DIRECTOR-ATE	JAN FTE	FEB FTE	MAR FTE	APR FTE	MAY FTE	JUN FTE	JUL FTE	AUG FTE
ECONOMICS	101.5	104.5	104.5	104.4	106.4	109.4	80.1	84.1
FINANCIAL OPERATIONS	76.2	76.2	74.2	73.2	74.2	76.2	79.2	80.2
RESOLUTION & CORPORATE AFFAIRS	150.4	149.4	150.4	153.5	152.5	153.5		
CORPORATE AFFAIRS							133.3	138.4
FINANCIAL STABILITY							60.3	64.3
SEM	5	5	5	5	5	6	7	7
CENTRAL BANKING TOTAL	333.1	335.1	334.1	336.1	338.1	345.1	359.9	374
CONSUMER PROTECTION	90.9	92.9	92.9	96.9	97.9	100.9	99.9	101.9
CREDIT INSTITUTIONS SUPERVISION	198.4	200.4	199.2	198.2	205.2	208.2	209	207.8
ENFORCEMENT	106.2	108.8	104.8	97.8	102.8	102.8	112.8	115.8
INSURANCE SUPERVISION	128.9	126.9	129.9	127.9	130.9	129.1	133.1	138.1
MARKETS	152.7	154.7	158.7	161.7	163.7	165.7		
SECURITIES AND MARKETS SUPERVISION							83.2	82.2
ASSET MANAGEMENT SUPERVISION							80.5	79.5
POLICY & RISK	71.6	70	70	69.8	69.8	73.8	75.8	75.8
SEM	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
FINANCIAL REGULATION TOTAL	755.7	760.7	762.5	759.3	777.3	787.5	801.3	808.1
IMTD	114.9	114.9	115.9	115.9	117.9	116.9	115.9	119.9
CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER DIRECT REPORTS	92.7	91.7	92.7	94.2	97	99	104	105
CURRENCY & FACILITIES MANAGEMENT	239.3	237.3	233.4	230.1	224.9	219.5	216.5	213.5
HUMAN RESOURCES	53.8	54.8	55.8	53.1	54.1	52.1	55.1	53.9
SEM	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
OPERATIONS TOTAL	504.7	502.7	501.8	497.3	497.9	491.5	495.5	496.3
GRADUATE PROGRAMME	7	7	6	5	5	4	4	4

Questions - Written Answers

DIRECTOR- ATE	JAN FTE	FEB FTE	MAR FTE	APR FTE	MAY FTE	JUN FTE	JUL FTE	AUG FTE
GRAND TOTAL	1600.5	1605.5	1604.4	1597.7	1618.3	1628.1	1660.7	1682.4

2017 September - December (A pillar restructuring took place in Sept. 2017)

DIRECTORATE	SEPT FTE	OCT FTE	NOV FTE	DEC FTE
CORPORATE AFFAIRS	140.4	141.6	140.8	140.8
ECONOMICS	85.1	86.1	88.1	89.1
FINANCIAL OPERA- TIONS	84.2	86.2	87.2	86.2
FINANCIAL STABILITY	65.3	70.3	72.3	74.3
SEM	8	8	7	6
CENTRAL BANKING TOTAL	383	392.2	395.4	396.4
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER	121.9	120.9	121.9	125.4
DIRECT REPORTS	103	102	101	100
CURRENCY & FACILI- TIES MANAGEMENT	209.5	206.5	207	207
HUMAN RESOURCES	57.9	59.5	60.5	59.6
SEM	4	4	4	4
OPERATIONS TOTAL	496.3	492.9	494.4	496
ASSET MANAGEMENT SUPERVISION	85.5	83.7	86.7	83.7
CREDIT INSTITU- TIONS SUPERVISION	206.8	206.2	209	211
INSURANCE SUPERVI- SION	135.1	137.1	138.8	138.8
SEM	3	3	3	3
PRUDENTIAL REGU- LATION TOTAL	430.4	430	437.5	436.5
CONSUMER PROTEC- TION	107.9	104.9	104.9	104.9
ENFORCEMENT	123.8	122.8	125.8	124.8
POLICY & RISK	70.8	74.8	76.6	79.6
SECURITIES AND MAR- KETS SUPERVISION	86.2	87.2	89.2	89.2
SEM	4	3	5	4
FINANCIAL CONDUCT TOTAL	392.7	392.7	401.5	402.5
GRADUATE PRO- GRAMME	10	7	7	7
GRAND TOTAL	1712.4	1714.8	1735.8	1738.4

11 July 2019

Question No. 170 answered with Question No. 166.

Question No. 171 answered with Question No. 167.

Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman Data

172. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number employed by the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman each month since the start of 2016 by functional area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30799/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Firstly, I must point out that the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman (FSPO) is independent in the performance of his statutory functions. I have no role in the day to day workings of the office or in the decisions which he takes.

The Office of the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman (FSPO) was established on 01 January 2018 to resolve complaints from consumers, including small businesses and other organisations, against financial service or pension providers. The establishment of the FSPO resulted from the merger of the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman and the Financial Services Ombudsman's Bureau.

I understand that the Office of the FSPO was in contact with the Deputy and this answer reflects their agreement on the format of the response.

The following table outlines the number of staff employed by the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman at the end of its first year in operation, i.e. 31 December 2018:

Number of Staff by Grade	Staff in position 31.12.2018
Ombudsman	1
Deputy Ombudsman	1
Principal Officer	4
Assistant Principal	5
Higher Executive Officer	12
Executive Officer	23
Clerical Officer	3.2
Total	49.2

A Workforce Plan for the period 2019 to 2023 was submitted to the Department of Finance in December 2018, which included an objective analysis of the level of resources currently available to the FSPO against both current and future demand for its services. The Workforce Plan aims to address the large existing caseload which the Office inherited on 01 January 2018, along with the sustained pattern of increased demand which the office continues to experience.

Following a review of this work force plan, I approved the recruitment of a further 35 staff at the following levels:

5 Assistant Principal

11 Higher Executive Officer

15 Executive Officer

4 Clerical Officer

The following table outlines the number of staff employed by the Financial Services and Pensions at the end of its Q2 2019, i.e. 30 June 2019, compared to the approved staff number:

Number of Staff by Grade	Approved Staffing 2019	Staff in position at 30.06.2019
Ombudsman	1	1
Deputy Ombudsman	1	0
Principal Officer	4	4
Assistant Principal	10	5
Higher Executive Officer	22	18
Executive Officer	42	24
Clerical Officer	10.2	9.6
Total	90.2	61.6

NAMA Operations

173. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the projected surplus from the National Asset Management Agency; the return on investment this will represent; if the surplus will be received into the Exchequer when NAMA is wound up; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30800/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As part of its Annual Report for 2018, NAMA recently revised its projected surplus to be returned to the State to €4 billion subject to market conditions prevailing. The realisation of this surplus also depends on the success of NAMA's ongoing deleveraging and completion of its Dublin Docklands SDZ and residential funding programmes.

Based on the end 2018 projected surplus NAMA has estimated a entity return on investment (EROI) of 37%. The EROI benchmark is calculated based on the comparison of NAMA's projected terminal surplus position with NAMA's initial investment, as adjusted to exclude the €5.6 billion in State Aid which NAMA was required to pay to the participating institutions as part of the loan acquisition price. NAMA's EROI target benchmark, as approved by its Board in 2014, is 20%.

It is important to note that this surplus has yet to fully crystallise and that the transfer of surplus funds to the Central Fund can only begin after NAMA's remaining subordinated debt and equity obligations have been repaid in full, which is expected to be in 2020.

It is currently envisaged that the available surplus will be transferred to the Exchequer in 2020 and 2021. It is estimated that €2 billion will be transferred in 2020 with a further €2 billion being transferred in 2021. This timeline is contingent on NAMA's projected surplus of €4 billion remaining unchanged.

Any NAMA surplus paid, while Exchequer positive, will not impact the general government balance, in line with Eurostat rules. It will be a decision for the Government as to how any surplus returned by NAMA will be utilised within the framework of the fiscal rules at that time. The intention has always been to use such receipts from the resolution of the financial sector crisis to pay down our national debt and reduce our debt servicing costs.

Tax Credits

174. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the annual cost of the research and development tax credit for the past five years; the number of companies that availed of the scheme in each of the years by multinational companies and SME companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30801/19]

175. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the annual cost of the Knowledge Development Box in each year since its creation; the number of companies that availed of the scheme in each of the years by multinational companies and SME companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30802/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 174 and 175 together.

I note that the Deputy previously received a response to these two questions in Parliamentary Questions 54 and 55 of 30 May 2019. No further data has become available in respect of these reliefs since 30 May.

I am advised by Revenue that the annual cost of the Research and Development (R&D) tax credit and the number of companies that availed of it for years up to 2017, the most recent year for which data is available, is published on the Revenue website at the following link:

<https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/r-and-d-tax-credits.aspx>.

The available information in respect of multinational and SME companies is split between companies administered by Revenue's Large Corporates Division (LCD) and non-LCD companies. Most of the companies administered by LCD are multinational companies. Also shown is the distribution of the R&D claims by the number of employees of the claimant companies.

A review of the research and development tax credit is being undertaken by my Department in 2019. This review will examine the interaction of SMEs with the credit as part of its scope.

In relation to the Knowledge Development Box (KDB), the number of claimants and cost are published in Revenue's recent paper on 2018 Corporation Tax payments and 2017 tax returns, which is available on the Revenue website at link <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/research/ct-analysis-2019.pdf> (Table 13 shows the KDB claims). Due to the small numbers of taxpayers claiming KDB, Revenue cannot comment further on the size of the claimant companies.

The Deputy may be aware that a claimant company has a period of up to 24 months to make a claim for KDB relief. It is anticipated that companies will make use of the 24 month time frame available, therefore more claims in respect of the year ended 31 December 2017 may be made by September 2019.

Tax Reliefs Costs

176. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the annual cost of the entrepreneurial relief for each year since its establishment, including 2018; the number of companies that availed of the scheme in each of the years by multinational companies and SME companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30803/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): It is assumed the Deputy is referring to Capital Gains Tax (CGT) Entrepreneurial Relief as provided for in section 597AA of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997. This provision was introduced in the Finance Act 2015 and provides relief from Capital Gains Tax for individuals disposing of business investments in certain circumstances.

Statistics on the numbers availing of the Relief, and the cost to the Exchequer, are available at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/entrepreneur-relief-statistics.aspx>. The most recent year for which data are presently available is 2017.

For the Deputy's convenience, the information available is presented in the following table.

Year	Cost € million	Number Availed
2016	20.4	406
2017	81.8	875

Information is not available in respect of multinational and SME companies as the relief applies to individuals only.

Tax Reliefs Costs

177. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the annual cost of the special assignee relief programme for the past five years including 2018; the number of companies that availed of the scheme in each of the years by multinational companies and SME companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30804/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The following table sets out the Exchequer cost of the Special Assignee Relief Programme (SARP) for each of the years 2012 to 2016.

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
€0.1 million	€1.9 million	€5.9 million	€9.5 million	€18.1 million

Currently, 2016 is the most recent year for which data are available.

For individuals to qualify for SARP, they must be employees of a multinational company so that the question of data in respect of SME companies does not arise.

I am informed by Revenue that further statistics on the SARP for 2012 to 2016 can be found at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/research/sarp-report-2016.pdf>.

Tax Deduction Systems

178. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the annual cost of the foreign earnings deduction for the past five years including 2018; the number of companies that availed of the scheme in each of the years by multinational companies and SME companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30805/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the annual costs of the Foreign Earnings Deduction (FED) for 2012 to 2016, the latest year for which figures are currently available, are as follows:

2016 €m	2015 €m	2014 €m	2013 €m	2012 €m
3.5	3.2	1.1	1	0.8

<https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/costs-expenditures.aspx>.

Revenue further advise me that FED is an allowance applied for by employees through their own tax returns and is not returned at a company level, therefore it is not possible to provide the data on the number of companies associated with employees availing of the scheme broken down by multinational and SMEs.

Revenue Commissioners

179. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the take up of the key employee engagement programme in each month since its establishment; the number of companies that availed of the scheme in each of the years by multinational companies and SME companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30806/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that 10 companies granted share options under the Key Employee Engagement Programme (KEEP) to 87 key employees during 2018 (the first year of the scheme). Generally, a key employee must hold the option for 12 months prior to exercise, and, therefore, 2019 will be the earliest date that individuals exercise their options to acquire shares in qualifying companies. Returns for 2019 will not be filed with Revenue until 2020.

The Programme is available only to SMEs, and is intended to help them attract and retain talent, so that the question of data in respect of multinational companies under same does not arise.

Employment Investment Incentive Scheme

180. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the annual cost of the employment and investment incentive scheme for each year since it started including 2018; the number of companies that availed of the scheme in each of the years by multinational companies and SME companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30807/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that a report on the Employment and Investment Incentive (EII) can be found at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/statistics/tax-expenditures/eii-stats.pdf>. The report contains statistics on the number of companies availing of the scheme and the cost to the Exchequer up to 2017, the latest year for which data are currently available.

The following table sets out the Exchequer costs and the companies availing of the incentive:

Year	1st Tranche Exchequer Cost €m	2nd Tranche Exchequer Cost €m	No. of Companies
2017	18.6	N/A	87

Year	1st Tranche Exchequer Cost €m	2nd Tranche Exchequer Cost €m	No. of Companies
2016	31	N/A	203
2015	28	N/A	270
2014	23.3	2	297
2013	17.3	2.9	248
2011/2012	15.7	3.2	255

The EII scheme applies to unquoted micro, small and medium sized trading companies only. Therefore, the question of data in respect of multinational companies under the scheme does not arise.

Startup Funding

181. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the annual cost of the start-up refunds for entrepreneurs for the past five years including 2018; the number of companies that availed of the scheme in each of the years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30808/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the latest information on the cost and number of individuals availing of the Start Up Refunds for Entrepreneurs (SURE) scheme can be found at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/costs-expenditures.aspx>. The most recent year for which data are currently available is 2016, it is expected that 2017 will be available in the coming weeks at the same link.

The following table sets out the Exchequer cost and number of claimants for each year between 2012 and 2016:

2016 €m	2016 Claims	2015 €m	2015 Claims	2014 €m	2014 Claims	2013 €m	2013 Claims	2012 €m	2012 Claims
1.9	80	1.8	86	1.8	59	1.3	60	1.6	88

Tax Appeals Commission

182. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of tax appeals before the Tax Appeals Commission; the value of tax these disputes amount to; the appeals by ranges (details supplied) respectively, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30809/19]

183. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the age and value of tax appeals before the Tax Appeals Commission by ranges (details supplied) respectively, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30810/19]

184. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of new appeals brought before the Tax Appeals Commission in each month since January 2016; the number of cases concluded in the same periods; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30811/19]

185. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of appeals before the Tax Appeals Commission concluded since January 2016 that have been settled; the

value of the settled; the number withdrawn; the value these amounted to; the number of cases heard; the value these appeals amounted to; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30812/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 182 to 185, inclusive, together.

The Tax Appeals Commission (“TAC”) was established on 21st March 2016 and new procedures for making, processing, adjudicating and determining appeals came into effect. Before this date taxpayers appealed directly to Revenue who then transferred cases to the Appeal Commissioners if and when they proceeded to appeal. Since that date, taxpayers send their appeals directly to the TAC which then notifies Revenue of the appeals.

In response to Questions 30809/19 and 30810/19 the following two tables provide an outline of the number of appeals on hand before the TAC as at 30 June, 2019:

Summary of number of appeals on hand as at 30 June, 2019 (by value and category/year received*) and

Summary of quantum of appeals on hand as at 30 June, 2019 (by value and category/year received*)

[Appeals-on-hand]

In response to Question 30811/19, the following table provides an outline of the number of appeals received and concluded in each month since the establishment of the Tax Appeals Commission on 21 March 2016:

[Appeals rec and concluded monthly]

Carbon Budget

186. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance when the distributional impacts on an increase in carbon tax will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30836/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and the Department of Finance operate a joint research programme on various macroeconomic and taxation issues in Ireland. Under this programme, the ESRI produced research on the carbon tax in 2018, including on the distributional impacts of a once-off increase in the tax. The research found that households at all income levels will face similar percentage increases in consumer prices in the event of such an increase, but with the impact felt differing on the basis of the carbon intensity of the goods they consume and the ease with which households can switch their consumption. In the case of a €5 increase in carbon tax, the research found that costs would increase by €0.45 per week for the poorest households and by €2.30 a week for the richest, reflecting the different consumption patterns experienced by these households. However, in terms of shares of income, the impacts on poorer households was found to be more than double that on richer households. For a €5 increase, the poorest households will have to spend 0.16% more of their income to continue the same level of consumption (of all commodities), whereas the richest will have to spend 0.07% more.

The model used in this research was limited to performing a static analysis and could not capture the impact of producers and consumers altering their behaviour in reaction to increases in the carbon tax. The next phase of this joint research work underway utilises a the more dynamic Ireland Environment-Energy-Economy (I3E) model which can examine phased increases in tax rates over time. As part of this work, the Department has also commissioned the ESRI to undertake an extension of the model to distinguish impacts by household income level and location. This research is currently in progress and is expected to be completed in advance of the budget so as to inform budgetary decisions on the carbon tax.

Departmental Data

187. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Finance the different income streams directly paid by persons to his Department or agencies under his remit, such as motor tax; the number of persons making annual payments; the value of same; the number of payments made through staged or increment payments; the value of same; the additional income generated as a result of payments being made on an incremental basis; if incremental payments are not available, the reason for same; the corresponding figures for 1999 and 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30854/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I wish to inform the Deputy that there are no income streams paid by persons directly to my Department.

One of the seventeen bodies under the remit of my Department, the Office of the Revenue Commissioners, has such an income stream in the form of the Local Property Tax (LPT).

In 2018, approximately 735,000 property owners (53% of LPT property owners) made payments on an annual basis with an approximate value of €240m and approximately 660,000 property owners (47% of LPT property owners) made payments on a phased basis with an approximate value of €250m.

Local Property Tax was introduced with effect from 1 July 2013. It is payable in respect of all residential properties, subject to certain exemptions. It is administered by Revenue in accordance with the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012, as amended. Liability for LPT arises where a person owns a residential property on the liability date which is 1 May 2013 for the year 2013 and 1 November in the preceding year for subsequent years. For example, the liability date for 2019 is 1 November 2018.

Revenue provides a wide range of phased and single payment options for LPT. The phased payment options include monthly direct debit through a financial institution, payment via deduction at source (DaS) from salary or pension and via approved payment service providers (An Post, Omnivend, Payzone). The single payment options include debit card, credit card, Annual Debit Instruction (ADI) and cheque.

There are no additions to the amount of LPT due regardless of which payment option a property owner chooses. Therefore, Revenue does not generate any additional income as a result.

Also, while Revenue does not apply any service fees, the financial institutions and approved payment service providers are commercial entities and do charge transaction fees.

Project Ireland 2040

188. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance the capital projects which

have been delayed under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; when these projects will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30883/19]

189. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance the capital projects which have commenced under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30919/19]

192. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance if expenditure estimates for capital projects under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies match projected cost requirements in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30965/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 188, 189 and 192 together.

I wish to inform the Deputy that neither my Department nor the 17 bodies under the aegis of my Department currently have any capital projects or expenditures under Project Ireland 2040.

However, one of the bodies under the aegis of my Department, the National Treasury Management Agency, through the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA), is currently advising on a number of projects under Project Ireland 2040 and it should be noted that the NDFA is not the sponsoring or sanctioning authority for these projects.

Tax Data

190. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons who requested a P21 balancing statement from the Revenue Commissioners; the refunds issued to, and additional tax collected from, persons, respectively, as a result in each of the years 2010 to 2018, in tabular and aggregate form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30928/19]

191. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the Revenue Commissioners will automatically issue the refund due to a person in a situation in which a person would be entitled to a refund of tax overpaid in a calendar year but does not request a P21 balancing statement or put in a claim for an income tax refund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30929/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 190 and 191 together.

Regarding Question 30928-19, the following Table sets out the number of End of Year Statements (P21) that issued to PAYE taxpayers for the years 2010 to 2018.

Tax Year	Total Issued	Value of Underpayments €	Value of Overpayments €
2010	1,073,269	112,362,206	431,694,623
2011	1,061,964	109,910,663	394,277,683
2012	1,072,789	94,338,124	414,924,792
2013	1,195,805	94,997,953	452,814,621
2014	1,249,281	93,096,365	435,823,238
2015	1,268,908	95,532,756	442,929,189
2016	1,157,251	144,908,919	455,118,798

Tax Year	Total Issued	Value of Underpay-ments €	Value of Overpay-ments €
2017	1,022,044	86,638,895	445,213,087
2018	684,617	97,242,451	354,661,317

It is important to note that the ‘value of overpayments’ amounts in the Table include various tax reliefs such as health expenses and tax relief on nursing home fees. For example, in 2016, the most recent year for which complete data are currently available, 454,700 taxpayers received tax relief on health expenses at a cost to the Exchequer of €131 million and 6,800 taxpayers received tax relief on nursing home fees, at a cost of €33 million.

Regarding Question 30929-19, I am advised by Revenue that prior to the commencement of PAYE Modernisation on 1 January 2019 (2019 tax year onwards) the practice was that an End of Year Statement (P21) only issued on request from a taxpayer or where a taxpayer completed a Form 12 tax return. The approach ensured the taxpayer record was fully up to date prior to the P21 Statement being generated and avoided the possibility of an overpayment or underpayment being incorrectly reflected.

The commencement of PAYE Modernisation means that Revenue is now receiving real-time pay and statutory deductions information from employers/pension providers for their employees/pension recipients on or before each pay date. The availability of such real-time data will allow Revenue to automatically provide preliminary End of Year Statements to all employees/pension recipients each year, for example, the End of Year Statements in respect of 2019 will be available in early 2020.

The End of Year Statement will include the pay, tax and Universal Social Charge (USC) information for each employment/pension, as reported by the employer/pension provider, and will indicate if an over-deduction or under-deduction of tax and USC has occurred. The availability of the End of Year Statement will encourage taxpayers to claim any additional tax credits or reliefs, such as health expenses, or to declare any additional incomes, which can be done by completing a pre-populated Form 12 tax return. Once a taxpayer confirms that the End of Year Statement is correct, a P21 Statement will issue and any overpayments will be automatically refunded.

Revenue’s innovative use of real-time information to streamline and simplify the PAYE process ensures that taxpayer records are fully up to-date and all employments, pensions, incomes, credits and entitlements accounted for before a final review is conducted and a P21 issued. It is hoped this simplified facility will encourage taxpayers to claim their entitlements and ensure as far as possible, that they pay the right amount of tax at the right time.

Finally, I commend Revenue for the very significant improvements it has made to the PAYE system and the efforts it has made to simplify the tax system for citizens.

Question No. 192 answered with Question No. 188.

Central Bank of Ireland Investigations

193. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the enforcement investigations being undertaken by the Central Bank in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30975/19]

11 July 2019

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by the Central Bank that it does not publish details of ongoing enforcement investigations.

However, as part of the Tracker Mortgage Examination (<https://www.centralbank.ie/consumer-hub/tracker-mortgage-examination>), the Bank confirmed that in parallel with its supervisory work, enforcement proceedings commenced against six lenders: permanent tsb plc; Ulster Bank Ireland DAC; Bank of Ireland Group (The Governor and Company of Bank of Ireland and the Bank of Ireland Mortgage Bank trading as Bank of Ireland Mortgages); KBC Bank Ireland plc; Allied Irish Banks, plc; and EBS DAC.

On 30 May 2019, the Central Bank fined permanent tsb plc €21,000,000 in respect of serious failings to 2,007 tracker mortgage customer accounts. This marked the completion of the first in a series of ongoing industry investigations arising from the the Tracker Mortgage Examination.

In addition, the Central Bank publishes all settlement agreements under the Administration Sanctions Procedures on its website, these details are available at the following link:

<https://www.centralbank.ie/news-media/legal-notice/settlement-agreements>

Financial Services Sector

194. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of financial services firms by category, such as insurance, credit card, mortgage providers and SME lenders selling business in the market here to end consumers, who are prudentially regulated in the UK and rely on the freedom of movement of services across the EU to sell here; the relevant quantum of financial activity involved for each category using the latest estimates; if there are risks for consumers here in the event of a hard Brexit in this context; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30976/19]

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

Tax Code

195. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding the review of betting duty; when he expects it to be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30977/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As I have stated in response to previous questions on the subject, my officials will set out analysis and options in relation to betting duty at the Tax Strategy Group (TSG) meeting in July. The TSG Papers will be published on the Department's website shortly afterwards.

Question No. 196 answered with Question No. 159.

Tax Reliefs Data

197. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons claiming tax relief on third level tuition fees; the cost of the relief in each complete tax year

since 2015 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31011/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the latest information on the number of taxpayer units benefiting from relief in respect of qualifying third level education fees, as well as the estimated total cost to the Exchequer can be found at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/costs-expenditures.aspx>. The most recent year for which data are presently available is 2016, it is expected that 2017 will be available in the coming weeks at the same link.

The (rounded) Exchequer costs and the numbers of claimants are set out in the following table.

	Cost €m	Claimants
2016	13.9	26,000
2015	12.9	23,900

Tax Collection

198. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Finance if a person (details supplied) in County Cork is being taxed correctly. [31027/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that it recently carried out a comprehensive review of the person’s tax situation and calculated that they overpaid their liabilities in 2019 (year to date) and in 2016, 2017 and 2018. The over payments occurred due to the incorrect allocation of tax credit entitlements.

Revenue has amended the person’s tax records for 2019 to reflect their correct entitlements and refunds for this year will issue via their employer. Revenue has also issued balancing statements in respect of the previous years and any refunds will issue directly in the coming days.

Question No. 199 answered with Question No. 159.

Capital Expenditure Programme

200. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance the number of capital projects being undertaken by his Department; the final agreed tender price; the estimated cost of each capital project in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31075/19]

201. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance the capital projects completed since 2010; the final agreed tender price for each project; the actual cost of each project; if the actual cost exceeded the tender price; the reason therefor in each case in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31091/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 200 and 201 together.

My Department’s capital allocation provides for the routine acquisition of IT equipment and systems and certain premises expenses relating to the buildings it occupies. Aside from these types of expenditure, my Department does not have any long or medium term capital projects.

The Department in recent years has engaged the Office of Public Works (OPW) to carry out a number of capital projects on the premises it occupies. The OPW would have had to engage outside contractors to carry out the associated works. The Department of Finance paid certain

costs related to these works during the period in question which is contained in the following table.

Year	Amount Spent on Capital Works €
2015	848,509
2016	1,666,399
2017	98,093
2018	761,951
2019 YTD	28,474

Brexit Preparations

202. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a recommendation in a report (details supplied). [31126/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As part of the contingency measures taken by the Government for a ‘no deal’ Brexit, I announced the introduction of a system of postponed accounting for VAT purposes to alleviate the cash flow burden on business. The Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2019 Act provides for the introduction of postponed accounting for VAT registered traders importing goods from non-EU countries, which will be implemented if the UK leaves the EU without a withdrawal agreement. The Act has been enacted and remains subject to commencement, until it is clear that the UK are exiting without an agreement.

Under the system of postponed accounting, importers will not pay import VAT at the point of entry, instead, importers will account for import VAT through their bi-monthly VAT return. The VAT will therefore be reclaimed at the same time as it is declared in the VAT return.

In a ‘no deal’ scenario, postponed accounting will be introduced for all traders for a limited period to alleviate immediate cash flow issues. Following an initial period, at a time to be decided by the Minister for Finance, continued use of the postponed accounting system will depend on fulfilling criteria which will be set by the Revenue Commissioners. The system of postponed accounting will not be mandatory and those traders who wish to pay VAT at point of entry, may continue to do so.

In the event of a no deal exit, exports to the UK will continue to be zero rated.

Credit Unions

203. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance his policy on the financial industry funding levy and its impact on the credit union movement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31148/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware, credit unions are regulated and supervised by the Registrar of Credit Unions at the Central Bank who is the independent regulator for credit unions. Within his independent regulatory discretion, the Registrar acts to support the prudential soundness of individual credit unions, to maintain sector stability, and to protect the savings of credit union members.

Since 2004 the amount of the Industry Funding Levy payable by each credit union has been capped at a rate of 0.01% of total assets.

Consultation Paper 95 ‘Joint Public Consultation Paper - Department of Finance and the Central Bank of Ireland - Funding the Cost of Financial Regulation’ (CP95) was published in 2015 and set out proposals to move from partial industry funding of financial regulation towards full industry funding, noting the proposal set out in an earlier consultation conducted by the Central Bank (CP61 ‘Consultation on Impact Based Levies and Other Levy Related Matters’) to move credit unions to fund 50% of the cost of regulating the credit union sector.

The Central Bank indicated, in its Funding Strategy and 2018 Guide to the Industry Funding Levy, that it intended to seek my approval to increase the proportion of financial regulation costs to be recovered from credit unions on a phased basis setting out an initial target of 50% to be reached by 2021.

In response to the Central Bank’s request I recommended that credit union contributions should not increase beyond the 50% target until:

1. The levy trajectory has reached the planned 50% rate, at which time the impact on the viability of the sector will be better understood; and

2. A public consultation regarding increasing the levy rate for credit unions beyond 50% is undertaken, which would include a regulatory impact assessment of such a change on the sector.

In contrast to this, recovery rates in 2018 for all other industry categories ranged from 65% to 100%, and the Central Bank intends to increase all to 100% funding over the next number of years.

The Deputy might also wish to note that the Department of Finance, in collaboration with the Central Bank, has prepared a public consultation paper on potential changes to the Credit Institutions Resolution Fund Levy, which is expected to reduce materially from 2020. This consultation, which has been published on the Department of Finance website, is open to all persons and I would strongly encourage all stakeholders to submit feedback.

It is also important to note that as Minister for Finance I have reduced the Stabilisation Scheme Levy materially and that since 2017 no further levies have been charged by the Credit Union Restructuring Board (ReBo).

National Debt

204. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance the size of the national debt; and the amounts of interest paid on the debt for each year from 1994 to 2018 and to date 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31149/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, there are two measures of public debt – National Debt and General Government Debt. The National Treasury Management Agency has supplied me with the figures in the following table, which focuses on the former, showing National Debt in both gross and net terms from 1994 to date in 2019.

The table also shows the Exchequer cash and other assets which are deducted from the gross measure to calculate National (net) Debt. It also shows National Debt interest.

Year	Gross National Debt €bn	Exchequer Cash & Assets €bn	National Debt €bn	National Debt Interest €bn
2019 (at end-Jun)	215.6	27.6	188.0	3.7 (Jan – Jun)
2018	205.3	17.6	187.7	5.8
2017	198.7	13.2	185.5	6.1
2016	196.7	11.1	185.6	6.7
2015	196.6	13.6	183.1	7.0
2014	197.1	14.8	182.3	7.5
2013	197.5	23.6	173.9	7.3
2012	161.5	23.9	137.6	5.7
2011	136.8	17.7	119.1	4.5
2010	109.6	16.2	93.4	3.5
2009	97.0	21.8	75.2	2.5
2008	72.5	22.1	50.4	1.5
2007	42.0	4.5	37.6	1.6
2006	39.5	3.6	35.9	1.9
2005	40.4	2.2	38.2	1.7
2004	39.9	2.1	37.8	1.7
2003	39.3	1.7	37.6	1.8
2002	38.1	1.8	36.4	1.7
2001	38.5	2.4	36.2	1.9
2000	39.0	2.5	36.5	2.1
1999	42.0	2.2	39.8	2.4
1998	39.4	1.9	37.5	2.7
1997	40.2	1.2	39.0	3.1
1996	39.0	1.0	38.0	2.8
1995	39.6	1.3	38.4	2.7
1994	38.2	1.1	37.1	2.7

Rounding may affect totals.

Tax Code

205. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will report on proposals from the EU for an aviation fuel tax; the way in which this will impact on Irish rates and levels of excise duty; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31150/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am not aware of any current EU proposals for an aviation fuel tax. As the Deputy will be aware the European Commission has the legislative right of initiative and in the normal course will be assessing where new legislation is in its view required and what form that legislation should take.

I am aware that there is an increasing focus on aviation taxation, led by Member States like the Netherlands, and that the European Commission may include legislative proposals on aviation taxes in the future. I recognise the environmental and fiscal merits of the case being made for the application of aviation taxes and Ireland will engage constructively in any future negotiations on this issue.

Tobacco Smuggling

206. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons prosecuted for cigarette and-or tobacco smuggling in 2018 and to date in 2019; the additional resources and equipment being provided to the Revenue Commissioners to tackle the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31166/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the number of persons prosecuted for cigarette and tobacco smuggling in 2018 and to date in 2019 is set out in the following table. The number of persons prosecuted for illegal selling of unstamped cigarette and tobacco products is also included.

2018 - 2019 (YTD end June)

	Indictable	Summary	Indictable	Summary
Smuggling	3	16	1	4
Selling unstamped products	3	56	0	31
Total	6	72	1	35

Revenue currently has 20 Detector Dog teams trained to detect tobacco, drugs and cash. One of the dogs is trained in food detection and operates on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Revenue also has three mobile x-ray scanners, a ‘backscatter van’ scanner, and a specialist vehicle that contains both x-ray and radiation detection technology. All the scanners are mobile and can be deployed to smuggling detection operations at both frontier and non-frontier locations. The ‘backscatter van’ scanner is Revenue’s most recent acquisition, which was delivered in December 2018. In addition, Revenue deploys baggage and parcel scanners at ports, airports, mail-centres and other locations throughout the State as required.

Revenue has confirmed to me that it continually reviews its overall detection capability having regard to evolving risk, developments in technology and the obsolescence of existing equipment.

Excise Duties

207. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated amount of excise duty that would apply on a pint of cider priced at €5.30, a pint of stout priced at €4.75 and a standard measure of spirits priced at €4.10; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31167/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The rates of excise (Alcohol Products Tax) for the various types of alcoholic beverages are provided for in Schedule 2 to the Finance Act 2003, as amended. In each case, the applicable excise duty must conform with EU Directive 92/83/EEC on the harmonization of the structures of excise duties on alcohol and alcoholic beverages.

The excise rate on cider exceeding 2.8% but not exceeding 6.0% alcohol by volume (ABV) is currently €94.46 per hectolitre of finished product, which equates to €0.54 per pint at 4.5% ABV. The excise on a pint of stout or other beer is currently €22.55 per hectolitre per cent of alcohol in the beer, which equates to €0.60 per pint of stout at 4.7% ABV.

Excise is calculated on spirits based on the amount of alcohol present in the product. The excise rate on spirits is currently €42.57 per litre of alcohol in the spirits. A standard measure of spirits is 35.5 millilitres and has an ABV of 40%, which equates to a rate of excise of €0.60

per measure.

The price charged at retail level for alcoholic beverages does not determine the amount of excise due.

Tax Code

208. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to impose a tax of 23% on certain food supplements; if the introduction of VAT on such products will be delayed pending a planned review by the Tax Strategy Group. [31245/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): 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 outlining 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 a report was submitted to the Tax Strategy Group on 9th July. The TSG papers are due to be published on my Department's website by the end of July.

Insurance Costs

209. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to implement further recommendations of the cost of insurance working group in view of the ongoing widespread concerns regarding escalating insurance costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[31258/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): At the outset, the Deputy should note that I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I, nor the Central Bank of Ireland, can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature, and are determined by insurance companies based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept. This position is reinforced by the EU framework for insurance which expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products. Consequently, I am not in a position to direct insurance companies as to the price or the level of cover to be provided either to consumers or businesses.

However, I acknowledge the general problems faced by many consumers, businesses, and community and voluntary groups, in relation to the cost and availability of insurance. I also appreciate that there is some frustration about the perceived pace of reform. Unfortunately, there is no single policy or legislative “silver bullet” to immediately stem or reverse premium price rises. This is because there are many constraints faced by the Government in trying to address this issue in particular the fact that for constitutional reasons, it cannot direct the courts as to the award levels that should be applied and for legal reasons it cannot direct insurance companies as to the pricing level which they should apply in respect of businesses seeking insurance.

I wish to reemphasise how important this issue is for the Government. As the Deputy is aware, the Cost of Insurance Working Group (CIWG) was established in July 2016 and undertook an examination of the factors contributing to the increasing cost of insurance in order to identify what short, medium and long-term measures could be introduced to help reduce the cost of insurance for consumers and businesses. The Deputy will recall that the CIWG has produced two reports since its inception and has been working to implement the 33 recommendations of the Cost of Motor Insurance Report published in 2017, as well as the 15 Recommendations of the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance Report, published in 2018. To that end, the key achievements to date from the two reports, including the following:

- the passing of the Judicial Council Bill by the Oireachtas on 9 July in order to implement the recommendations of the Personal Injuries Commission regarding award levels in this country, including a judicial recalibration of the existing Book of Quantum guidelines;

- the commencement by the Law Reform Commission (LRC) of its work to undertake a detailed analysis of the possibility of developing constitutionally sound legislation to delimit or cap the amounts of damages which a court may award in respect of some or all categories of personal injuries, as part of its Fifth Programme of Law Reform;

- the establishment of the National Claims Information Database in the Central Bank to increase transparency around the future cost of private motor insurance;

- reforms to the Personal Injuries Assessment Board through the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (Amendment) Act 2019;

- commencement of the amendments to Sections 8 and 14 of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004 to make it easier for businesses and insurers to challenge cases where fraud or exaggeration is suspected;

- the reform of the Insurance Compensation Fund to provide certainty to policyholders and insurers; and,

- various reforms of how fraud is reported to and dealt with by An Garda Síochána, includ-

ing increased co-ordination with the insurance industry, as well as the recent decision by the Garda Commissioner to develop a divisional focus on insurance fraud which will be guided by the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) which will also train Gardaí all over the country on investigating insurance fraud, and the recent success under Operation Coatee, which targets insurance-related criminality.

I believe that these reforms are having a significant impact with regard to private motor insurance (CSO figures from May 2019 show that the price of motor insurance is now 24.5% lower than the July 2016 peak). The Government is determined to continue working to ensure that these positive pricing trends can be extended to other forms of insurance, including those relevant to businesses.

Undoubtedly the single most essential challenge which must be overcome if there is to be a sustainable reduction in insurance costs particularly for small businesses is to bring the levels of personal injury damages awarded in this country more in line with those awarded in other jurisdictions. In this regard, the Personal Injuries Commission has highlighted the significant differential between award levels in Ireland and other jurisdictions, and has made a number of recommendations to address this issue, in particular the establishment of a Judicial Council to compile guidelines for appropriate general damages for various types of personal injury. Minister of State D'Arcy and I have worked closely with the Minister for Justice and Equality, Mr Charlie Flanagan TD to progress the Bill through the Houses of the Oireachtas as a matter of priority. I am therefore pleased that the Bill was passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas on 9 July, and I expect it will be signed into law by the President shortly.

Now that the Bill has been passed, it will be a matter for the Judiciary to put in place the Judicial Council and to establish the Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee. While the Government cannot interfere in their deliberations, I would hope that the Judiciary will recognise the importance of this issue and prioritise it accordingly and will take account of the PIC's benchmarking report.

Finally, I would like to assure the Deputy that the Cost of Insurance Working Group will continue to focus on implementing the remaining recommendations of the Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance in parallel with implementing those from the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance and I expect to publish the Ninth Update Report by the Cost of Insurance Working Group in the coming weeks. I am hopeful that the cumulative effects of the completion of the two Reports' recommendations will include increased stability in the pricing of insurance for businesses and a more competitive insurance market.

Vehicle Registration Data

210. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of the VRT rebate for electric cars in 2018; the estimated cost of extending the VRT rebate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31292/19]

211. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of the VRT rebate for hybrid vehicles in 2018; the estimated cost of extending the VRT rebate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31293/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 210 and 211 together.

I am advised by Revenue that the cost of the Vehicle Registration Tax (VRT) rebate for electric cars in 2018 is estimated at €9.2 million and the first six months of 2019 is estimated

at €10m. If there is no change in the trend of registrations to date this year, the annual cost for extending the VRT rebate for electric cars would be in the region of €20m.

I am advised by Revenue that the cost of the VRT rebate for hybrid vehicles in 2018 is estimated at €18.7 million, and the first six months of 2019 is estimated at €16.4m. If there is no change in the trend of registrations to date this year, the annual cost for extending the VRT rebate for hybrid vehicles would be in the region of €33m.

Departmental Communications

212. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Finance the oversight of his Department of directives, circulars, advice or requirements issued since 2016; if surveys have been carried out of compliance with these communications to date; the surveys carried out; the results of the surveys; the compliance rate; the actions taken by his Department following these results; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31325/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Department monitors compliance with its relevant legislative, regulatory and internal procedural obligations under its Compliance Framework. These obligations are set out in various registers including a Compliance Obligations Register which is managed and monitored by the Department's Compliance Officer.

Compliance obligation deadlines are monitored on a regular basis and issues requiring attention are reported to the Executive Board and/or the Minister for Finance as necessary.

The Department's Registers are an important control measure to help identify accurate and up to date compliance obligations and is used to support the development and documentation of appropriate controls and procedures to ensure ongoing compliance with the Department's obligations.

Climate Change Policy

213. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Finance the recurring weekly meetings attended by either him or the Secretary General of his Department in 2019 at which climate change and-or preparations within his Department to enact a climate plan has been an agenda item; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31341/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Deputies will be aware, in November of 2018 the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment received a mandate from Government to prepare a climate plan which would make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change. Following this, the Government's Climate Action Plan 2019 was published on 17 June, and it outlines an ambitious course of action, setting out how Ireland can reach its 2030 targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and also to put Ireland on the right trajectory towards net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The Plan represents a significant step-up in ambition, and with a strong focus on implementation the Plan contains over 180 actions, assigning clear timelines and steps to support delivery. The Department of Finance has been assigned lead responsibility for a number of actions, primarily in the area of environmental taxation reform, with a number of measures to be examined as part of Budget 2020.

In preparation of the Plan, officials from my Department have participated in the various cross-Government teams established to undertake analysis of areas of substantial mitigation

and adaptation potential, and which have supported the development of the Plan's actions. Additionally, during the Plan's development, progress was considered at two meetings of the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure at which I attended, and at three meetings of the relevant Senior Officials Group which were attended by Department of Finance officials. Furthermore, updates on the Plan's progression have been routinely discussed at the Department's Executive Board and Senior Management Group meetings. As Minister for Finance, I am kept up to date on progress in relation to development of climate initiatives.

European Fund for Strategic Investments

214. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the projects here that have benefitted to date from the European Fund for Strategic Investments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31355/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Since the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI)'s enactment in July 2015, it has been possible for any project promoter, either public or private, to engage with the EIB regarding the possibility of receiving loans or guarantees under EFSI for particular projects.

In this way, EFSI is providing an important additional funding possibility to the State alongside other possibilities such as the EIB's normal lending, the State's borrowings through the NTMA and other mechanisms such as PPPs and off-balance sheet vehicles. It should be remembered that each EFSI loan entered into by the State pre-commits funding for the repayment of such loans, and has to be considered in the context of the expenditure benchmark under the EU's fiscal rules.

In general, Government Departments have existing relationships with the EIB so it has been a matter for each Department concerned to advance the projects in coordination with the Government's Capital Plan as coordinated by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The Department of Finance has no role in assessing projects either public or private which may be the subject of applications for EFSI loans/guarantees.

I can inform the Deputy that there is a publicly available list of projects which have been approved for EFSI support by the EIB in the State (<https://www.eib.org/en/efsi/efsi-projects/index.htm?c=IE&se=>). I have attached a spreadsheet containing lists of signed, approved and pre-approved projects for your convenience.

According to the above mentioned website, there have been 33 transactions covering €1.5bn of approved EFSI financing and €7.1bn expected investment related to EFSI in Ireland since inception. I would ask the Deputy to be aware, however, that the Irish list contains both private and public sector projects, and it also includes cross-border projects between Irish entities and entities in other Member States. On the other hand, the list may not reflect Irish private sector project promoters participating in a project that could receive funding from EFSI loans/guarantees but which is led or based in another EU Member State.

[https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-07-11_pq214-11-07-19_en.xls] EFSI

Questions Nos. 215 and 216 answered with Question No. 159.

Insurance Costs

217. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance if the issue of returning emigrants being charged high car insurance due to the fact they have lost their no claims bonus will be addressed (details supplied); and his views on whether the matter should be addressed urgently. [31365/19]

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

Notwithstanding this, the difficulties faced by returning emigrants in respect of motor insurance was recognised by the Cost of Insurance Working Group's (CIWG) and was the subject of a particular recommendation. In this regard, a protocol was agreed between Insurance Ireland and the Department of Finance in relation to returning emigrants, under which insurance companies committed to accepting the driving experience of such drivers gained while abroad, when the driver has had previous driving experience in Ireland. The details of it is available on Insurance Ireland's website and the websites of its member companies.

The guiding principle of the protocol is to ensure that a returning emigrant is not treated differently to any other driver, subject to verification of their continued driving experience and the normal acceptance criteria of the company. Thus, a returning emigrant will not be disadvantaged from spending that time abroad. Furthermore, under the protocol, insurance companies will not distinguish between countries on the basis of which side of the road driving takes place therein. My Department continues to review the implementation of this recommendation through its regular engagement with Insurance Ireland.

I understand that in general, insurance companies set a date by which a no-claims bonus will expire, where the driver has held no insurance in their own name for two or more years. This applies whether the person continues to reside in Ireland, or they decide to move abroad and it is primarily a commercial matter for insurance companies. Therefore, if the person is abroad for less than two years, then it should not be necessary to continue to pay for a policy while abroad. However, the protocol states that if more than two years have passed since the Irish motor insurance policy was cancelled/lapsed, the Irish No Claims Discount is no longer valid. Notwithstanding this, if the person has been abroad for longer than two years, Insurance Ireland members have agreed through the protocol that if the person has claims-free driving experience in a different country in their own name, they will take this experience into consideration if that person seeks a quotation from an insurer, on their return to Ireland, subject to the appropriate verifiable documentation being provided. If the Deputy is aware of instances where it appears that a person is having problems in this regard, I would suggest that the person contacts Insurance Ireland, who operate a free Insurance Information Service for those who have queries, complaints or difficulties in relation to obtaining insurance. Insurance Ireland can be contacted at feedback@insuranceireland.eu or 01-6761914.

Finally, I believe that the overall implementation of the CIWG's recommendations is having a significant impact with regard to private motor insurance. The latest CSO figures from

May 2019 show that the price of motor insurance is now 24.5% lower than the July 2016 peak, consequently the average consumer should be seeing reductions when renewing their motor insurance. In addition, I would note that representations made to my Department from returning emigrants have dropped significantly in the last year. I am hopeful that this reflects that more are receiving insurance cover in line with the protocol referenced above. The Government is determined to continue working to ensure that these positive pricing trends can be extended to other forms of insurance, including those relevant to businesses.

Insurance Data

218. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether a database (details supplied) should be managed and controlled by the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31430/19]

219. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the State provides information to an organisation (details supplied) for a database; if so, the type of information shared; if there is a data sharing agreement between the State and the organisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31431/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 218 and 219 together.

The database referenced by the Deputy is a claims matching database currently run by Insurance Ireland to assist its members in the detection and defence of potentially fraudulent claims. The Cost of Insurance Working Group (CIWG) examined this database with a view to determining how effective it was from an operational perspective. It concluded that in light of the limitations identified that a fully functioning integrated insurance fraud database should be established and that this would have to be managed by an independent not-for-profit body but funded by the industry. It was considered that such a database would be provided to all insurance companies participating in the Irish market for the purposes of identifying patterns of fraud.

The current position is a working group chaired by the Department of Justice and Equality is currently working on the implementation of this recommendation to develop an insurance fraud database to which all insurers will have access once complete. However, this is a complex project which needs to fully consider data protection implications and therefore it has taken more time to implement than was anticipated when the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance was published.

I agree with the view of the CIWG that a new fully functioning integrated fraud database should be established. In this regard, I believe that the State managing and controlling the existing database would be a sub-optimal solution in dealing with the issue of insurance fraud. I would note that the proposal that this new integrated fraud database be managed by an independent not-for-profit body but funded by industry, would meet the objective of removing industry's control of the database and be more economical as the taxpayer should not have to pay for a service which is ultimately of benefit to insurers. In addition, the nature of the CIWG proposal is that it will most likely make the existing database redundant as it relates to fraud detection.

Finally, it should be noted that as Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation and therefore have no role in the operation of, or the provision of information to the organisation mentioned or this database.

However as the Deputy will note from the attached link a number of the Members of the Self Insured Taskforce who have access to this database are state bodies. Details of the database can be accessed at:

<http://www.insuranceireland.eu/member-services/shared-services> or at: <http://www.inslink.ie/>

Insurance Data

220. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the progress the CSO is making in compiling a price index for public liability and employer liability; his views on whether such an index will be created; when such an index will be up and running; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31436/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Increasing the availability of data in relation to Employer and Public Liability Insurance is a matter which was discussed by the Cost of Insurance Working Group in its Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance (2018). It recommended a number of actions to improve transparency in this area. Amongst these, Recommendation 1 requires the Central Statistics Office (CSO) to consider the feasibility of collecting price information on the cost of insurance to businesses, and if it considers such an index feasible to make appropriate proposals.

The Deputy will be aware that the CSO submitted a draft report to the Department of Finance in December 2018 on the work undertaken on the feasibility study to date. It subsequently provided a final report to the CIWG in January 2019. In this report, the CSO outlined the method that they would recommend for the compilation of a price index for public and employer liability insurance. I understand that this method is currently being piloted by the CSO and that good progress has been made. In this context, the CSO is working closely with a technology partner and has had positive engagement to date from most of the relevant insurance companies. I understand from the CSO that the pilot project will conclude at the end of September.

In that context, I would expect that it will make a report to the CIWG in relation to its recommendation on a path forward. It should be noted however that the CSO is an independent Office and it will ultimately be for them to determine whether or not to proceed with such an index.

Insurance Data

221. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance when the national claims information database will incorporate public liability and employer liability data; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31437/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware, the scope of the National Claims Information Database (NCID) was designed in such a way as to enable it be expanded to include other classes of insurance, e.g. liability, property, etc. in the future. However the Cost of Insurance Working Group (CIWG) considered it important that the first focus of the database should be on the collection of private motor data. It should be noted that this motor exercise is well advanced and the Central Bank is expected to publish its first report later this year.

In parallel with its work on the private motor data exercise, I have been informed that the

Central Bank has been considering the merits and feasibility of collecting data related to general liability insurance (or public and employer liability insurance) from all relevant insurance undertakings operating in the State. This is in line with the Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance recommendation on this matter.

I understand that the Central Bank is currently engaging with external stakeholders, including industry and consumer representative groups, to confirm the key data requirements, and will also research the employer and public liability insurance environment in other jurisdictions, focussing on data availability. The Central Bank intends to produce its feasibility report by the end of 2019, and I understand that this will include recommended data submission requirements.

In conclusion, I am satisfied that progress is being made with regard to this recommendation.

Insurance Costs

222. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance when the key information report on employer and public liability insurance claims will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31438/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Deputy will be aware from previous Cost of Insurance Working Group's (CIWG) update reports that a data template was developed by the data sub-group of the CIWG and this was submitted to Insurance Ireland by Minister of State D'Arcy on 18 May 2018. In it, he requested that the completed data submission be returned by the end of Q3 2018 to allow sufficient time for the production and publication of the Report by the end of Q4 2018.

Since then, my Department has corresponded with Insurance Ireland about receipt of a completed data submission, however Insurance Ireland has informed my Department that it has not been in a position to provide such a submission, due to the volume and complexity of the data to be collected. They also indicated that they had instigated a procurement process for a third party to assist with this exercise and that they were liaising with their members.

I understand that these consultations are continuing with members but that the focus is now on the feasibility of being able to provide the data requested. They expect to provide a substantive update to my Department on feasibility shortly. Accordingly, it is not possible for me to publish this key information report at the moment.

While I recognise that this exercise is complex and that Insurance Ireland has never compiled this level of data with regard to employer and public liability insurance before, and ultimately it is a voluntary exercise, I think that this delay is very unfortunate and demonstrates the importance of the Central Bank of Ireland's consideration of the potential for expanding the scope of the National Claims Information Database to cover employer and public liability insurance.

Insurance Industry Regulation

223. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether insurance companies must ensure defendants are notified of a claim made against them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31439/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department is currently working on developing legislative changes that would oblige insurance companies to inform policyholders of claims made against them. The objective of the proposal is to ensure that policyholders are informed as soon as possible after a claim against their policy is lodged and informed after a claim is settled. In addition, the proposal will seek to require insurers to engage with the policyholder to ensure that the policyholder's views can be taken into consideration.

This proposal originates from Recommendation 8 of the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance. A corresponding recommendation was then included in the Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance (Rec 10) as this issue is generally far more pertinent to businesses and other liability insurance policyholders rather than individual motorists. Thus, the proposal seeks to include within the scope of the changes small businesses which have an annual turnover of €3 million or less.

The Department engaged with Insurance Ireland to seek voluntary agreement of this proposal through a protocol. Unfortunately, no such agreement could be reached on a non-legislative basis.

As a result, it is proposed to include this legislative proposal within the Consumer Insurance Contracts Bill 2017, a Private Members' Bill which is based on a 2015 Law Reform Commission Report. The Government provided support in principle for the objectives of this Bill at Second Stage and noted the intention of the Minister for Finance to submit substantive amendments should the Bill reach Committee Stage. This proposal has been developed as a Committee Stage amendment, which Minister of State D'Arcy will propose at the Select Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach consideration of this Bill on the 11th July.

The reason the legislative changes are not being drafted as a new separate Bill is because I see the Consumer Insurance Contract Bill as an ideal vehicle for addressing insurance consumer related issues, such as this one, from an efficiency and effectiveness perspective. In addition, as all parties have worked very constructively together on important insurance legislation such as the Insurance (Amendment) Act 2018, and the Central Bank (National Claims Information Database) Act 2018 to date, I see no reason why this constructive engagement cannot continue.

Garda Station Refurbishment

224. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of planned works to Mullingar Garda station; and when these works will commence. [31261/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I can confirm that the Office of Public Works plans to commence the following works at Mullingar Garda Station; boiler upgrade works, upgrade and refurbishment works to timber windows, partial internal decorating and the provision of accommodation for a specialist Garda Unit. These works have been tendered, are expected to commence in the coming months and be complete before the year end.

Although not finalised, the Office of Public Works is working with Garda Estate Management and local Garda management on preparing options for addressing further requirements at Mullingar Garda Station.

Public Sector Staff Data

225. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of public servants who retired after the imposition of FEMPI who received a lump sum as part of their pension that was reduced due to the impact of FEMPI; the average amount of the reduction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30484/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Firstly I should clarify that public service lump sums payments were not directly reduced by the Financial Emergency Measure in the Public Interest (FEMPI) legislation. The FEMPI legislation introduced measures that directly reduced pay, and reduced annual pensions of public servants, subject to certain rates, thresholds and exemptions. As both the annual pensions and lump sum payments of members of pre- 2013 public service pension schemes are directly linked to salary at retirement, the reductions to the pay of public servants would have had a knock on impact on the lump sum payment they received at retirement.

However because of what is known as the first grace period, those who retired between 1 January 2010 and 29 February 2012 did not have the first FEMPI pay reduction (imposed 1 January 2010) reflected in the salary rate used to calculate their annual pension or their lump sum. A second round of FEMPI reductions was imposed in 2013 (imposed on 1 July on public servants with an annual remuneration above €65,000). However the second grace period meant that those who retired from that point onwards (assuming their pay was affected by those reductions while still serving) did not have those reductions reflected in the salary rate used to calculate their annual pension or lump sum.

Thus it is only those who retired from 1 March 2012 onwards whose lump sums are potentially, indirectly impacted by FEMPI, and it is only the first FEMPI reduction which could have had an impact. However salaries of all serving staff have been increased, and some restored to pre-FEMPI rates, through pay increase measures contained in FEMPI Act 2015 and The Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017, the first of these measures being applied from 1 January 2016. Thus the lump sums of those retiring since such pay increases were introduced are not affected to the same extent, or if the salary has been fully restored by the time they retired their lump sum is not affected at all. (As of June 2019, pay reductions have been fully reversed for all public servants earning up to €30,000 and this includes approximately 9,500 civil servants).

Due to the fact that there was no explicit measure to reduce lump sum payments contained in the FEMPI legislation, but rather an indirect impact, and to varying degrees, on certain lump sums, the information requested is not readily available and its compilation would involve a disproportionate amount of time and work.

However the following table illustrates an example of the impact on the lump sums of individuals who retired between 1 March 2012 (the date after the expiration of the first grace period) and before the date of the first pay increase, at different salary rates. It illustrates the difference between the lump sum that would have been received had the FEMPI reduction of 1 January 2010 not been reflected in the salary rate used to calculate their lump sum, and the lump sum received when this reduction is reflected in the salary rate used in the calculation.

Salary rate pre FEMPI pay reduction of 1 Jan 2010	Salary rate with FEMPI reduction of 1 Jan 2010 applied	Lump sum payment based on 40 years' service if pre-FEMPI rate used to calculate lump sum	Lump sum payment based on 40 years' service if reduced rate used to calculate lump sum	% difference
€30,000	€28,500	€45,000	€42,750	5%
€70,000	€65,500	€105,000	€98,250	6%
€100,000	€92,500	€150,000	€138,750	8%

Departmental Submissions

226. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the involvement of his Department in the submission to the Public Sector Pay Commission regarding Defence Forces pay and conditions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30515/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The employer submission to the Pay Commission, as was the case in similar submissions, was made on a collaborative basis between the management side parties and included extensive inputs from the Department of Defence and the Military Authorities. It is longstanding practice that the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (and before it the Department of Finance) represents the public service as employer. The Department has the responsibility for co-ordinating, articulating and submitting the employer case in such matters on behalf of Government as employer. This is essential to ensure consistency and coherence in approach and the balancing of important broader public service wide policy and fiscal considerations.

Cyber Security Protocols

227. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if it has had a cybersecurity breach in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30592/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department implements a multi-layered approach to cyber security and to protecting ICT systems, infrastructures, and services. My Department implements a defence-in-depth security strategy which is achieved through the effective combination of People, Processes, and Technology to support the implementation of appropriate security measures and provisions. With the threat landscape constantly evolving, significant effort is expended to continually enhance and strengthen ICT security to mitigate against emerging threats, risks, vulnerabilities and cybersecurity issues. In terms of cyber security strategies, my Department works closely with the National Cyber Security Centre which is a division of the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment and encompasses the State's national/governmental Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT-IE).

My Department has no evidence to indicate any cybersecurity breaches in the past 12 months.

Commencement of Legislation

228. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position on the requirement to prepare a report within three months of the enactment of the Public Service Superannuation (Age of Retirement) Act 2018 in respect of those public servants who were forced to retire between 6 December 2017 and the commencement of the Act due to reaching 65 years of age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30605/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware, 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 between the date of the Government Decision and the enactment of the legislation because, while they would be aware of the Government's decision, they would be unable to avail of it. The interim arrangements permitted these individuals to be re-hired post-retirement for a period of 1 year until they reached the age of eligibility for the State Pension (Contributory). Without those specific arrangements, 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. Their contract terms continue to apply and they cease working when they reach the age of 66, as previously provided for.

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.

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.

Flood Relief Schemes

229. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if there are grants available to assist homeowners to carry out flood defence works to protect their homes from flooding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30642/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): Local flooding issues are a matter for each local authority to investigate and address in the first instance. They may carry out flood alleviation works from their own resources or apply to the Office of Public Works (OPW) for funding under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme. This purpose of this scheme is to provide funding to local authorities to undertake minor flood mitigation works or studies to address localised flooding and coastal protection problems within their administrative areas. This scheme is not a grant scheme for individual homeowners or private property owners. While individual property owners may benefit from the works, the local authority must be the promoter and proposer of the project and will be fully responsible for the implementation of the works and ensuring that all relevant and necessary statutory consents are applied for and received. When funding is approved under the scheme, the progression of any works is the responsibility of the local authority.

Individual Property Protection (IPP) can be effective in mitigating against the adverse consequences for properties at risk of flooding. It can reduce the damage caused to contents, furniture and fittings in a house or business, but it is not applicable in all situations. For example, it may not be suitable in areas of deep or prolonged flooding, or for certain types of properties.

The OPW has undertaken a study of IPP to look at the potential for protecting a proportion of those properties that do not form part of the Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) and will continue to explore possible options for IPP during the course of 2019.

Project Ireland 2040 Administration

230. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide his Department's most recent version of the capital projects tracker (details supplied). [30716/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department has now transitioned its material to Gov.ie. Project Ireland 2040 information is available at gov.ie/2040. The specific link to the Investment Projects and Programmes Tracker is now

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6db7c4-investment-projects-and-programmes-tracker/>

The Investment Projects and Programmes tracker is currently being revised and updated. This updated version will be published in autumn 2019.

Drawing on the material from the tracker, my Department has developed MyProjectIreland, a new citizen-focused interactive map developed in partnership with Ordnance Survey Ireland which allows the user to navigate projects around the country, finding out what is happening in their region. This further enhances public awareness and engagement. MyProjectIreland is available at

<https://geohive.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=752cbec9c0f64c6894fb63f7ebe7c4db>

MyProjectIreland was launched alongside the first annual report for Project Ireland in May 2019. The report provides a synopsis of the strong progress made so far as well a roadmap of what is still to come.

Living Wage

231. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the estimated cost of implementing a living wage €12.30 for all employees directly employed and or in agencies under his remit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30776/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware, the National Minimum Wage is a statutory entitlement and has a legislative basis. The Low Pay Commission annually assesses the appropriate level of the National Minimum Wage. The current national minimum hourly rate of pay, since 1 January 2019, is €9.80 per hour, as set out in the National Minimum Wage Order 2018. The Living Wage has no legislative basis and is therefore not a statutory entitlement.

The suggested wage at €12.30 per hour based on the Civil Service 37 hour standard net working week equates to an annual salary of €23,747. Public servants currently on an annual

salary of less than €23,747 may be receiving remuneration in excess of the suggested living wage through additional premium payments in respect of shift or atypical working hours or are on salary scales that progress to the suggested living wage and above through incremental progression.

It should also be noted that in the context of the Living Wage, pay increases under the Public Services Stability Agreement 2018-2020 include: 1% in October 2018; 1% for those earning under €30,000 in January 2019; 1.75% in September 2019; and 2% in October 2020. Those increases have increased and will continue to increase earnings for all public servants over the term of the Public Service Stability Agreement.

In respect of my own Department, I can confirm that the cost of implementing the Living Wage solely to staff within my core Department would be €74,064.05.

In line with Standing Order 42A, my Department will forward additional material to the Deputy regarding costs in respect of bodies under the aegis of my Department.

Defence Forces Remuneration

232. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the short-term timeline for all actions to be implemented in the implementation plan for the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30831/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): A High Level Plan to implement the Report of the Public Service Pay Commission on recruitment and retention issues in the Permanent Defence Forces has been published by Government. The Plan extracts the recommendations made in the third Report of the Public Service Pay Commission and translates them into discrete actions. Furthermore the Plan categorises the actions, proposes a timeframe for their commencement and identifies the lead actors to implement the action. The timeframe for commencement of actions in Phase One is split into four distinct timelines as follow:

1 Immediate (ie action to commence and be completed within 1 month of approval of the Plan)

2 Short term (ie action to be commence (and in some cases be completed) within 3 months of approval of the Plan)

3 Medium term (ie action to commence (and in some cases be completed) within 3 months of approval of the Plan)

4 Long term (ie action to commence within 6-12 months of the Plan).

Carbon Budget

233. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when the updated public spending code to increase the shadow price of carbon in project appraisal will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30832/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Facing challenging and legally binding greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, it is imperative that the assessment of public investment projects include an appropriate valuation of the cost that soci-

ety will bear in dealing with the increased greenhouse gas emissions a project might give rise to.

Under the National Mitigation Plan, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform committed to “undertake a review of guidance on public expenditure appraisal and evaluation to ensure their suitability to capturing key costs and benefits of climate measures”. In November 2018, my Department published a consultation paper on valuing greenhouse gas emissions in the Public Spending Code, along with a review of the other central technical appraisal parameters used in the Code.

The paper on valuing greenhouse gas emissions concluded that the model currently in use for pricing carbon in the Public Spending Code is outdated. It proposed a new methodology that values future greenhouse gas emissions according to a shadow price of carbon that is based on the estimated marginal cost that will be faced by society in achieving Ireland’s legally binding 2030 greenhouse gas emissions target.

In practical terms, this means a new shadow price of carbon for non-ETS emissions of €32 per tonne in 2020, rising by €6.80 a year to reach €100 per tonne by 2030. Beyond 2030, it is proposed that the shadow price of carbon will continue to rise by 5% a year. This means that the shadow price of carbon rises to €128 for 2035, €163 for 2040, €208 for 2045 and €265 for 2050.

The consultation period has now concluded and my Department has completed its evaluation of the responses received. It is my intention to publish a decision paper detailing my Department’s response to the views received along with a circular revising the Public Spending Code to take account of the revised shadow price of carbon during the course of July. The circular will also update other technical parameters, including a downward revision of the test discount rate from 5% to 4%.

Collectively, these reforms will ensure that the Public Spending Code incorporates a more realistic appreciation of the climate consequences of all Government investment decisions. Once the circular is published the use of the revised values will be mandatory for all appraisals.

Project Ireland 2040 Administration

234. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the review of selection criteria for Project Ireland 2040 funds has commenced to ensure low-carbon investments are prioritised for funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30833/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The selection criteria for the Project Ireland Funds are a matter for the four Departments running the Project Ireland 2040 competitive funds, namely:

- the Minister for Business, Enterprise & Innovation for the Disruptive Technologies Fund,
- the Minister for Communications, Climate Action & the Environment for the Climate Action Fund,
- the Minister for Rural & Community Development for the Rural Regeneration & Development Fund, and
- the Minister for Housing, Planning & Local Government for the Urban Regeneration & Development Fund.

Departmental Data

235. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the different income streams directly paid by persons to his Department or agencies under his remit, such as motor tax; the number of persons making annual payments; the value of same; the number of payments made through staged or increment payments; the value of same; the additional income generated as a result of payments being made on an incremental basis; if incremental payments are not available, the reason for same; the corresponding figures for 1999 and 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30859/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Due to the nature of their roles, neither my Department nor the bodies under its aegis have annual income streams from sources similar to motor tax, directly paid by persons to them. The Office of Public Works will respond directly to the Deputy in line with Standing Order 42A.

Public Spending Code

236. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the changes to procurement procedures after the national children's hospital capital overrun; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30874/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As part of the ongoing reform of Ireland's capital management systems, the Office of Government Procurement is conducting a review of construction procurement and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is reviewing the Public Spending Code. The purpose of these reviews is to strengthen the existing guidance to better align with the realities of project delivery and with a particular focus on improved financial appraisal, cost estimation and management.

The following reforms will be considered and implemented as part of the Public Spending Code review:

- Strengthen and harmonise capital appraisal guidance;
- Greater clarity on governance and roles and responsibilities, particular in terms of who is the Sanctioning Authority and who is the Sponsoring Agency for major projects;
- Introduce new mechanisms to improve the accuracy of cost estimates;
- Improve project life cycle to better reflect the realities of project delivery; and
- Complement the Project Ireland 2040 Capital Tracker in monitoring projects and costs.

The revised central elements of the Public Spending Code relating to the appraisal and management of public capital projects will be published this summer. Further technical guidance building upon these central elements will follow in the second half of 2019 and in 2020.

Procurement legislation is established on an EU wide basis through the suite of procurement directives. The most recent directives were issued in 2014 and have all been transposed into Irish law by means of Statutory Instrument.

The Capital Works Management Framework ("CWMF") is the structure that has been developed to deliver the Government's objectives in relation to public sector construction procurement reform. It consists of a suite of best practice guidance, standard contracts and generic template documents that must be used on all projects that are to be delivered under the Exche-

quer-funded element of the National Development Plan (“NDP”). It is managed by the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) in consultation with the Government Contracts Committee for Construction (GCCC).

The performance of a key component of the CWMF; the public works contract, was reviewed in 2014 and a series of recommendations that apply to the conditions of contract have been implemented since 2016.

That review prompted the OGP to undertake a broader review of the procurement of public works projects in order to develop the next generation of the CWMF.

A set of objectives have been developed to manage the review process which will permit a progressive refinement of the CWMF rather than awaiting the completion of the entire work programme prior to implementation. Enhanced risk management throughout a project’s life-cycle and quality of information will inform all aspects of the work programme.

Consultation has already commenced with industry and the public bodies charged with the delivery of public works projects on a broad range of issues that are impacting on the successful and timely delivery of projects. These are wide ranging and warrant careful consideration and cover areas such as:

- price variation;
- risk management;
- creating a better quality : price balance in the award of contracts;
- adoption of BIM on public works projects;
- liability, indemnity and insurance requirements;
- performance evaluation;
- encouraging collaborative working.

It is proposed to publish a range of position papers throughout 2019 and 2020 on these and other issues and invite submissions from interested parties. Upon conclusion of the consultation process recommendations will be prepared by the GCCC on the measures necessary to address any shortcomings identified.

The programme commenced with a focus on the early stages of a project’s development with the publication of a position paper on the engagement of the consultant technical professionals upon which submissions have been received. The paper focusses on improving the manner in which consultants are engaged to provide expert advice to contracting authorities on matters such as design, cost estimating, project management, procurement and contract administration.

Project Ireland 2040

237. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the capital projects which have been delayed under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; when these projects will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30888/19]

239. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the capital projects which have commenced under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his De-

partment and agencies in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30924/19]

240. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if expenditure estimates for capital projects under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies match projected cost requirements in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30970/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 237, 239 and 240 together.

Due to the nature of their roles, neither my Department nor the bodies under its aegis, with the exception of the Office of Public Works, have projects under Project Ireland 2040. The main purpose of the capital investment undertaken by my Department is to deliver greater effectiveness and efficiency across the Civil and Public Service, primarily through the development of cross-government ICT systems.

The Office of Public Works will respond directly to the Deputy in line with Standing Order 42A.

Flood Relief Schemes Status

238. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the Maghery and Magheraroarty flood plan measures in County Donegal which received funding in July 2018; if the studies have been completed; the timeline for the delivery of the projects; if he is satisfied that both projects will be adequately funded in order to deal with the measures proposed by the respective studies to prevent future flooding of the areas; when funding will be made available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30894/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I am advised that funding was approved to Donegal County Council in July 2018 under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works & Coastal Protection Scheme for a coastal flooding and erosion risk management Study covering the areas mentioned in the deputy's question.

I am further advised by that the procurement process by the Council for the appointment of the consultants to carry out the study is currently in progress.

Following completion of the study and subject to the options identified, Donegal County Council may carry out coastal protection works using their own resources or if necessary, they may also put forward proposals to the relevant central Government Departments for funding of appropriate measures depending on the infrastructure or assets under threat.

They may also apply under the OPW Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme for funding, where applications are considered for flood relief and erosion protection measures costing up to €750,000 in each instance.

Questions Nos. 239 and 240 answered with Question No. 237.

Budget 2017

241. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount designated for demographics in each budget since budget 2017; if an ex-post analysis

has been undertaken to assess the validity of these figures; if there will be a new analysis undertaken by IGEES on demographics; if it will cover all Departments as against just Health, Employment Affairs and Social Protection and Education and Skills; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31059/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Current estimates of certain demographic pressures in the areas of Health, Social Protection and Education were set out in Expenditure Report 2019 and included in the pre-committed current expenditure baseline for the period to 2021. These costs are set out again on an aggregate level in the recently published Summer Economic Statement.

The amounts allocated for demographics and included in the relevant pre-Budget expenditure position for the Departments of Health, Social Protection and Education from 2018 to 2020 are set out in the following table.

Estimated Demographic Pressures 2018 to 2020 (€m)

	2018	2019	2020
Health	118	123	137
Employment Affairs and Social Protection	233	241	260
Education	57	49	54
Total	408	413	451

These allocations are informed by the paper ‘Budgetary Impacts of Changing Demographics 2017 – 2027’, published by the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES). The paper can be found on the IGEES website here: <https://igees.gov.ie/budgetary-impact-of-changing-demographics-2017-to-2027/>.

This paper covers a number of areas of expenditure, including pensions, child benefit, education provision and health schemes such as the Nursing Home Support Scheme. These pure demographic costs are factored in to Ministerial Expenditure Ceilings for Health, Social Protection and Education.

As part of the 2019 Spending Review process, an update of this paper is due to be published in the coming months. This forthcoming paper will again look at the key areas of Health, Social Protection and Education and will examine demographic pressures in these areas over a ten year period. In light of this publication, demographic estimates will be reassessed as part of the Estimates 2020 process.

Departmental Budgets

242. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount in supplementary funding allocated in each of the past five years to each Department by capital and current expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31060/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Supplementary Estimates by Vote for each of the last five years, on a net voted expenditure basis are available at the following link:

[Appendix 1]

The tables for each year reflect the Vote structure that was in place in that year. In a number of cases, a negative amount has been included for either current or capital expenditure. These negative figures represent amounts that were available within a particular Vote to offset overspends in another area within that same Vote. For example, underspends on capital expenditure which were used to offset additional current expenditure.

Departmental Expenditure

243. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the expenditure ceilings by each Department since the three year expenditure ceiling was introduced; the revised expenditure ceiling for each Department over the three years; the actual spend from each Department in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31061/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Expenditure Report 2014 was the first in which multi-annual Ministerial Expenditure Ceilings were published, setting out baseline gross voted current, capital and total expenditure for 2014, 2015 and 2016. The Ministerial Expenditure Ceilings as published in each Expenditure Report from Budget 2014 to Budget 2019 are available at the following link:

[Expenditure]

This spreadsheet also sets out the outturn for each Department for 2014 to 2018.

The expenditure ceilings are presented here as they were published in each Expenditure Report from 2014 to 2019. As such, they do not reflect any transfers of functions or technical adjustments which have occurred wi

thin the period. As a result, ceilings may not be directly comparable for all Vote groups across the period. The transfers of functions that have taken place between 2014 and 2019 are set out at the following link:

. [Expenditure Ceilings]

A number of technical adjustments also impact on analysis of the 2014 to 2019 period. Significant among these are changes made in 2017 to funding for Irish Water. Following the enactment of the Water Services Act 2017, all Motor Tax receipts are paid into the Exchequer, rather than the Local Government Fund, and all State funding for domestic water services is provided through the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. This resulted in an increase in gross voted expenditure in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV) 2018 for the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government of €792 million. This increase had no impact on overall General Government expenditure.

On the Defence Vote, from 2015 onwards, the purchase of military equipment was reclassified as capital expenditure rather than current expenditure. This accounts for the apparent rise in Defence capital expenditure that occurs between Budget 2015 and Budget 2016. Conversely, REV 2015 reflected the disestablishment of the HSE Vote with expenditure of the HSE now met by way of a grant from the Department of Health Vote. As a consequence, certain income previously recognised as appropriations-in-aid on the HSE Vote is now retained by the HSE and is no longer reflected in gross expenditure ceilings or outturns from 2015 on.

HSE Expenditure

244. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he receives monthly financial reports on the costs and revenue incurred in the month from the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31063/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Health Vote is in regular contact with the Department of Health regarding expenditure management. Each month, the drawdown of funds from the Exchequer is reported on against published expenditure profiles in the Fiscal Monitor, published by the Department of Finance.

In addition, the HSE monthly Management Data Reports which include the information outlined above are shared with officials in my Department, albeit with some time lag. To date in 2019, officials from my Department have received reports pertaining to January - April. All of these reports are publicly available on the HSE website.

Capital Expenditure Programme

245. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of capital projects being undertaken by his Department; the final agreed tender price; the estimated cost of each capital project in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31080/19]

246. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the capital projects completed since 2010; the final agreed tender price for each project; the actual cost of each project; if the actual cost exceeded the tender price; the reason therefor in each case in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31096/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 245 and 246 together.

My Department has not previously had any capital projects over the value indicated by the Deputy's office (€5 million). Similarly, the Department has no capital investment planned in projects over this value.

Due to the nature of its role, my Department does not have any major capital projects. The main purpose of the capital investment undertaken by my Department is to deliver greater effectiveness and efficiency across the Civil and Public Service, primarily through the development of cross-government ICT systems.

Public Expenditure Data

247. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the percentage growth in current spending, capital spending and total spending in each of the years since 2000; the percentage movement in GDP and GNP; the General Government Balance in percentage terms in each year in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31159/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The percentage growth in gross voted current, capital and total expenditure from 2000 to 2019 is available at the following link:

[Figures]

. These expenditure figures are available on databank.per.gov.ie.

In a number of years, there are technical changes which impact on the year-on-year increases.

This includes the disestablishment of the HSE Vote in 2014, with expenditure of the HSE now met by way of a grant from the Department of Health Vote. As a consequence, certain income previously recognised as appropriations-in-aid on the HSE Vote is now retained by the HSE and is no longer reflected in gross expenditure ceilings or outturns from 2015 on.

Another significant alteration includes changes to the arrangements for funding of domestic water services in 2017. This impacted on the year-on-year increase from 2017 to 2018. Following the enactment of the Water Services Act 2017, all Motor Tax receipts are paid into the Exchequer, rather than the Local Government Fund, and all State funding for domestic water services is provided through the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. This resulted in an increase in gross voted expenditure in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV) 2018 for the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government of €792 million. This increase had no impact on overall General Government expenditure.

Also included in the spreadsheet is the percentage movement in both GDP and GNP (based on current market prices) from 2000 to 2019. For 2000 – 2018, this data is sourced from CSO. ie. The General Government Balance as a percentage of GDP figures presented here are also from the CSO. For 2019, the Department of Finance projections are provided, as published in the 2019 Stability Programme Update.

Office of Public Works Projects

248. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 167 of 5 March 2019, when the Chief State Solicitors Office and the OPW will meet with the parties affected by the manner in which the site was assembled especially in circumstances in which new facts have come to light which will assist the investigation and resolution of the matters. [31175/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): As set out in my reply of the 5th March 2019, the issues in this case are complex and require significant examination. At this stage I would like to invite the Deputy to contact my office to arrange a meeting with my officials from the Property Management Division to discuss matters further.

Departmental Communications

249. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the oversight of his Department of directives, circulars, advice or requirements issued since 2016; if surveys have been carried out of compliance with these communications to date; the surveys carried out; the results of the surveys; the compliance rate; the actions taken by his Department following these results; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31330/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): All Government Departments and public bodies in receipt of public funding must comply, as appropriate,

with the relevant requirements of Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) Circulars, Public Financial Procedures, Public Spending Code, the Civil Service Corporate Governance Standard or Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, and Government Procurement rules. It is, of course, a matter for each Department and public body concerned to ensure that there are appropriate oversight arrangements and structures in place to ensure that this overall framework is fully implemented in all cases.

Specifically in terms of DPER Circulars, these are issued by the relevant Divisions of the Department to contact points in other Government Departments. Those Departments must then comply with the Circulars and also have responsibility for circulating these to the bodies under their aegis.

Climate Change Policy

250. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the recurring weekly meetings attended by either him or the Secretary General of his Department in 2019 at which climate change and or preparations within his Department to enact a climate plan has been an agenda item; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31346/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department and I are committed to making a strong contribution to the collective efforts that we all need to make in respect of climate action. For this reason, latest developments in respect of climate action are regularly discussed at the Department's weekly Management Board meetings. I attend these meetings once a quarter and the matter also features then.

Other opportunities are also taken to have more in-depth discussion on climate change and climate action – for example, this has featured as a topic at both the Management Board Policy Forum and at last year's DPER Annual Management Conference, when there was a dedicated session on Climate Change with two external expert speakers and 120 staff.

Like other Departments, my Department is also playing a role in relation to specific Government initiatives in this area - for example, in respect of energy performance and also the recent development of a Resource Efficiency Action Plan. My Department is hosting a workshop in September to outline to Energy Performance Officers in the bodies under the aegis of my Department good practice examples in managing the achievement of energy efficiency targets under the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy.

More generally, I have attended Cabinet Committee meetings where Climate Action was on the agenda on the following dates: 31 January 2019, 27 May 2019 and 1 February 2018. Finally, the Deputy may wish to note that my Department has a climate change unit who input into the inter-Departmental climate structures and ensure that I am briefed on climate developments.

Civil Service Staff Data

251. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of civil servants that applied to transfer from Dublin zone 46 to another zone by grade in each Department and agency under the Civil Service mobility scheme launched on 13 November 2017; the number of civil servants that requested a transfer to Dublin zone 46 by grade in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31443/19]

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

the replies to Questions No.53934/18 of 18/12/2018 and No.17264/19 of 16/04/2019, an applicant may express a preference for mobility for up to 3 out of 46 Zones with an option to apply for any, or all organisations in Zone 1 to Zone 45, and up to 5 organisations in Zone 46 (Dublin). Staff members can apply for mobility within their current zone as well as other zones. A number of mobility zones also have an option to include or exclude a choice of satellite towns.

There are currently 937 staff members (486 COs and 451 EOs), based in Zone 46 (Dublin), with applications for Mobility to organisations located outside of Dublin (see breakdown in table below). This equates to 13% of the c.7,000 participating staff members in Dublin while 87% wish to remain in their current location.

There are 55 staff members (37 COs and 18 EOs), based in locations outside of Dublin, with applications for mobility to organisations located in Zone 46.

Phase 1B of the scheme which facilitates the general Civil Service grades of CO and EO for mobility within the zone of Dublin opened for applications on 14th June 2019. There are currently 635 staff members (347 COs and 288 EOs), based in Zone 46 (Dublin) with applications for Mobility to organisations located within Dublin. This equates to 9% of the c.7,000 participating staff members in Dublin wishing to move to another organisation in their chosen location. Local HR will be able to transact offers of mobility within the zone of Dublin with effect from 2nd September 2019.

As previously outlined, the Mobility scheme launched following an era of moratorium and low levels of staff transfers in the Civil Service and these factors would contribute to the initial high surge of interest in the scheme.

After 9 months of the scheme being live, it is also important to note that to date, 50% of initial offers have been refused by employees at pre offer stage.

Phase 2 of the scheme which will facilitate the general Civil Service grades of AO, HEO and AP for mobility will launch at a later date.

Further information on the Mobility scheme is available to view at <http://hr.per.gov.ie/civil-service-mobility/>

Department	CO	EO	Grand Total
National Council for Special Education	7	2	9
Dept of An Taoiseach	12	11	23
Central Statistics Office	2	5	7
Department of Finance	6	4	10
State Exams Commission	11	16	27
Revenue Commissioners	135	142	277
Office of Public Works	30	34	64
States Laboratory	54	45	99
Garda Civilians	114	85	199
Legal Aid Board	23	24	47
Department of Justice and Equality	17	18	35
Courts Service	19	10	29
Property Registration Authority		1	1
Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	1		1

Department	CO	EO	Grand Total
Department of Education and Skills	12	10	22
NSSO	1		1
Office of Government Procurement		1	1
Communications, Climate Action and Environment		1	1
Dept of Defence	6	7	13
Department of Social Protection	21	6	27
Dept of Foreign Affairs and Trade	1	5	6
Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine	9	23	32
Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs	2		2
Dept of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation	2	1	3
Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport	1		1
	486	451	937

Office of Public Works Data

252. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of participants in the Office of Public Works heritage card scheme in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the budget allocation in each year; and the number of designated heritage sites in which the card can be used in tabular form. [31444/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The number of Heritage Cards issued by OPW Heritage Services since 2016 were as follows:

2016	2017	2018	2019 (up to 2/6/2019)
18,390	14,483*	14,268*	4,304

* The lower sales of Heritage Cards in 2017 and 2018 reflect the provision in those years of complimentary admission to specific groups such as Children Under 12 and Persons with disabilities and their Carers.

The OPW's total Visitor Services budget allocation for the relevant years was as follows:

2016	2017	2018	2019
€8,215,000	€9,067,000	€9,308,000	€10,630,000

This allocation covers all areas of Visitor related expenditure including Guide pay and other non-pay items relevant to the presentation and promotion of the heritage sites managed by the OPW. The costs generally associated with administering the Heritage Card scheme are those relating to printing of the cards and are paid from the Visitor Services allocation. The printing and card fabrication costs were:

2016	2017	2018	2019 (up to 2/6/2019)
€25,765.20	€4,274.25	0*	0*

*No costs were incurred in 2018 or to date in 2019 due to stocks in hand.

The OPW Heritage Card is accepted at the following fee-charging sites:

OPW Sites	Non-OPW Sites
Adare Castle	Glenveagh Castle
Ardfert Cathedral	Muckross House
Athenry Castle	
Aughnanure Castle	
Battle of the Boyne/Oldbridge Estate	
Blasket Centre	
Boyle Abbey	
Brú na Bóinne/Newgrange/Knowth	
Cahir Castle	
Carrowmore	
Casino Marino	
Castletown House	
Céide Fields	
Charles Fort	
Clonmacnoise	
Derrynane House	
Doneraile House	
Donegal Castle	
Dublin Castle	
Dún Aonghasa	
Dunmore Cave	
Emo Court House and Parklands	
Ennis Friary	
Farmleigh Estate	
Garinish Island & Bryce House	
Glebe House and Gallery	
Glendalough Visitor Centre	
Hill of Tara Visitor Centre	
J F Kennedy Arboretum	
Jerpoint Abbey	
Kilkenny Castle	
Kilmainham Gaol	
Mellifont Abbey	
Parke's Castle	
Pearse's Cottage	
Portumna Castle	
Rathfarnham Castle	
Reginald's Tower	
Rock of Cashel	
Roscrea Heritage	
Ross Castle	
Sligo Abbey	
Swiss Cottage	

OPW Sites	Non-OPW Sites
Tintern Abbey	
Trim Castle	

School Transport Eligibility

253. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a reply will issue to correspondence (details supplied) regarding a school transport service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30506/19]

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

In general children are eligible for school transport if they meet the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school.

Children who are eligible for school transport and who complete the application process on time will be accommodated on school transport services where such services are in operation for the 2019/20 school year.

The number and size of buses operating for the 2019/20 school year will be determined by the number of children who complete the application process on time and who are deemed eligible for school transport.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only and will be facilitated where spare seats are available after eligible children have been accommodated. In this regard families should liaise with their local Bus Éireann office regarding the availability of transport on a concessionary basis for the next school year.

The terms of the School Transport Schemes are applied equitably on a national basis.

Schools Building Projects Status

254. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a school (details supplied); the timeline for construction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30526/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The building project referred to by the Deputy is being delivered by my Department's 2020 Design and Build programme under the National Development Plan.

The first step in the process will be the application for planning permission which is expected to be lodged in quarter 3 of 2019. Thereafter, the timeframe for delivery of the school will be dependent on the grant of planning permission. My Department is working to deliver the school's permanent accommodation at the earliest possible date.

Cyber Security Protocols

255. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if it has had a cybersecurity breach in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30585/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Department implements multiple cybersecurity protocols and measures including User Awareness, Perimeter Security, Anti-virus/Anti-Malware, Email and Web filtering, System Patching, Risk Management, Policies, Regular Vulnerability Assessments/Penetration Testing, Mobile Device Management, Access Management, Incident Management, Event Monitoring, Information Security Governance, GDPR Awareness, Disaster Recovery, Offline backups, Supplier Management and Encryption.

The Department has not had a cybersecurity breach in the last 12 months.

School Transport Eligibility

256. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a reply will issue to correspondence (details supplied) regarding a school transport service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30598/19]

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

In general children are eligible for school transport if they meet the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school.

Children who are eligible for school transport and who complete the application process on time will be accommodated on school transport services where such services are in operation for the 2019/20 school year.

The number and size of buses operating for the 2019/20 school year will be determined by the number of children who complete the application process on time and who are deemed eligible for school transport.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only and will be facilitated where spare seats are available after eligible children have been accommodated. In this regard families should liaise with their local Bus Éireann office regarding the availability of transport on a concessionary basis for the next school year.

The terms of the School Transport Schemes are applied equitably on a national basis.

Autism Support Services

257. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to estab-

lish an autism and-or ADHD unit in a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30606/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): This Government is spending nearly one euro in every five of the education budget on special education – about €1.9 billion in 2019. This includes an allocation of over €300 million towards providing additional resources specifically to support students with Autism in schools.

The number of Special Education Teachers has increased by 37% from 9,740 in 2011 to over 13,400, Special Needs Assistants by 42% - from 10,575 in 2011 to 15,000, as well as 83 Special Education Needs Organisers (SENOs).

My Department's policy is that children with special educational needs should be included where possible and appropriate in mainstream placements, with additional supports provided.

In circumstances where children with special educational needs require more specialised interventions, special school or special class places are provided for.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of local SENOs, in consultation with the relevant education partners, is responsible for identifying the need for and sanctioning the resourcing of special classes and special school placements in various geographical areas where there is an identified need.

It is open to any school to make an application to the NCSE for the establishment of a specialised provision and where sanctioned, there is a range of supports including capital funding available to the school.

There are now 1,459 special classes in place, compared to 548 in 2011, including 1,196 special classes cater for students diagnosed with ASD – 131 Early Intervention, 743 Primary and 322 Post-primary.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) have advised that for the 2019/20 school year there will be a total of 1,618 special classes of which 1,353 will be for children diagnosed with autism.

124 special schools also provide specialist education for those students with complex special educational needs.

There are currently 2 special schools and 60 special classes attached to mainstream schools in Co. Wexford. The NCSE has informed my Department that they intend to establish 167 new special classes nationally for 2019/20 school year of which approximately 156 will be new ASD special classes. This includes 7 new primary ASD classes and 1 post-primary ASD class in Co. Wexford.

Parents/guardians who may need advice or are experiencing difficulties in locating a school placement should contact their local SENO who can assist in identifying an appropriate educational placement for their child. Contact details are available on www.ncse.ie.

The NCSE is currently undertaking Policy Advice on Education Provision in Special Classes and Special Schools to examine whether placement in specialist settings brings about improved educational outcomes and experiences, relative to their ability, for students with special educational needs. This Policy Advice is to be completed and a report submitted to the Minister no later than June 2020.

As the matter raised by the Deputy refers to a particular school, I have arranged for the

Deputy's question to be forwarded to the National Council for Special Education for their attention and direct reply.

School Accommodation Provision

258. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the short, medium and long-term accommodation plan for a new school (details supplied) in County Cork; the timeline for the future provision of accommodation including the permanent school building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30612/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): A planning application for the school to which the Deputy refers was lodged with Cork County Council on 20 December 2018 and this was refused on 22 February 2019 primarily due to issues around traffic. That decision was upheld by An Bord Pleanála on 24 June 2019.

My Department can confirm that the school will open in suitable interim accommodation in a building in Coláiste Stiofan Naofa, Tramore Road, Cork City. The Patron body Educate Together have been advised of this and they in turn have advised the parents of pupils enrolled.

A building project for the new primary school is included in my Department's current 6 year construction programme.

Officials from my Department are working to identify and procure a suitable site for the school. A number of potential site options have been identified and these are currently under consideration.

While a site acquisition process is underway, given the commercial sensitivities associated with land acquisitions generally I am not in a position to comment further at this time.

In the interim my Department will provide suitable interim accommodation arrangements for the school.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

259. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the estimate of an organisation (details supplied) that the extension of the July provision to all children with Down's syndrome that need access would cost €1 million per annum is correct; his views on whether children with Down's syndrome need the additional support during the summer months in order that they can catch up with their peers and stay in mainstream education; if he will review the current policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30626/19]

260. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of his engagement with an organisation (details supplied) further to the recent court settlement regarding the July provision for children with Down's syndrome; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30627/19]

261. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if consideration will be given to the provision of post-primary specialised units for students with Down's syndrome similar to that provided to children with autism; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30628/19]

262. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the rec-

ommendations of the NCSE review on the July provision will be implemented; if the implementation group has provided him with a report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30629/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 259 to 262, inclusive together.

My Department's July Provision Grant Scheme provides funding for an extended school year for students with severe or profound intellectual disabilities and students with Autism.

The scheme was developed to reduce potential regression in learning associated with these specific categories of special education needs over the summer holidays.

It is not possible to estimate the cost of extending the existing July Provision Scheme to other categories of children with Special Educational needs. Such an estimate would require analysis of the availability and willingness of schools to provide for this and also the availability of suitably qualified tutors to be available for home based July provision.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) which advises the Minister on these matters published its Policy Advice on Educational Provision for Children with Autism in July 2016 which included a review of the July Scheme.

The review found that in general parents value July provision because it provides day-time respite for families and a structured day for students. The NCSE review found a number of problems with the scheme as currently organised.

These include concerns that the scheme may be inequitable because it is not provided to all students with complex special educational needs.

The Council recommended that the relevant Government Departments consider how an equitable national day activity scheme could be developed for all students with complex special educational needs.

The proposed scheme would provide a structured, safe, social environment for all students with complex special educational needs.

My Department has convened an Implementation Group to ensure that the Report's recommendations are fully and appropriately considered.

There has been consultation with a number of other Departments and State agencies regarding the future direction of the July Education Programme.

It is expected that the Group will make recommendations shortly concerning a revised scheme which would be implemented next year at the earliest. Before any changes are made, there will be consultations with stakeholders.

I met with a number of representatives from Down Syndrome Ireland on 3rd July 2019. There was a very fruitful discussion across a range of issues affecting children with Down Syndrome in the education system, including the review of the July Provision Scheme. The Department undertook to continue to engage with Down Syndrome Ireland on a range of education matters.

The policy of my Department is to ensure that all children with special educational needs, including children with Down syndrome, can be provided with an education appropriate to their needs.

11 July 2019

Living Wage

263. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of implementing a living wage €12.30 for all employees directly employed and or in agencies under his remit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30769/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): My Department issues Circulars detailing pre-determined salary scales which are negotiated at central level.

I am advised that all staff paid on payrolls operated by my Department are paid in excess of €12.30 per hour.

There are also a significant cohort of staff paid directly by Agencies and/or Bodies coming under the aegis of my Department. Information in relation to the individual hourly wages of all of these staff is not readily available and accordingly, it is not possible to estimate what cost, if any, would arise from implementing a living wage of €12.30 for all employees either directly employed and/or employed in Agencies and/or Bodies coming under my remit.

I would also like to take this opportunity to outline the current position in respect of two specific categories of staff in the Education and Training sector

1. The position in relation to Secretaries and Caretakers employed and paid directly through grant funding by the managerial authorities of schools is that, on foot of a Chairman’s Note to the Lansdowne Road Agreement, officials from the Department of Education and Skills 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 was implemented by my Department and covers the period up to 31 December 2019.

2. The hourly rate of pay for Bus Escorts will vary from time to time in line with revised salary rates arising from the various Public Service Stability Agreements[1]. School management authorities are notified of any revised salary rates as they occur by way of circular issued by my Department. The current hourly rate of pay is €12.85.”

Capitation Grants

264. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and proportion of schools rewarded with extra capitation grants arising from compliance with circular 0032/2017. [30780/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): My Department has published measures to be adopted by schools to reduce the cost of school uniforms and other costs, in consultation with parents, in circular 32/2017. This includes principles of cost-effective practices to be adopted, including generic rather than branded items, use of sew-on or iron-on crests, and all elements of a uniform being available from various stores.

While the circular provided, as resources permit, to reward schools that can provide evidence of having adopted the principles of cost-effective practice, my Department recognises the need to improve capitation funding for all schools. To this end, in 2019, my Department has provided for a 5% increase in capitation funding for primary and post primary schools that will apply from the start of the 2019/20 school year. Over the course of the school year 2019/20, an additional €10 million will be allocated to primary and post primary schools, of which €4 mil-

lion will be allocated in 2019.

It is important that schools consult with parents and the school community, and the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019 will require each school to implement a Student and Parent Charter in accordance with national guidelines to be published by the Minister after consultation with the education partners, including the recognised national associations of parents. One of the key concepts in the Bill is the need for schools to seek to reduce the costs to parents as far as is practicable.

Subject to Government approval, I intend to publish the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill in the Autumn.

School Costs

265. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the significant additional burden on parents of schools charging for new laptops or other digital devices for students in place of books; and the way in which he plans to address these additional costs. [30782/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The decision to use tablet devices is a matter for the Board of Management of a school. Where the introduction of new technology is planned, consultation with members of the school community including parents is advised. The cost and other implications must be fully considered by the Boards of Management before a decision is made.

An advice sheet on the adoption of tablets in schools is available on the PDST-Technology in Education (PDST-TIE) website, detailing what tablets can offer a school, educational considerations, purchasing considerations and software.

It is a matter for the Board of Management of each individual school to decide on its own policy in relation to the use of textbooks in the school. Individual schools should adopt a cost-conscious approach to the selection of books in their classes.

I want to give parents a strong voice in ensuring costs are always kept to a minimum.

Work on the drafting of the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019 is close to being finalised and I intend to seek Government approval shortly for its publication. 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. The charter legislation will include requirements for consultation and engagement with parents and students on matters relating to school life and will include provision for full transparency in relation to costs and the use of any voluntary contributions sought by schools.

Schools Building Projects Status

266. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of all school building projects planned for County Kildare at present; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30814/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that the current status of school building projects being delivered as part of the National Devel-

opment Plan, including those projects for County Kildare, may be viewed on my Department's website, www.education.ie and this information is updated regularly. In addition, a list of the large-scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

Departmental Data

267. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the different income streams directly paid by persons to his Department or agencies under his remit, such as motor tax; the number of persons making annual payments; the value of same; the number of payments made through staged or incremental payments; the value of same; the additional income generated as a result of payments being made on an incremental basis; if incremental payments are not available, the reason for same; the corresponding figures for 1999 and 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30852/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): My Department does not receive any major income streams directly from individuals. The Department's Appropriations-in-Aid are comprised primarily of superannuation contributions, additional superannuation contributions and certain EU receipts, including those related to the European Social Fund.

My Department does not maintain information centrally regarding the income streams of our aegis bodies.

Schools Building Projects Status

268. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress of pre-tender qualification and site acquisition for a major school building project (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30862/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The major building project for this school is at an advanced stage of architectural planning, Stage 2b – Detailed Design, which includes the applications for Planning Permission, Fire Cert and Disability Access Cert and the preparation of tender documents. All statutory approvals have been obtained.

Following a legal challenge, authorisation to re-commence the pre-qualification process issued to the Design Team and school. This advert has recently closed and the Design Team is currently in the process of compiling a shortlist of contractors for tender stage.

When the pre-qualification process for the main contract and reserved specialists contracts is complete, the project will then be progressed to tender stage.

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

Regarding the site acquisition, legal representatives for both parties are working together with a view to concluding the conveyancing. There continues to be progress on foot of close and intense engagement from all parties. A number of amendments have been agreed between the legal representatives for the vendor and the CSSO. These amendments have been incorporated into the draft Contract for Sale along with a number of other suggested amendments proposed for the sake of completeness. The CSSO and the Vendor's solicitor will, after having had an opportunity to consider all the points, arrange to meet with a view to finalising matters.

Project Ireland 2040 Implementation

269. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the capital projects which have been delayed under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; when these projects will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30881/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): With regard to the schools sector, my Department's capital programme continues to address the challenge posed by a rapidly increasing school population. To meet this demographic challenge, during the course of 2019 over 80 large scale projects and 140 projects under the Additional Accommodation Scheme will be under construction. Details on those projects and on all other school projects that are being progressed through the architectural planning process towards tender and construction are available on my Department's website at www.education.ie. The Department is also increasing its investment in higher education infrastructure; many of these projects are currently in the planning phase.

The success of the schools building programme is predicated on the need to ensure that at any given time, there are sufficient number of school projects available to proceed to construction. If this is not the case, then there is the risk that capital monies made available for the purpose of accommodating children at primary and post-primary level, cannot be spent and that the State cannot provide for school buildings at maximum capacity. This ensures that when some projects experience delays such as site issues, planning difficulties, design challenges, etc., other projects can be progressed.

The Department seeks to progress all approved education building projects to completion as soon as possible and works towards this objective in all cases.

Project Ireland 2040 Implementation

270. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the capital projects which have commenced under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30917/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The information requested by the deputy in relation to capital projects which have commenced under Project Ireland 2040 is currently being collated. I will arrange for the information to be forwarded directly to the deputy shortly.

Schools Building Projects Data

271. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the schools put in the school building capital plans for new schools or large extensions in each of the years 2011 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the schools built; and the status of each of the other schools in tabular form. [30930/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that the current status of large-scale building projects being delivered as part of the National Development Plan may be viewed on my Department's website, www.education.ie and this information is updated regularly. In addition, a list of the large-scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

Project Ireland 2040 Expenditure

272. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if expenditure estimates for capital projects under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies match projected cost requirements in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30963/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Under the National Development Plan, my Department's total capital allocation for 2019 is €941m of which €622m is allocated to the School Building Programme. As in other years, the Department will proactively manage its capital allocation across the various subheads and budget lines to advance its school building and other capital investment priorities. The specific amount to be spent by the Department on each project in 2019 will depend on progress during the year and availability of funds. Project cost estimates and project delivery timelines are kept under review through the design and planning process and financial allocations are not definitively assigned to individual projects until the point of entering into a contractual commitment for that particular project. Therefore it is not possible to provide the tabular form requested by the Deputy. However, it is important to note that the Department ensures that funding is available from within agreed capital allocations before entering into contractual expenditure commitments.

Schools Establishment

273. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to establish a new primary school for Carrigaline, County Cork; when the school will be established; the position concerning the patronage of the school; the location of the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31006/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy will be aware, the Government recently announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022) including a new 16-classroom primary school to be established in 2020 to serve the Carrigaline school planning area. This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

A patronage process is run after it has been decided, based on demographic analysis, that a new school is required. This patronage process is open to all patron bodies and prospective patrons. Parental preferences for each patron, from parents of children who reside in the school planning areas concerned, together with the extent of diversity currently available in these areas, are key to decisions in relation to the outcome of this process.

An Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) has been developed by my Department to provide objective information to all parents which will allow them to make an informed choice about their preferred model of patronage for their child's education. Parental preferences will be collected based on direct engagement with patron bodies.

The patronage process for new schools is overseen by an external independent advisory group, the New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG). Following their consideration of my Department's assessment reports, the NSEG will submit a report with recommendations to me for consideration and final decision.

The patronage process for schools due to be established in 2020, including the school re-

ferred to by the Deputy, will be run later this year. Updates in relation to further patronage processes will be announced on the OPPS website and the Department's website (www.education.ie).

The school will be established in September 2020 in suitable interim accommodation. My Department is currently identifying site options and a determination regarding the permanent location for the school will be made as soon as possible.

Third Level Data

274. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of students attending third level colleges in which courses are provided that qualify for tax relief on tuition fees in each of the years since 2015; the number who paid fees in excess of the student contribution charge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31012/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I refer the Deputy to the below estimated number of students paying in excess of the student contribution charge since 2015. The numbers calculated are based on the total number of undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in publicly funded institutions; less the students eligible for free fees who would be paying the Student Contribution charge. The figures also excludes students who have the contribution paid for them in full or part by SUSI, through their eligibility for the Student Support Scheme. The Student Contribution currently stands at €3,000 per student per annum.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
*Estimated Number of Students paying fees in excess of the Student Contribution	86,000	94,000	96,000	100,000

*The Deputy should be aware that these figures are estimated as some of these students may be in receipt of individual scholarships, bursaries or courses funded from other sources.

I would also advise the Deputy that my Department does not have details regarding the numbers of students in receipt of tax relief on courses. All details in respect of tax relief are a matter for the Revenue Commissioners and the Minister for Finance.

Capital Expenditure Programme

275. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of capital projects being undertaken by his Department; the final agreed tender price; the estimated cost of each capital project in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31073/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The information requested by the deputy in relation to capital projects is currently being collated. I will arrange for the information to be forwarded directly to the deputy shortly.

Capital Expenditure Programme

276. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the capital projects completed since 2010; the final agreed tender price for each project; the actual cost of each project; if the actual cost exceeded the tender price; the reason therefor in each case in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31089/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Major school building completions across my Department regularly reach a yearly total of 40-50 projects.

In terms of providing cost details of all capital projects completed since 2010, this requires compilation of precise financial information in respect of 400-500 school building projects. The administrative burden upon my Department to carry out such a task is not warranted in the time available.

Therefore, I propose that the information requested will be forwarded subsequently to the Deputy in respect of all capital projects completed in the last 5 years.

National Training Fund

277. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount collected from the national training levy in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the use made of this funding by types of course or programme, apprenticeship, traineeship, further education, third level, research and so on; the purpose of the fund; the evolution of its use over the past number of years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31133/19]

278. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the expenditure under the National Training Fund between funding allocated to those in employment and funding for those unemployed on an annual basis over the period 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the percentage breakdown of the funding between training for those in employment and those unemployed; the number of participants under the programme annually according to this same breakdown; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31134/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 277 and 278 together.

The National Training Fund (NTF) was established by the National Training Fund Act, 2000, as a dedicated fund to support the training of those in employment, and those seeking employment. The Act also provides for the funding of research to provide information on existing and likely future skills requirements of the economy.

The creation of the fund was announced in Budget 2000 by the then Minister for Finance to raise the skills of those in employment, to give jobseekers relevant skills and to facilitate lifelong learning. The NTF replaced the Apprenticeship Levy which was set up under The Industrial Training (Apprenticeship Levy) Act 1994. In May 2010, responsibility for the NTF was transferred from the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation to the Minister for Education and Skills.

During the recession, the focus moved sharply from training those in employment to supporting unemployed people back into the workplace. However there has been a fundamental shift in the labour market over the last 6 years with unemployment falling from a 16% high in 2012 to 5.6% in February 2019. This has been reflected in a changed and rebalanced suite of NTF-funded programmes to support the larger working population, to address the higher demand for lifelong learning as the influence of technology increases and to seek to address emerging areas of skills and labour shortage.

The NTF enables more flexible responses to changing economic/labour market conditions. As the economic climate has improved, expenditure on training for those in employment has increased with a corresponding reduction in expenditure on training for those seeking employment. This trend is evident from 2014 to 2018 and will continue in 2019.

Following a consultation process, the Government, as part of Budget 2018, decided to raise the rate of the National Training Fund (NTF) levy by 0.1% in 2018 to 0.8%. As part of Budget 2019, the levy was raised by a further 0.1% to 0.9% and by 0.1% in 2020 on the basis of the implementation of planned reforms.

An independent review of the National Training Fund was commissioned by the Department of Education and Skills as part of the package of reforms. This independent review, which was undertaken by Indecon, was published by the Minister for Education and Skills on 17 August 2018. The report made 14 specific recommendations across 4 key areas:

- Reform of the future direction of the NTF.
- Utilising the NTF to support investment in Higher Education.
- Enhancing enterprise engagement and input to NTF priorities.
- Improvements in monitoring/evaluation of the NTF.

An Implementation Plan to deliver the recommendations contained in the Independent Review was published as part of Budget 2019 along with details of a new advisory group to the National Skills Council in order to optimise enterprise engagement on NTF priorities.

I attach a file showing the amount collected from the NTF levy and the expenditure as requested and the number of participants funded by the National Training Fund from 2010 to 2018, which is the information available.

Additional information is available in the recently published expenditure report available at the following link:

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/national-training-fund-expenditure-report-2019.pdf>

[NTF]

Skills Development

279. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of businesses that availed of enterprise training, workforce learning and upskilling services from Skillnet Ireland on an annual basis over the 2014 to 2018 period; the annual breakdown in participation in percentage terms by firm size (details supplied); the annual allocation to Skillnet Ireland in each year over 2014 to 2018 period; and the amount allocated in 2019. [31135/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): Skillnet Ireland actively supports and works with businesses in Ireland to address their current and future skills needs. Skillnet Ireland fund groups of companies in the same region/sector, and with similar training needs, through training networks that deliver subsidised training to Irish businesses.

Skillnet Ireland networks arrange relevant, cost-effective and innovative training courses for member companies who operate on both a regional and sector-specific basis. The Skillnet Ireland allocation increased in 2019 to €28m allowing for an allocation of €25.649m for Training in Employment and €2.351m for Training for the Unemployed.

The information requested by the Deputy is in the table.

Skillnet Ireland - Member Company profile by business size

Year	Annual Funding	<10 Em- ployees	11-49 Em- ployees	50-249 Employees	>249 Em- ployees	No. of Companies
2014	€15.69m	47%	30%	8%	15%	10,879
2015	€16.2m	52%	31%	12%	5%	12,861
2016	€16.2m	48%	28%	16%	8%	12,997
2017	€18.2m	51%	28%	15%	6%	15,012
2018	€21.7m	56%	26%	13%	5%	16,462

The above funding is received from the Department of Education and Skills via the National Training Fund.

The above data is extracted from the Skillnet Ireland Annual Reports for the financial periods ended 31 December 2014 to 31 December 2018

Adult Education Provision

280. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the Irish participation rate in lifelong learning in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the EU average rate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31136/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Attached are the latest rates for Ireland and the EU 28 average for adult participation in lifelong learning (formal and non-formal).

Please note that there is a break in series for 2017, and it is not possible to compare the rates for Ireland in 2017 and 2018 with earlier years.

Data for 2019 has not yet been published.

Figure 1. Annual average lifelong learning rates among adults (25-64 years) 2014-2018

	2014	2015	2016	2017*	2018
EU 28	10.8	10.7	10.8	10.9	11.1
Ireland	7	6.5	6.5	9	12.5

Source: Eurostat

*Break in series. Data for 2017 and 2018 is not comparable with previous years.

State Examinations Data

281. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of post-primary schools in the past five years which have offered the option to study leaving certificate applied in tabular form; and the percentage of students completing post-primary education who chose leaving certificate applied in the period. [31191/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme is one of a number of options made available by my Department for Senior Cycle students which schools can choose from, based on the education needs and inter-

ests of their student.

Schools that choose to organise the LCA programme are entitled to an additional fixed allocation of 0.5 of a teaching post, over the standard allocation. There is no minimum number of LCA pupils required for schools to secure the additional teaching allocation from my Department.

My Department is committed to supporting this programme, which is appropriate for members of the student cohort whose needs, aptitudes and learning styles are not fully catered for by the other two Leaving Certificate programmes (Leaving Certificate Established and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme).

Revised module descriptors in English and Communications, ICT (Introductory Module and Specialism) and Mathematical Applications are being finalised and schools will be advised of details of their implementation soon.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is currently undertaking a review of senior cycle which will comprehend each of the Leaving Certificate programmes, including the LCA.

The details requested by the Deputy are as follows:

Academic Year	Number of Education Organisations Offering Leaving Certificate Applied
2014-15	283
2015-16	280
2016-17	287
2017-18	288
2018-19	297

	Leaving Certificate (Established and LCVP)	Leaving Certificate Applied Programme	Total Candidates	LCA as % of total
2014	54,025	2,964	56,989	5.20%
2015	55,044	2,887	57,931	4.98%
2016	55,707	2,758	58,465	4.72%
2017	55,770	2,773	58,543	4.74%
2018	54,440	2,709	57,149	4.74%

Teaching Contracts

282. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that teachers who disclose a disability may be excluded from the terms outlined in his Department's circulars and agreed with the education partners in accordance with section 24(3) of the Education Act 1998; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31198/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Under the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015, employers are obliged to make reasonable accommodation for staff with disabilities.

In the Education sector, the employer is the Education and Training Board (ETB) for those employed in vocational schools/community colleges, community national schools and is the

Board of Management/Manager in the case of primary (excluding community national schools) voluntary secondary, community and comprehensive schools.

In accordance with the Education Act, the terms and conditions of employment of teachers employed in approved posts funded by moneys provided by the Oireachtas are determined by the Minister for Education and Skills, with the concurrence of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

The provisions regarding reasonable accommodation for teachers are set out in the 'Terms and Conditions of Employment for Registered Teachers in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools', Chapter 3, paragraph 16 of the Sick Leave Scheme.

This paragraph states:-

"The Employment Equality Acts require employers to take reasonable steps to accommodate the needs of employees and prospective employees with disabilities. Reasonable accommodation typically involves some modification to the tasks/structure of a job or workplace environment, which would enable such an employee to fully perform their work role and enjoy equal employment opportunities. An employer will make reasonable adjustments for teachers who have a disability, or who have acquired a disability, to have reasonable accommodation made to facilitate their return to work. However, employers are not obliged to provide special treatment or facilities if the cost of doing so is excessive or disproportionate. The employer should explore in conjunction with the teacher and the OHS any appropriate enabling options, for example: (these examples are not exhaustive):

- Making reasonable adjustments to the school building and/or working space
- Acquiring relevant equipment or modifying existing equipment
- Partial Return to Work as detailed below"

Details on Partial Return to Work are outlined in Paragraph 17 of the same publication.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

283. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a grant or other funding is available for parents of children with autism who wish to avail of early intervention services privately. [31221/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): It is understood that the question relates to the provision of services provided by the HSE. The provision of health related services including Early Intervention services, for example, Speech and Language Therapy, are under the remit of my colleague, the Minister for Health with the services provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE). Questions in relation to the provision of such services should therefore be referred to the Department of Health and the HSE.

My Department does not provide grants or funding for Parents to engage private Health services.

Schools Building Projects Status

284. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps and

timelines for a new school build (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31264/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy has been recently informed, it is premature at this juncture to give a timeline for the delivery of the new building to replace the school to which he refers. A new site is required for the replacement building and my Department has commenced the site identification process. When a suitable site is identified and agreed for purchase, architectural planning for the new building has to be undertaken and planning permission sought. Then the project has to be tendered for construction. I can again assure the Deputy that my Department is making every effort to progress the site identification.

Schools Establishment

285. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of each of the 42 new schools announced in April 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31265/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): In April 2018, the Government announced plans to establish 42 new schools over the 4 year period 2019 to 2022. Twenty-six of these are at primary level and 16 at post-primary level. In addition, following a review of provision at primary school level in Ashbourne, a new 16 classroom primary school was announced to be established from September 2019.

For each new school announced, arrangements have or are being put in place for the provision of accommodation and a patronage process has or will be undertaken in relation to the patronage of these schools.

An Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) has been developed by my Department to provide objective information to all parents which will allow them to make an informed choice about their preferred model of patronage for their child's education. Parental preferences were previously collected based on direct engagement with patron bodies.

The patronage process in respect of the four post-primary schools and 14 primary schools to be established in 2019 has concluded. The patronage process for schools to be established in 2020 will commence later in 2019. There will be further patronage processes for the remainder of the new schools announced. Updates in relation to further patronage processes will be announced on the OPPS website (<https://patronage.education.gov.ie/>) and my Department's website (www.education.ie).

The schools are being established in interim accommodation initially pending permanent accommodation solutions being put in place. My Department's Design and Build Programme will be the main delivery mechanism for providing permanent accommodation for the 43 new schools.

The current status of large-scale projects, including the 43 new schools, being delivered under the school building programme may be viewed in tabular format on my Department's website, www.education.ie and this information is updated regularly.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

286. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated

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full year cost of implementing one point reductions in average class size at primary level. [31266/19]

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.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

287. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated full year cost of implementing one point reductions in the average class size at post-primary level. [31267/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Teacher allocations to all second level schools are approved annually by my Department in accordance with established rules based on recognised pupil enrolment and are available on the Department's website. A pupil teacher ratio (ptr) of 19:1 is applied to all second-level schools in the Free-Education System. A ptr of 23:1 is applied to the 52 schools in the fee-charging sector.

Each 1 point adjustment to the pupil teacher ratio at post primary level is estimated to cost in the region of €63m per annum.

School Staff

288. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of restoring the pre-2012 staffing and retention schedule for schools with four or fewer teachers. [31268/19]

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

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

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

Small schools have also benefitted from the 1 point improvement to the primary staffing schedule for all schools implemented in 2016 and again in 2018. The staffing schedule at primary level currently operates on a general average of 26 pupils to every 1 teacher which is historically the lowest ever allocation ratio at primary level.

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

The estimated cost of restoring the staffing schedule for small schools to pre-2012 levels would be €1.1million in the first year, and €3.4 million for the full year.

Minor Works Scheme Data

289. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount allocated to schools for minor works grants in 2018. [31269/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): A total of just under €29m was paid out from my Department under the Minor Works Grant in 2018 for the school year 2018/2019.

Capitation Grants

290. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of a 5%, 10%, 15% and 20% increase in capitation grant to voluntary secondary schools. [31270/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I fully recognise the need to improve capitation funding for schools.

I am pleased to have been able to provide for a 5% increase in capitation funding for primary and post primary schools that will apply from the start of the 2019/20 school year. The first and full year costs of this increase is €4 million and €10 million respectively.

The estimated cost of restoring capitation by 10% in Voluntary Secondary schools is circa €5.2 million.

The estimated cost of restoring capitation by 15% in Voluntary Secondary schools is circa €7.9 million.

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The estimated cost of restoring capitation by 20% in Voluntary Secondary schools is circa €10.4 million.

I must be prudent in the context of ongoing budgetary pressures. Where it is not possible to do everything that I would like to do in the education sector in any one year I have to prioritise, especially in the context of increasing enrolments.

It is my intention to seek funding for further capitation increases in future budgets.

Capitation Grants

291. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of a 5%, 10%, 15% and 20% increase in capitation grant to community and comprehensive schools. [31271/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I fully recognise the need to improve capitation funding for schools.

I am pleased to have been able to provide for a 5% increase in capitation funding for primary and post primary schools that will apply from the start of the 2019/20 school year. The first and full year costs of this increase is €4 million and €10 million respectively.

The estimated cost of restoring capitation by 10% in Community and Comprehensive schools is circa €1.6 million.

The estimated cost of restoring capitation by 15% in Community and Comprehensive schools is circa €2.4 million.

The estimated cost of restoring capitation by 20% in Community and Comprehensive schools is circa €3.1 million.

I must be prudent in the context of ongoing budgetary pressures. Where it is not possible to do everything that I would like to do in the education sector in any one year I have to prioritise, especially in the context of increasing enrolments.

It is my intention to seek funding for further capitation increases in future budgets.

Capitation Grants

292. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of restoring capitation and related grants to primary and post-primary schools to pre-2011 levels. [31272/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I fully recognise the need to improve capitation funding for schools.

I am pleased to have been able to provide for a 5% increase in capitation funding for primary and post primary schools that will apply from the start of the 2019/20 school year. The first and full year costs of this increase is €4 million and €10 million respectively.

In addition to the 5% increase above the estimated cost of restoring capitation to pre-2011 levels in primary and post-primary schools is circa €24.7 million.

I must be prudent in the context of ongoing budgetary pressures. Where it is not possible to do everything that I would like to do in the education sector in any one year I have to prioritise, especially in the context of increasing enrolments.

It is my intention to seek funding for further capitation increases in future budgets.

School Management

293. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the cost of changes to enable teaching principals to have one release day per week is in the order of €12.5 million per annum. [31273/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Since my appointment as Minister for Education and Skills I have met with a number of Teaching Principals, including at this year's IPPN conference, and I appreciate the pressures they face. In Budget 2019, school leadership is again supported with an additional release day for teaching principals in primary schools and a further four additional release days for teaching principals in schools with special classes. These additional release days - 18, 24, and 30 depending on the size of the school - will be effective from 1st September 2019.

This builds on measures in previous budgets, including €0.4 million made available in Budget 2018 to fund almost 4600 additional release days for teaching principals in primary schools. This funding provided an increase in the number of release days available to teaching principals in the 2018/19 school year to 17, 23 or 29 days depending on the size of the school.

Enabling teaching principals to have one release day per week would cost an estimated €7.5m per annum.

Any additional increase in the number of release days will have to be considered as part of the annual budgetary process, alongside the many other demands in the education sector.

School Guidance Counsellors

294. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to restore remaining ex-quota guidance posts. [31274/19]

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.

Special Educational Needs Data

295. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost

to restore English as an additional language post to pre-2012 levels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31275/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that DES Circular 0007/2019 for primary schools and 0008/2019 for post primary schools were published in February 2019.

These Circulars set out the details of the model for allocating special education teachers to schools.

Since the 2017/18 school year the new Special Education Teaching allocation provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on each school's educational profile and also encompasses the Language Support (EAL) allocation that schools were allocated in previous years.

Under this allocation model, schools have been provided with a total allocation for special education needs support based on their school profile.

The provision of a profiled allocation is designed to give a fairer allocation for each school which recognises that all schools need an allocation for special needs support including language support but which provides a graduated allocation which takes into account the actual level of need in each school.

Under this allocation model, schools are frontloaded with resources, based on each school's profile, to provide supports immediately to those pupils who need it without delay.

It should be noted that this model of allocation introduced in the 2017/18 school year is not comparable to the previous model. By using a broad range of attainment and socio-economic criteria, it is expected that generally, a school's profile will remain relatively constant from year to year. Each year, some students with additional teaching needs will leave and others will enrol, broadly balancing the school profile.

Further additional temporary Language Support is also provided, as necessary, to schools that have high concentrations of pupils that require language (EAL) support. At primary level, these allocations are made on the basis of appeals by schools to the Primary Staffing Appeals Board and at post-primary level to the Post Primary Staffing Appeals Board.

National Educational Psychological Service Data

296. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of employing an additional ten, 20, 50 and 100 new NEPS psychologists for special needs assessment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31276/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I can inform the Deputy that the average direct pay and non-pay cost per annum of employing an Educational Psychologist in my Departments NEPS service is €75,000 per annum. The estimated annual additional cost, therefore, of employing 10, 20, 50 or 100 psychologists would be; 10 posts - €0.75m, 20 posts - €1.5m, 50 posts- €3.75m and 100 posts- €7.5m .

Student Assistance Fund

297. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the student assis-

tant fund allocation in the 2018/2019 school year. [31277/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Student Assistance Fund (SAF) provides financial assistance to students experiencing financial difficulties while attending third level. Students can be assisted towards the rent, childcare costs, transport costs and books/class materials.

The core allocation in 2018/2019 was €8.1 million. An additional €1m was added to the Fund in 2017 which is specifically ring-fenced for part-time students who are lone-parents or members of the other access target groups. Prior to that the fund supported full-time students only.

In December 2018 specifically for the 2018/19 academic year, a further €1 million was added to the Fund for students attending Professional Masters of Education courses, who are experiencing financial difficulty.

The total 2018/2019 allocation for the SAF was €10.1 million.

Junior Cycle Reform

298. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will conduct a review of the common level junior cycle science course; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31278/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) will carry out a review of Science in Q3 2019, as this is when the first cohort of students will have completed the course.

The new Framework for Junior Cycle presents a dual approach to assessment that supports student learning over the three years of the junior cycle and also measures achievement at the end of those years. The approach reduces the focus on one final examination and provides for formative assessment through classroom based assessments.

This change of emphasis arises from an acknowledgement that students learn best when teachers provide feedback that helps the student to understand how their learning can be improved.

The learning experiences provided in Junior Cycle aim to help all students achieve their potential regardless of their abilities and interests.

Students mature at different rates. Keeping subjects at a common level ensures that all students are treated fairly and impartially and that students are not channelled into a lower level of learning at too early a stage of their post-primary education.

Child and Family Agency Staff

299. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has discussed issues raised by a person (details supplied) in their resignation from the board of Tusla with the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs; if his Department has examined the issues they raised; the result of the examination; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31279/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Child and Family Agency

comes under the remit of my colleague The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

Under Section 19 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs appoints all of the members of the Board of the Agency.

I have not spoken to the person concerned in relation to the issues raised or their resignation from the Board of the Child and Family Agency.

Student Support Schemes

300. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the oversight conducted by his Department of the number of young persons seeking support and or counselling for mental health difficulties at third-level; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31280/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Student services, which are an integral part of the whole student experience at third level, support students to achieve their intellectual, cultural and social potential while supporting and complementing the formal academic programme. Student services can fall under a number of headings, particularly ‘Welfare and Guidance’ which includes counselling services and health promotion.

In relation to the provision of these services within the institutions, the position is that my Department’s provides recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority for direct disbursement to its designated higher education institutions. The HEA allocates this funding as a block grant to these institutions, and the internal disbursement of this funding, including the funding of student services, is a matter for the individual institution.

Details of expenditure incurred in respect of counselling services in the third level sector are outlined below. Data in respect of subsequent academic years is not readily available at this time.

	Universities & Colleges (incl MIC, NCAD & St Angela’s College)	IoTs
2013/14	€3,963,627	€2,038,106
2014/15	€3,853,638	€2,185,196
2015/16	€4,185,682	€2,299,286

Apprenticeship Programmes

301. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to abolish student contributions for apprenticeships; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31281/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): An Annual Student Contribution (ASC) is levied on all students attending Institutes of Technology (IoTs). Previously this ASC was paid by FÁS/SOLAS with apprentices themselves paying the part of the contribution relating to examination fees. As part of Budget 2014, SOLAS ceased making payments to IoTs and apprentices pay the full pro rata ASC.

The amount charged to apprentices is calculated on a pro rata basis of the time which they spend in IoTs during the academic year. For craft apprenticeships, this cost would typically be one third of the €3,000 ASC paid by students attending for the full academic year and so

amounts to approximately €1,000 per apprentice per period spent in the IoT. In the case of the new consortia led apprenticeships the contribution varies for each programme as their off-the-job training has a more flexible structure. In cases where training is delivered in an Education and Training Board there is no contribution made by the apprentice.

Based on projected apprenticeship provision in higher education institutions, apprentices or their employers will make up to €6.6 million in ASCs in 2019. If the arrangement in place prior to Budget 2014 arrangement were to be reinstated, where the apprentices paid the proportion of the ASC deemed to relate to examination fees, the total cost of not charging the ASC to the State would be €4.8 million in a full year.

Student Universal Support Ireland Data

302. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of students who received a SUSI grant for the 2017/2018 academic year; the cost of the provision of the SUSI grant for the year; and the estimated cost of a 1%, 5% and 10% increase in the SUSI grant. [31282/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): According to SUSI's records, 77,495 students were paid a SUSI grant in 2017/18 at a cost of €362,900,084. This figure is made up of both maintenance and fee grants.

The cost of the maintenance grants in 2017/18 was €167,616,986. Therefore, applying a 1%, 5% and 10% increase to the maintenance grants would cost €1.7m, €8.4m and €16.8m respectively.

Third Level Funding

303. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the results of the economic analysis of the Cassells report on third-level funding referred to the European Commission will be made available. [31283/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Following a request from the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills for an economic examination of the three policy options proposed by the report on future funding of higher education (Cassells report), my Department engaged with the European Commission Structural Support Service throughout 2018 to ascertain the scope for the economic evaluation to be carried out with support from the European Commission Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP). The SRSP provides tailor-made support to all EU countries for their institutional, administrative and growth-enhancing reforms to carry out the analysis of the three policy options identified by the Expert Group.

A formal application for support under the SRSP was submitted in October 2018 and subsequently approved by the Commission. Officials of my Department are currently working with officials from the European Commission to assist in finalising the detailed terms of reference for the review which will commence thereafter. It is currently expected that the evaluation will be completed in Q2 2020.

Having this evaluation undertaken through the Commission's SRSP will provide access to the type of independent international expertise and analysis that will be very beneficial to a major evaluation of this nature.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) closely monitors the financial position of higher

education institutions and in particular works closely with any institution that experiences financial difficulties in order to ensure appropriate mechanisms are put in place to eliminate any deficit as quickly as possible.

The Government's commitment to higher education is clearly demonstrated by the increase in current spending on higher education of almost €350m since 2015. This amounts to an increase approaching 25% over the period. In addition, the Government has already committed to a five year programme of increased investment amounting to €300m, commencing next year, under the Human Capital Initiative. It represents a significant response to projected demographic pressures impacting on the sector over the next five years, as highlighted in the report on future funding.

Departmental Staff Data

304. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of retirements and pensions started by staff in 2019; if these are in line with projections; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31284/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): In relation to staff employed directly by the Department of Education & Skills, 19 such staff have retired to date and are either in receipt of a pension or their pension is being processed by the National Shared Services Office who has responsibility for pension administration on behalf of staff at my Department. These numbers are broadly in line with Department projections.

In regard to retirements and pensions for the teaching and non-teaching staff employed by Primary and Post Primary Schools who are paid through the various payrolls in my Department, applications for

retirement benefits in 2019 continue to be submitted and 1,200 have been received to date; in the region of 280 applications have been fully processed and work is on going in the Departments Pension Unit, to process the remainder of the applications. The number of applications for retirement benefits for this group are also broadly in line with projections.

Springboard Programme

305. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of the provision of 100 additional springboard courses. [31285/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Springboard+ which incorporates the ICT skills conversion programme, is a targeted initiative which is used to provide funding for higher education courses aimed at meeting the need for in-demand skills in the economy. Springboard+ supports jobseekers to return to employment and those in employment to upskill or reskill.

Springboard+ is funded through the National Training Fund, €34.4m has been allocated to Springboard+ 2019 providing for 9,151 places on 275 courses.

The cost of providing 100 additional Springboard+ places would depend on the NFQ level and the skills area of the course. The most recent costings available are in relation to Springboard+ 2017 which are attached.

Questions - Written Answers

Skills Sector	SB2017
Construction/Green Economy	3,883
Financial Services	5,092
ICT Conversion	6,684
ICT Part-time	5,043
Management/Business/Entrepreneurship	3,743
Manufacturing/Biopharmachem	3,824
Other Skills Areas	3,870
Cost per Place — Level 6 (€)	
Skills Sector	SB2017
Construction/Green Economy	3,000
Financial Services	-
ICT Conversion	-
ICT Part-time	4,774
Management/Business/Entrepreneurship	3,012
Manufacturing/Biopharmachem	3,335
Other Skills Areas	3,544
Cost per Place — Level 7 (€)	
Skills Sector	SB2017
Construction/Green Economy	-
Financial Services	2,400
ICT Conversion	-
ICT Part-time	4,689
Management/Business/Entrepreneurship	3,795
Manufacturing/Biopharmachem	3,453
Other Skills Areas	2,563
Cost per Place — Level 8 (€)	
Skills Sector	SB2017
Construction/Green Economy	-
Financial Services	5,142
ICT Conversion	6,684
ICT Part-time	4,389
Management/Business/Entrepreneurship	3,793
Manufacturing/Biopharmachem	3,576
Other Skills Areas	4,750
Cost per Place — Level 9 (€)	
Skills Sector	SB2017
Construction/Green Economy	4,325
Financial Services	5,516
ICT Conversion	-
ICT Part-time	6,417
Management/Business/Entrepreneurship	4,092
Manufacturing/Biopharmachem	4,836
Other Skills Areas	5,600

Third Level Charges

306. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of a reduction of €100 to the student contribution at third-level. [31286/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Student Contribution, which currently stands at €3,000, was introduced on an incremental basis from the 2011/12 academic year. It is important to recognise that there has been no increase in the contribution rate since 2014/15.

Based on the number of students that qualified for free fees funding in the academic year 2017/18 (and were therefore liable to pay the Student Contribution), and taking into account projected increases in student numbers, it is estimated that the annual net cost to my Department of reducing the contribution by €100 is approximately €7.64million.

It should be noted that this figure encapsulates the resulting reduction to my Department's Student Grant Scheme budget, as the exchequer pays the contribution in full or part, on behalf of almost 50% eligible undergraduate students who are in receipt of student grant assistance.

Tax relief provisions are also available so that second and subsequent siblings do not have to bear the full cost. In addition, higher education institutions have provisions in place to allow students to pay the contribution in two moieties.

School Curriculum

307. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the specific learning outcomes for the draft primary mathematics curriculum; the rationale for this approach; the other countries in which a similar model is applied; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31287/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The National Strategy: Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020 called for a "learning outcomes" approach...to be incorporated into all curriculum statements at primary level. Since then, the NCCA has embarked on a review of the primary curriculum with language and mathematics being the first areas to be redeveloped using a learning outcomes approach.

It is generally agreed that Learning Outcomes are broad statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do after completion of learning. In the case of the draft Primary Mathematics Curriculum, the learning outcomes also set out big mathematical ideas for children's learning. The outcomes represent a shift towards thinking about what children will learn rather than what is to be taught.

Learning Outcomes in the draft Primary Mathematics Curriculum will help teachers to:

- select what to teach and the best order in which to teach it
- choose the most appropriate teaching methods and learning tasks and experiences for the children in their specific classrooms
- improve assessment by linking methods to the intended Learning Outcomes thereby ensuring more authentic assessment
- provide more focused and helpful feedback to children.

Sharing Learning Outcomes with children will help them to:

- be clear about what they are meant to be learning in maths
- monitor their own progress
- be able to take greater control of their own mathematical learning.

Based on international research as described in NCCA's Research Reports 17 and 18, the overarching aim of the draft Primary Mathematics Curriculum, to which the learning outcomes contribute, is the development of all children's mathematical proficiency. This proficiency encompasses conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, adaptive reasoning, strategic competence, and productive disposition. Mathematical proficiency has been adopted as a key aim in policy documents on mathematics in many countries, for example, the US (CCSSM/NGA, 2010), New Zealand (Anthony & Walshaw, 2007) and Australia (ACARA, 2009).

The NCCA will publish the draft Primary Mathematics Curriculum for junior infants to sixth class in 2020 for consultation.

School Transport Appeals

308. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of school transport appeals lodged to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31288/19]

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 School Transport Appeals Board is independent of my Department. Under the terms of reference of the Board, the Board determines appeals against decisions made by, or on behalf of, the Department of Education and Skills regarding the provision of school transport services and/or grant-aid under the terms of the School Transport Schemes.

I can advise that a total of 94 appeals were lodged to date for the 2019 school year.

School Transport Data

309. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of applications received for the school transport scheme in 2018; and the number of places provided. [31289/19]

310. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of children provided with school transport on a concessionary basis through the school transport scheme. [31290/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 309 and 310 together.

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.

Throughout the course of the school year Bus Éireann continue to issue tickets and allocate seats to pupils once capacity exists on any given route.

For the 2018/19 school year there were in the region of 1,600 children who applied for tickets on a concessionary basis who were not allocated a ticket.

In the 2018/2019 school year there were over 28,500 children availing of school transport on a concessionary basis.

The terms of the School Transport Schemes are applied equitably on a national basis.

Departmental Communications

311. Deputy Thomas Byrne asked the Minister for Education and Skills the oversight of his Department of circulars issued; if surveys have been carried out of compliance with circulars since 2016; if so, the surveys carried out; the results of those surveys; the compliance rate; the actions taken following these results; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31291/19]

312. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Education and Skills the oversight of his Department of directives, circulars, advice or requirements issued since 2016; if surveys have been carried out of compliance with these communications to date; the surveys carried out; the results of the surveys; the compliance rate; the actions taken by his Department following these results; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31323/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 311 and 312 together.

The Department of Education and Skills has issued a total of 285 circulars since 2016 – 81 in 2016, 84 in 2017, 84 in 2018 and 36 to date in 2019. All of these circulars are published on my Department's website. A number of circulars are issued on an annual basis and thereby amend or replace the previous versions.

The circulars cover a wide range of topics such as school staffing matters, continuing professional development for teachers, curriculum developments and buildings issues. Circulars may be addressed to a variety of stakeholders including, for example, teachers, principals, school

managers and Education and Training Boards.

Engagement with stakeholders on circulars can happen in a variety of ways. For instance, there are industrial relations fora set up across the education sector where issues arising from circulars may be raised. Education and Training Boards are required to comply with the Department's circulars. They are subject to audit by the Internal Audit Unit - ETBs to ensure, inter alia, compliance with the relevant circulars.

In the instance where a school inspector, in the course of an inspection, becomes aware of a school's non-compliance with Departmental circulars, the inspector will bring the matter to the attention of principal and to the Board of Management as appropriate. The non-compliance may also feature in findings and recommendations section of the inspection report. Where serious and/or multiple instances of non-compliance are noted the Inspectorate forwards a memo on the non-compliance to the relevant section of the Department for their attention.

Non-compliance with the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 (circular 81/2017) are always referred to in a discrete section of the inspection report.

Climate Change Policy

313. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the recurring weekly meetings attended by either him or the Secretary General of his Department in 2019 at which climate change and or preparations within his Department to enact a climate plan has been an agenda item; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31339/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department fully engages in any discussion relating to the Government's Climate Action Plan and will continue to participate in future discussions on the matter.

Schools Building Projects Status

314. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of planned works to a school (details supplied). [31450/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The project referred to by the Deputy has been devolved for delivery to the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA).

I am pleased to inform the Deputy that a Request for Tenders for the appointment of a Programme Manager and Design Team for the project has recently been issued by the NDFA.

While at this early stage it is not possible to provide a timeline for completion of the project, the NDFA will be engaging directly with the school authority to keep it informed of progress.

Schools Building Projects Status

315. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of planned works to a school (details supplied). [31451/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The project referred to by the Deputy has been devolved for delivery to the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA).

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I am pleased to inform the Deputy that a Request for Tenders for the appointment of a Programme Manager and Design Team for the project has recently been issued by the NDFA.

While at this early stage it is not possible to provide a timeline for completion of the project, the NDFA will be engaging directly with the school authority to keep it informed of progress.

Schools Building Projects Status

316. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a new building will be completed for a school (details supplied); the reason for the delays; and the number of labourers and tradesmen working on site. [31452/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy is aware, the project to which he refers has been devolved to Westmeath County Council (WCC) for delivery.

The Deputy will recall from previous answers that the initial delays with the delivery of the project were due primarily to unforeseen ground and weather conditions. However, I can assure the Deputy that I consider that the delays with this project that have arisen in recent months are completely unacceptable for all concerned. In particular, I am very conscious that the school will have to continue to operate from unsatisfactory conditions with increasing enrolments until its new building is ready.

The Deputy will also recall that a programme provided by the contractor which had indicated a completion date in July has recently been changed to provide for a completion date in October. Let me reiterate my extreme disappointment and frustrated with this development.

The contractor is responsible for resourcing and programming the construction works in question. WCC, which is responsible for managing the contract, has expressed to the contractor directly its disappointment with the level of resources on site and the slow progress of the construction programme.

I am pleased to say that Westmeath County Council has reported to my officials that there has been a significant improvement in the activity on site in recent weeks. The project is well over 80% complete and, on that basis, I am hopeful that the project will be completed in October as is now planned.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

317. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the fact children diagnosed with autism must travel to Kinnegad, County Westmeath twice daily to attend school due to the delay in the completion of a school (details supplied). [31453/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The project to which the Deputy refers has been devolved for delivery to Westmeath County Council (WCC).

The Deputy will be aware that my Department has met and worked closely with the patron and school authorities of both schools to which he refers. Together, they have put in place contingency arrangements to ensure that the needs of the school that has had a project delayed for the coming academic year are being met.

In that context, the Deputy is also aware that the school authorities and patron for the school in Kinnegad to which he refers have kindly agreed to temporarily provide accommodation for a

number of special needs pupils as an alternative to home tuition for those children. The Department will be providing the funding needed to facilitate this arrangement. I would like to express my thanks to the patron and school management of that school who have gone out of their way to provide a temporary home for these pupils.

I can assure the Deputy that I am extremely disappointed that the delays that have arisen in relation to this project in recent months have made it necessary to put these contingency arrangements in place. I would also assure the Deputy that Westmeath County Council, to whom responsibility for delivery the project in question has been devolved, is continuing to pursue the contractor for as speedy a delivery of the project as possible. It is fully supported by my Department in that respect.

Special Educational Needs Staff

318. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the possibility of a SNA for a child (details supplied) will be investigated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31454/19]

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.

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 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.

Direct Provision Data

319. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number and proportion of adults in direct provision in employment. [30785/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 which I signed into effect from 30 June, 2018, includes access to the labour market for qualified international protection applicants.

My Department provides confirmation in writing to qualified applicants of their entitlement to access the labour market, for use when they apply for a job or become self employed. It is a free, easy to use, accessible service with a very short turn around from receipt of application to the sending out of the permission letter. It is a very broad access to the workplace.

When an international protection applicant is issued with a labour market access permission under the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 and takes up employment, the employer (or applicant in the case of self-employment), is obliged to inform the Minister for Justice and Equality within 21 days. A standard form for this purpose is available on the website of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department.

I am advised by INIS that, based on the returned declaration forms received to date, a total of 1,267 applicants have indicated they have commenced employment or self-employment, of which 896 are living in Direct Provision. As the employer or applicant has 21 days from the time they take up employment or self-employment to return the declaration form, there is likely to be a time lag between the actual date of commencement of employment and INIS being notified of same.

Victims Commission

320. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if consideration will be given to reappointing a victims commissioner (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31178/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am assuming that the Deputy is referring to an equivalent position to the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Victims and Survivors.

The Deputy will recall that former Tánaiste, the late John Wilson was instrumental in chairing the Commission which produced the Report of the Victims' Commission, "A Place and a Name" in August 1999. John Wilson went on to play an important role as Commissioner to the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains.

The Stormont House Agreement, concluded by the two Governments and the Northern Ireland Parties in December 2014, provides for a framework of measures to address the legacy of the conflict in Northern Ireland. The Agreement provides for the establishment of an Independent Commission on Information Retrieval (ICIR).

The objective of the ICIR will be to enable victims and survivors to seek and privately receive information about the Troubles-related deaths of their next of kin. Individuals from both the UK and Ireland will be able to seek information from the ICIR. Relevant authorities will

cooperate with the ICIR.

The Irish and UK Governments concluded an agreement on the establishment of the ICIR in October 2015. The ICIR will consist of five members; an Independent Chairperson of international standing, appointed by the two Governments, one Commissioner each appointed by the Irish and UK Government and two Commissioners appointed by the Office of the Northern Ireland First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Work on the implementation of the Stormont House Legacy framework has been unduly delayed by the political impasse in Northern Ireland, although I am hopeful of progress and indeed the Government has been actively supporting recent efforts to try to find a way forward.

The Government has been progressing a programme of major reform in supporting victims of crime in recent years. This is being driven by a strong commitment to make our criminal justice system one which is much more accommodating and more supportive of all victims of crime including those who have suffered during the troubles.

In particular, the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act, 2017, which transposed the European Union's Directive (2012/29/EU) establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, into national law has provided for new statutory rights for all victims of crime in Ireland. This legislation, which was enacted in November 2017, includes new rights, particularly in areas such as the right to information and the provision of additional supports and protection.

At an operational level significant work has been, and continues to be, taken across the relevant criminal justice agencies to ensure that the necessary structures and arrangements are in place so as to ensure effective and streamlined implementation of the Act and in the overall provision of better supports to victims of crime.

Garda Data

321. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of FTE members of the Garda traffic corps or equivalent division in each of the past six years. [31185/19]

349. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of full-time equivalent members of the Garda traffic corps or equivalent division in each of the past six years. [31164/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 321 and 349 together.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for managing An Garda Síochána, including personnel matters, and I, as Minister, have no role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution under review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities to ensure optimum use is made of the resources.

In 2017 the Commissioner established the Garda National Roads Policing Bureau (GNRPB) to ensure a consistent approach to road safety and enforcement of road traffic legislation across the country. This is achieved through coordination of enforcement and development of policy based on research and analysis of statistics and by engaging in campaigns in partnership with other State Agencies.

11 July 2019

The Divisional Garda Traffic Corps have been re-named Garda Road Policing Units, to reflect the role the Units will play in denying criminals the use of the roads network. In addition to the Roads Policing Units focusing on the lifesaver offences of speeding, seatbelts, mobile phones and driving under the influence, they will also focus on crime prevention and crime detection. Divisional Roads Policing Units will work closely with other Divisional units to target known criminals and to disrupt their activities through strict enforcement of road traffic legislation.

The allocation and transfer of Garda Personnel is determined by a number of factors, including crime and non-crime workload, minimum establishment, population, area, policing arrangements, operational strategies and transfer applications, including welfare issues. When allocations are taking place, comprehensive consultation is carried out with Local Management during which all factors are taken into consideration. Where a deficiency in resources is identified the matter is considered fully and addressed accordingly.

The strength of the Roads Policing Units by Division, in each of the years 2009 to 31 May 2019 is available on my Department's website through the following link:

http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Roads_Policing_Unit

The overall workforce strength of An Garda Síochána is available on my Department's website through the following link:

http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Garda_Workforce

For more general information on Garda Facts and Figures please see the following link:

http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/An_Garda_Siochana_facts_and_figures.

Garda Data

322. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the strength of the Garda fraud unit; the strength in each of the past five years; and the number of personal injury claims defended in each year in tabular form. [31255/19]

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 matters.

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 requested a report from the Commissioner in relation to the matter referred to by the Deputy and I will revert to him when it is to hand.

Crime Investigation

323. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a historical investigations unit, similar to such a unit in Northern Ireland, will be created; if not, if a committee, body or independent person will be put in place to monitor the progress of State institutions here in investigating legacy issues as recommended in a report (details supplied); and if

he will make a statement on the matter. [31350/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, the investigation of crime is a matter for An Garda Síochána and the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the deployment of all Garda resources, including personnel. I have no role in such matters.

I have been advised by the Garda authorities that, in general terms, responsibility for the investigation of criminal offences resides in the first instance with the Superintendent of the District where the offence was committed.

The Garda National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, under the command of the Assistant Commissioner for Special Crime Operations, holds a national investigative remit and it is specialised in the area of major crime investigation. It undertakes and supports investigations on the direction of the Garda Commissioner.

The support provided includes using the expertise of the Serious Crime Review Team (SCRT), which was established in 2007 to provide independent review of historical investigations, including homicides. The purpose of a review conducted by the SCRT is to assist the Senior Investigating Officer with the criminal investigation. Such review is an independent examination of evidence and other material, gathered during investigation and to ensure that it conforms to approved standards; that the investigation has been thorough, conducted with integrity and objectivity; and to identify further investigative opportunities.

The range of other bureaux within Special Crime Operations support major investigations at a national level depending on the category of crime under investigation.

The investigation of terrorist-related offences falls under the remit of the Special Detective Unit under the command of Assistant Commissioner, Security and Intelligence. Other services within An Garda Síochána, such as the Analysis Service or the Technical Bureau, also provide support and assistance in the investigation and review of serious crimes.

The Deputy can be assured that in circumstances where historic, troubles-related offences have not been resolved, the investigations remain open and the Garda Authorities will and do follow up fully on any new evidence or information that becomes available to them, whether that comes from the public, from other police services or from their own investigations.

Garda Stations

324. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a car-park will be constructed at a Garda station (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31415/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation of €1.76 billion for 2019. Very significant capital investment is also being made, including a capital allocation of €92 million this year.

The Deputy will appreciate that the Office of Public Works (OPW) has responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation. Works in relation to Garda accommodation are progressed by the Garda authorities working in close cooperation with the OPW.

I am informed by the Garda authorities and the OPW that An Garda Síochána has made

enquiries with the OPW about developing parking facilities at the Garda station referred to by the Deputy. A quotation for the work was provided to the Garda authorities by the OPW. I am informed that the matter is under consideration by An Garda Síochána, in the context of overall Garda accommodation priorities.

Personal Injury Claims

325. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the most recent statistics on complaints and investigations relating to fraud within the personal injuries area as specified in recommendation 11 of the cost of insurance working group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31440/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As I noted in response to Parliamentary Question 269 of 18 June 2019, the most recent figures provided to me by An Garda Síochána show that, in the period 1 November 2018 (please note the corrected date) to end May 2019, 50 incidents of insurance fraud were recorded on PULSE. This equates to just over seven reports per month, with 1 November 2018 being the date on which a new category for “insurance fraud” went live on PULSE. 50% of these incidents related to staged collisions.

It is important to note that the aforementioned figures refer to reports being made to An Garda Síochána in the respective timeframe. Many of the alleged incidents reported during that period are historical in nature and occurred outside of the reporting timeframe.

It is also important to note that, while all incidents come under the umbrella of the “insurance fraud” category, not all of them relate to bogus insurance claims. For example, incidents of forged ‘no claims bonus’ documents, while being an insurance fraud, does not necessarily relate to a bogus insurance claim. Alternatively, a report of a staged collision clearly does link to a bogus insurance claim. Such nuances should be kept in mind when analysing this data.

Finally, An Garda Síochána have stressed that the data is correct as at 6 June 2019, however as it is operational data it is, therefore, subject to change.

Family Law Cases

326. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to provide a designated support services area in the family courts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30486/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I intend to publish proposals in 2019 for a new approach to handling family law cases in Ireland at District, Circuit and High Court levels. A Family Court Bill will be introduced to create a new dedicated Family Court within the existing court structures. These courts will have new procedures aimed at less adversarial resolution of disputes and will have appropriate facilities and case management arrangements.

A working group was established in 2017, comprising officials from the Department of Justice and Equality, the Courts Service and the Legal Aid Board, to examine the operational aspects relating to the family court and develop an overall architecture for the new family court structure. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Tusla also participated in the working group. Key issues that arose in consultations included family court venues and facilities, resources and capital investment in family courts and integration of relevant family and

child services to provide the best possible family law outcomes.

In 2018, a task force on the Family Court comprising senior officials from the Department of Justice and Equality, the Legal Aid Board and the Courts Service was formed to seek agreement on core questions of policy and costs. A representative of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs has also joined the group. The work of this group is at an advanced stage. Issues being examined include court areas and locations, use of courthouses, provision of facilities and services, arrangements for management of resources, and oversight arrangements.

Work is well advanced on the General Scheme of a Family Court Bill. When finalised, the General Scheme will be submitted for Government approval in the usual manner and will have to undergo pre-legislative scrutiny. The Bill will then be drafted by the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel.

The Family Court Bill is only one component of a new Family Court system. The provision of appropriate court facilities and services, including the designation of areas for support services, and the capital and current resources that may be required for this, will be important enablers for the operation of a new family court system.

Direct Provision System

327. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the national standards for direct provision accommodation will be published in view of the fact that the consultation concluded in September 2018; his plans to ensure an independent inspection mechanism will be put in place in line with the McMahon report recommendation to ensure oversight and compliance with the new national standards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30492/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): I and my colleague Minister Charles Flanagan T.D. have recently approved new standards for direct provision accommodation centres. They were prepared by a Standards Advisory Group, established in 2017 and comprising officials from my Department, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the HSE National Office for Social Inclusion as well as representatives from AkiDWA, Children's Rights Alliance, the Core Group of Asylum Seekers and Refugees, the Jesuit Refugee Service, SPIRASI, and the UNHCR. The Standards address a range of themes including accommodation provided for those people seeking the protection of the State, food and catering, individual, community and family life, health and wellbeing, governance and meeting the special reception needs of applicants. They therefore build on the work done in the 2015 McMahon Report and meet the requirements of the Recast Reception Directive.

The standards were opened to public consultation last year which included dedicated information workshops at a number of accommodation centres.

It is planned to publish the standards shortly. The current procurement process in respect of direct provision accommodation was designed with a view to ensuring that all direct provision accommodation will adhere to these standards, when they come into force in January 2021.

I am committed to developing a robust independent inspection process to monitor and ensure compliance with the standards following their implementation.

Direct Provision System

328. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the improvement works due to be carried out at the Towers direct provision centre in advance of the new contract being signed (details supplied). [30495/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): My Department, through the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), has commenced a national procurement programme for accommodation centres for persons entering the state and seeking international protection. This will comprise a series of regional competitions through the Government's procurement website www.etenders.gov.ie.

The Department ran a tender competition for premises within 40km of Newbridge, Co. Kildare for accommodation and ancillary services. Successful bidders were required to undertake mobilisation works to provide for residents cooking facilities, a foodhall (where residents can obtain ingredients and food items as well as toiletries and household items through a points system) and designated living space for families outside of the bedrooms. There is a 12 week provision for the completion of the required mobilisation works. No contract will be in effect until the mobilisation works are completed and subsequently inspected and verified as complete by RIA.

The provider who is currently providing accommodation and ancillary services at the Towers Centre in Clondalkin, Dublin 22 was successful in being placed on the framework. The 12 week mobilisation period commenced on the 11th April 2019 which required all works to be complete by the 4th July 2019. My Department has been informed recently that due to logistical reasons, the contractor was unable to commence mobilisation works. Following discussions, the contractor has agreed to commence these works and the current contract has been extended to allow this to happen.

Garda Transport Data

329. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of the Garda fleet that are rented vehicles; the cost of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30516/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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 allocation and efficient use of Garda resources.

I have requested the relevant information from the Commissioner and I will write to the Deputy directly when I receive it.

Garda Data

330. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the divisional breakdown of gardaí allocated to drug units in each of the past five years in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30530/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, the Garda Commissioner is statutorily responsible for the management of An Garda Síochána, including personnel matters, and I, as Minister, do not have responsibility for this matter. Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review in the context of

crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of resources.

I have been informed by the Commissioner that the additional resources coming on stream have enabled him to assign resources to Specialist Bureaus such as the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau. This Bureau leads on the strategy for tackling drugs and works with Garda Divisional Drug Units nationwide in demand reduction and supply reduction at local level.

An Garda Síochána remains resolute in its determination to act against those within society who pose a significant threat to the welfare and well-being of our citizens and the communities they serve. All Gardaí have a responsibility in the prevention and detection of criminal activity whether it be in the area of drug offences crime or otherwise. A core focus of the work carried out by An Garda Síochána is aimed at tackling drugs and organised crime.

The information requested by the Deputy is as set out in the following link:

[Drugs Unit by Division '08-18]

For more general information on Garda Facts and Figures please see the following link:

http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/An_Garda_Siochana_facts_and_figures.

Cyber Security Protocols

331. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if it has had a cybersecurity breach in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30591/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department's ICT Division employs a variety of policies and practices in its attempts to ensure the integrity, confidentiality and availability of the Department's data and ICT infrastructure and to protect it from all potential threats, both external and internal. In these efforts, ICT Division utilises expert support from specialist resources including its managed service contract. The division also liaises with the Computer Security Incident Response Team (the CSIRT-IE) of the National Cyber Security Centre in the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. The CSIRT-IE issues general cyber security updates on a regular basis and issues continuous alerts to ICT Division in relation to specific potential cyber security breaches, including advices on appropriate actions to mitigate such threats, which are then implemented.

The Department is not aware of any cyber security breach in the last 12 months but it continues to be vigilant in its efforts to ensure attempted breaches are repelled. In these circumstances, I am sure the Deputy will appreciate that I cannot provide detail on the Department's cyber security protocols in this reply, as it could potentially reduce their effectiveness and increase the risk of breaches.

Prison Visiting Committees Data

332. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide information in respect of prison visiting committees (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30614/19]

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Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): A Visiting Committee is appointed by the Minister for Justice and Equality to each prison under the Prisons (Visiting Committees) Act, 1925 and Prisons (Visiting Committees) Order, 1925. There are currently 12 Visiting Committees - one for each institution.

The function of Visiting Committees is to visit the prison to which they are appointed at frequent intervals and to hear any complaints which may be made to them by any prisoner. The Committees report to me any abuses observed or found by them in the prison and any other matters which they think may need be addressed. The Visiting Committee members have free access either collectively or individually to every part of their prison.

Details of visits, announced and unannounced, along with the arrangements generally made by Committees are contained in the Prison Visiting Committee Annual Reports. These Annual Reports up to and including 2017 are available on my Department's website - www.justice.ie. The 2018 annual reports are being collated at present with the intention of publishing them before the end of this year.

This question asks for the number and the dates of visits by members of the visiting committee to each of the prisons for the period 1 January to 8 July 2019. These statistics are not readily available. My officials will liaise with the Visiting Committees to gather and collate the details requested by the Deputy, but with the completion of the 2018 Annual Reports being the priority. The 2019 figures requested will be transmitted to the Deputy when my officials have them available.

European Arrest Warrant

333. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of European arrest warrants issued for which arrests and-or extraditions remain outstanding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30632/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): A court in the State may only issue a European Arrest Warrant upon application by or on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions where it is satisfied that a domestic warrant was issued for the arrest of that person but was not executed and the person is not in the State.

My Department is not involved in the issuing of warrants but does have a role in the transmission of such warrants to other member states of the European Union as appropriate.

My Department does not have full details of each case which is a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions. The information held by my Department suggests that of all the European Arrest Warrants issued in Ireland and transmitted to other Member States since 2004, 197 are currently ongoing. Of this overall provisional figure for active outgoing cases, 98 were issued in the period from the beginning of last year to date.

It should be noted that compliance with EAWs issued by this State is a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Brexit Issues

334. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the way in which a no-deal Brexit scenario will impact on the level of criminal justice co-operation which exists between parties to the agreement and the UK specifically with respect to outstanding European

arrest warrants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30633/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can assure the Deputy at the outset that it is the firm intention of the Government and the British Government that the current high level of criminal justice cooperation will continue in the event of a no-deal Brexit scenario. Cooperation in the area of law enforcement, particularly in relation to Northern Ireland, is at an all-time high and the Government is determined to maintain this. The Deputy will be aware that national security is outside the competence of the EU, so ongoing day-to-day cooperation in this area with the UK will continue following Brexit, whatever form it ultimately takes.

Notwithstanding this, considerable planning and preparation across the criminal justice area has been ongoing to take account of the potential impact of Brexit, including in relation to ensuring the continuance of effective extradition arrangements between Ireland and the UK. This is necessary because of Britain's proposed departure from the European Arrest Warrant (EAW) system. While the EAW will cease to apply when Brexit occurs, the High Court in the meantime is continuing to deal with outstanding UK EAW cases with a view to minimising the impact of Brexit in this regard.

Following examination of the options available for extradition arrangements between Ireland and the UK in the event of a no-deal Brexit, the fall-back solution is to apply the 1957 Council of Europe Convention on Extradition, to which both Ireland and the UK are party, to extradition arrangements between Ireland and the UK. The provisions of the Convention are given effect to by Part II of the Extradition Act 1965. The 1965 Act has been amended by Part 13 of the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2019, which can be commenced when Brexit occurs, in order to ensure that this is a workable solution.

Immigration Data

335. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the processing of applications under the special scheme for non-EEA nationals that held a student permission (details supplied); the number of applications made; the number of applications processed; when the processing is planned to be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30635/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the Special Scheme for Students was launched on 15 October, 2018 and closed to new applications on 20 January, 2019. INIS received approximately 3,100 applications comprising former students and their family members. To date, INIS has made a decision in approximately 1,800 cases. INIS has also made a decision in approximately 100 applications for review of a decision to refuse permission under the scheme.

The Deputy will appreciate that it is necessary to process such applications in compliance with legal requirements and in accordance with the Scheme criteria. I am assured that INIS continues to optimise available resources, including the provision of overtime, with the overarching objective of delivering decisions to all applicants under the scheme as soon as possible.

Refugee Resettlement Programme

336. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there is a deadline by which he expects Ireland's commitment to admit 4,000 persons under the relocation and resettlement programmes will be met; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30665/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): In 2015, as part of Ireland's response to the migration crisis in central and southern Europe, the Government established the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP). Under this programme, the Government committed to accepting up to 4,000 people into the State, primarily through a combination of the EU Relocation Programme and the UNHCR's Refugee Resettlement Programme.

The Government Decision to accept 4,000 persons into the State did not contain a deadline, but the relocation mechanism, in particular, did carry a time limit of approximately two years to end on 31 December 2017. This was extended to 31 March 2018. In total, 1,022 people were welcomed in Ireland under the EU relocation mechanism, which fulfilled Ireland's commitment to this strand of the Programme.

A total of 2,555 people have arrived in Ireland to date under the various strands of the IRPP, 51 of whom are unaccompanied minors. A further 60 refugees are due to arrive in the coming weeks.

An IRPP mission to Lebanon in March 2019 selected 331 refugees for resettlement to Ireland. A further mission to Jordan later this month will select approximately 300 refugees. This will complete Ireland's commitment to admit 1,985 programme refugees under the resettlement strand of the IRPP. The remaining refugees are due to arrive in Ireland during the remainder of 2019.

The IRPP programme also includes the IRPP Humanitarian Admission Programme under which Irish citizens, programme refugees, Convention refugees and persons with subsidiary protection can apply for family members to come to Ireland where those persons are living in the top 10 refugee generating countries. 530 persons are being admitted to Ireland this year under that programme.

The following table shows the current state of commitments made and the number of persons welcomed to Ireland as part of the IRPP.

Commitments and Arrivals as part of the IRPP

-	Commitment	Arrivals	Remaining
EU Relocation Strand (concluded on 31 March 2018)	1,022	1,022	-
Of which are unaccompanied minors	6	6	-
UNHCR-led Resettlement Strand	1,985	1,335	650
Calais Special Project	41	41	-
Unaccompanied minors: Greece / Malta	60	-	60
Total unaccompanied minors	101	41	60
IRPP Humanitarian Admission Programme 2018/19	530	99	431
Mediterranean search and rescue missions			
Adults	54	54	-
Unaccompanied minors	9	4	5
Total from search and Rescue missions	63	58	5

Mechanism as yet undecided	299	-	299
Total IRPP Commitment/Arrivals	4,000	2,555	1,445

Migrant Integration

337. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the local authorities that have a published migrant integration strategy; the local authorities without such a strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30666/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): As the Deputy is aware, responsibility in relation to the actions of local authorities lay with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have sought the relevant information from the Local Government Management Agency.

I am informed that all 31 local authorities, under the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), have “new communities” and Roma listed as target groups for their actions. Actions for the delivery of SICAP are captured in local authority migrant integration strategies by eight local authorities and an additional twelve local authorities have detailed their actions in other plans, i.e., the Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP). The remaining local authorities are in the process of creating plans or strategies in which their actions targeted at new communities and Roma can be captured and tracked.

Migrant Integration Strategies in place (in addition to SICAP)	Integration actions detailed in other plans (in addition to SICAP)	SICAP integration actions
1. Dublin City Council 2. Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council 3. Fingal County Council 4. Kildare County Council 5. Limerick County Council 6. Longford County Council 7. South Dublin County Council 8. Waterford County Council	1. Cavan County Council 2. Cork City Council 3. Cork County Council 4. Donegal County Council 5. Galway City Council 6. Kerry County Council 7. Leitrim County Council 8. Mayo County Council 9. Sligo County Council 10. Tipperary County Council 11. Westmeath County Council 12. Wexford County Council	1. Carlow County Council 2. Clare County Council 3. Galway County 4. Kilkenny County Council 5. Laois County Council* 6. Louth County Council* 7. Meath County Council 8. Monaghan County Council 9. Roscommon County Council 10. Wicklow County Council* 11. Offaly County Council*

* Update provided in January 2019. All other updates provided by local authorities in June 2019

Citizenship Applications

338. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a sworn affidavit may be of assistance in authenticating a relationship to their late parent in respect to making an application for Irish citizenship in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30697/19]

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Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that, as indicated in my response to the Deputy's Parliamentary Question No. 117 of 20 June 2019, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements, not only within the State but also at European Union level, and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

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

As the Deputy will appreciate, the granting of Irish citizenship is governed by specific legal provisions and an assessment as to whether an application is eligible or not can only be made after an application has been submitted.

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.

Brexit Preparations

339. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his Department has conducted an assessment of the additional resources that An Garda Síochána may require in the event of a hard or no-deal Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30738/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, the manner in which the resources of the Garda Síochána are deployed is solely a matter for the Garda Commissioner and his management team and I, as Minister, have no direct role in this regard.

However, I can assure the Deputy that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that optimum use is made of resources.

In common with all Government Departments and State Agencies, An Garda Síochána has been preparing for Brexit and there is ongoing engagement between senior Garda management and my Department in this regard. Preparation has had a wide-ranging focus on operational requirements, including personnel, infrastructure and technology. I know the Commissioner

is committed to ensuring the organisation can deal with any policing challenges arising from Brexit though clearly the circumstances which may arise are dependant on the political settlement.

As the Deputy is well aware, the Government's policy is that there will be no hard border on the island and there are no plans for such. However, as he is also aware, policing in the border region has always presented particular challenges and this can be expected to increase in the context of Brexit. It is also the case that violent dissident republican groups continue to seek to frustrate counter-terrorism efforts and organised criminals seek to exploit the two jurisdictions in order to try to evade detection.

The 2018 Cross-Border Threat Assessment prepared jointly by An Garda Síochána and the PSNI estimated that some 43 per cent of organised crime gangs in Northern Ireland have a cross-border dimension. Likewise, mobile organised crime groups, responsible for multiple instances of domestic burglary, operate on an all-island basis. There are increasing instances of borderless crimes such as cyber fraud and international terrorism.

The success of cross border policing actions is grounded in the recognition that the best means of combatting the threat to our communities is to maintain and enhance the excellent levels of cooperation between law enforcement agencies north and south of the border. The Gardaí and PSNI, along with other agencies, have worked together closely for many years and enjoy an excellent working relationship and co-operation at all levels.

The Fresh Start Agreement recognised this and led to the establishment of Joint Agency Investigation Teams which have had considerable success in combatting this type of crime. I understand this is also the context for the Commissioner's operational decision to establish an additional Armed Support Unit in Cavan.

Garda ASUs provide a rapid armed response capacity and capability on a Regional basis. Members of the ASUs are highly trained and equipped with a variety of non-lethal and lethal weapons and perform high visibility armed checkpoints and patrols throughout their respective Regions. In the Northern Region ASUs are currently based in Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal and Dundalk, Co. Louth. An additional ASU for the Northern Region is to be established in Cavan.

Garda deployments in all areas of the country including those along the Border have benefited from increased recruitment in recent years. I am advised by the Commissioner that the strength of the Northern Region as on 31 May, the latest date for which figures are currently available, was 1,448 Gardaí. There are 56 Garda Reserves and 153 Garda civilian staff attached to the Northern Region. An additional 50 Gardaí were assigned to the region from the last attestation on 7 June 2019.

The increased resources coming on stream have also provided the capacity to expand the specialist bureaus including the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau, all of which are particularly active in the Northern Region in addition to the Armed Support Units.

The ongoing recruitment will provide the Commissioner with the resources needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí to deliver a visible, effective and responsive policing service. These requirements will be kept under ongoing review by Garda management with a view to addressing any policing requirements for the Border region which may arise depending upon the outcome of the Brexit negotiations. In the event that a "no deal" Brexit gives rise to additional requirements in border areas, further resources can and will be provided through redeployment.

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Living Wage

340. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated cost of implementing a living wage €12.30 for all employees directly employed and or in agencies under his remit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30775/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Based on current salaries and staff numbers, the additional annual salary cost for implementing a wage of €12.30 per hour is estimated to be €2,105,568.70 for 592 staff.

These figures include bodies under the aegis of my Department with the exception of An Garda Síochána, the Legal Aid Board, and the Courts Service who were not able to supply data within the timeline. I have asked these bodies to provide the information directly to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Departmental Data

341. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the different income streams directly paid by persons to his Department or agencies under his remit, such as motor tax; the number of persons making annual payments; the value of same; the number of payments made through staged or increment payments; the value of same; the additional income generated as a result of payments being made on an incremental basis; if incremental payments are not available, the reason for same; the corresponding figures for 1999 and 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30858/19]

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.

Prison Service Strategies

342. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he is considering piloting the concept of a therapeutic community in the prison system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30869/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Irish Prison Service has advised me that the prison environment provides a unique opportunity to support individuals in managing their addiction to drugs and alcohol and to provide rehabilitation.

The Irish Prison Service is currently developing a new Drugs Strategy which is reviewing measures to prevent drugs getting into prisons and changing patterns of illicit drug use. The Irish Prison Service in conjunction with The Probation Service commissioned a ‘Review of Drug and Alcohol Treatment services for Adult Offenders in Prison and in the Community’ the recommendations of which will form a key component of the new Drugs Strategy.

The development of a Therapeutic Community will remain a key element of the Irish Prison Service Strategic Plan 2019 – 2022. The Irish Prison Service considers this initiative as one of primary importance in addressing addiction in the prison population. It would represent a positive addition to collaboration which exists between the Irish Prison Service and the Health Service Executive in addressing addiction.

However, the development of a Therapeutic Community on a pilot basis requires the availability of sufficient resources. The Irish Prison Service has sought the agreement of the Department of Health to jointly seek funding as part of the upcoming 2020 estimates process.

Project Ireland 2040 Implementation

343. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the capital projects which have been delayed under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; when these projects will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30890/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the following capital projects under the remit of my Department and Agencies have been delayed under Project Ireland 2040:

Justice : Forensic Science Laboratory

The Office of Public Works (OPW) is managing the Forensic Science Laboratory Project, on behalf of my Department. The OPW advised that, due to the complexity of ISO standard (14644-1) for Cleanrooms and Associated Controlled Environments, it was necessary to add further material to the tender documentation for the main contract. As a result the timelines for issuing the tender documentation had to be revised.

The Forensic Science Laboratory project has incurred expenditure in 2017 and 2018 in relation to site clearance and preparation works. Tender submissions for the main contract are due to be received in the coming weeks.

I have requested that relevant agencies under the remit of my Department, and operating under a separate Vote structure (An Garda Síochána, Irish Prison Service and Courts Service) respond directly to the Deputy.

Project Ireland 2040 Implementation

344. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the capital projects which have commenced under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30923/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the following capital projects under the remit of my Department and Agencies have commenced under Project Ireland 2040:

Justice: Forensic Science Laboratory

Justice: Baseline Capital

I have requested that relevant agencies under the remit of my Department, and operating under a separate Vote structure (An Garda Síochána, Irish Prison Service and Courts Service) respond directly to the Deputy.

Project Ireland 2040 Expenditure

345. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if expenditure estimates for capital projects under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies match projected cost requirements in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30969/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the following capital projects under the remit of my Department and Agencies are included in Project Ireland 2040:

Justice: Forensic Science Laboratory

Justice: Baseline Capital

Forensic Science Laboratory

The Office of Public Works (OPW) is managing the Forensic Science Laboratory Project, on behalf of my Department. The OPW advised that, due to the complexity of ISO standard (14644-1) for Cleanrooms and Associated Controlled Environments, it was necessary to add further material to the tender documentation for the main contract. As a result the timelines for issuing the tender documentation had to be revised.

The Forensic Science Laboratory project has incurred expenditure of €1.3m and €1.4m in 2017 and 2018 respectively, in relation to site clearance and preparation works. As the issuing of tender documentation has been delayed, expenditure is behind that originally profiled. Tender submissions for the main contract are due to be received in the coming weeks and information in relation to tender pricing is commercially sensitive.

Baseline Capital

The Baseline Capital refers to the Department's annual capital allocation of €0.35m, principally for ICT capital costs, in line with projected cost requirements.

I have requested that relevant agencies under the remit of my Department, and operating under a separate Vote structure (An Garda Síochána, Irish Prison Service and Courts Service) respond directly to the Deputy.

Capital Expenditure Programme

346. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of capital projects being undertaken by his Department; the final agreed tender price; the estimated cost of each capital project in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31079/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that there are no capital projects being undertaken by my Department at present. I have requested that relevant Agencies under the remit of my Department and operating under a separate Vote structure (Courts Service, Prison Service and An Garda Síochána) respond directly to the Deputy.

Capital Expenditure Programme

347. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the capital projects completed since 2010; the final agreed tender price for each project; the actual cost of each

project; if the actual cost exceeded the tender price; the reason therefor in each case in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31095/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that there were no capital projects more than €5m completed by my Department since 2010. I have requested that relevant Agencies under the remit of my Department and operating under a separate Vote structure (Courts Service, Prison Service and An Garda Síochána) respond directly to the Deputy.

Courts Service Data

348. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of court cases in each year since 2014 in which it has been shown that the claimant has made a fraudulent claim; the number of times per year the judge has referred the person to the Director of Public Prosecutions as specified in the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31101/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that section 25 of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004 provides that it is an offence for a person to give or adduce evidence in a personal injuries action that is false or misleading and that the person knows to be false or misleading, or to cause false or misleading evidence to be given or adduced with the intention of misleading the court. It is also an offence for a person to give false or misleading instructions or information to a solicitor or expert in relation to a personal injuries action or to cause false or misleading instructions or information to be given with the intention of misleading the court.

The Courts Service has advised that Courts Service statistics are not compiled in such a way as to provide the information requested by the Deputy. The Deputy will be aware that the Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance by the Cost of Insurance Working Group recognised the data challenges in establishing the number of initial complaints and investigations through to the resultant cases of prosecutions and convictions relating to fraud within the personal injuries area and the Report made recommendations to address this matter.

While the Courts Service was consulted in respect of recommendation 12 to commence producing statistics on prosecutions and convictions relating to fraud within the personal injuries area, it was considered that the addition of a specific Insurance Fraud category on the PULSE system would allow for the production of such statistics and consequently it was agreed that these statistics would be provided by An Garda Síochána rather than the Courts Service as originally envisaged.

I am informed that while technical issues arose with the introduction of a new “insurance fraud” category on the PULSE system, these issues have now been resolved and the collection of statistics under the new category has commenced.

The most recent figures provided to me by An Garda Síochána show that, in the period 1 November 2018 to end May 2019, 50 incidents of insurance fraud were recorded on PULSE. This equates to just over seven reports per month, with 1 November 2018 being the date on which a new category for “insurance fraud” went live on PULSE. 50% of these incidents related to staged collisions.

It is important to note that the aforementioned figures refer to reports being made to An Garda Síochána in the respective timeframe. Many of the alleged incidents reported during that period are historical in nature and occurred outside of the reporting timeframe.

It is also important to note that, while all incidents come under the umbrella of the “insurance fraud” category, not all of them relate to fraudulent insurance claims. For example, incidents of forged ‘no claims bonus’ documents, while being an insurance fraud, does not necessarily relate to an insurance claim.

Finally, An Garda Síochána have stressed that the data is correct as at 6 June 2019. However as it is operational data it is, therefore, subject to change.

Question No. 349 answered with Question No. 321.

Garda Investigations

350. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the further progress regarding the need for a full and comprehensive investigation here and in Northern Ireland into the bombing in Belturbet, County Cavan, in December 1972 which caused the death of two young persons and injuries to many others; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31173/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The murder of two innocent young people in Belturbet in December 1972 was an appalling act of brutality. The perpetrators of this bombing demonstrated a callous disregard for human life which, as the Deputy has stated, claimed two lives and injured many other people.

The Deputy will be aware that this crime was methodically investigated by An Garda Síochána at the time, with technical assistance from the Defence Forces and the close cooperation of the authorities in Northern Ireland. It is a source of great regret that, in spite of a comprehensive investigation, it was not possible for those responsible to be prosecuted for their crimes. In the absence of justice, the bombing of Belturbet continues to inflict an intolerable suffering on the families of those who died and those who were injured.

As I previously informed the Deputy in my response to his question of 6 February, the passage of 45 years and the absence of new evidence being produced has diminished the prospect of a successful prosecution in this case. Nonetheless, the Garda investigation remains open and any new information or evidence will be thoroughly investigated both in Ireland and in Northern Ireland with the assistance of the PSNI. I would call on anyone with information about this crime to bring it to the attention of the Garda authorities.

Human Rights Cases

351. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when his Department first learned of the case of a person (details supplied); the actions his Department has taken on this matter and to facilitate this person’s return here; the progress made to date in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31197/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, these are very sensitive matters and it is the long standing policy of my Department not to comment publicly on the details of any individual case or the arrangements that may be put in place.

The provision of consular assistance to Irish citizens abroad is the responsibility of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

I along with my colleague, the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs, continue to monitor the situation and the authorities here will continue to work closely with their international partners in this regard.

Coroners Service

352. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the coroner service holds data for the number of young children and teenagers ruled to have died in the past five years as a result of eating disorders; and if so, if the information will be provided. [31218/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department, as required by the Coroners Act 1962, publishes annual statistics in respect of the primary work of coroners in the various jurisdictions throughout the country.

These statistics concern the number of deaths reported, the number of post-mortem examinations directed and the number of inquests heard by each coroner. This information is publicly available on the coroners website at www.coroners.ie.

Statistics on the types of death requested by the Deputy are not held by my Department.

Garda Recruitment

353. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated cost of 50,100 and 200 Garda recruits in each of the years 2019 to 2022; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31303/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): There has been an unprecedented level of investment in An Garda Síochána in recent years. The budgetary allocation to An Garda Síochána for 2019 amounts to €1.76 billion, which includes provision for sustained recruitment to An Garda Síochána this year.

The Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling the administration and business of An Garda Síochána, including by arranging for the recruitment and training of personnel. Further, the allocation of Garda resources and distribution of personnel are a matter for the Commissioner, in light of identified operational demands.

I am pleased to say that recruitment of Garda members and staff is ongoing. Since the beginning of 2017, just under 500 new Garda staff posts have been sanctioned by the Policing Authority with the consent of my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The Government provided funding in Budget 2019 to sustain continued recruitment into An Garda Síochána and, as part of this recruitment, the Commissioner decided to recruit a net 600 Garda Staff this year, which will facilitate the ongoing programme of civilianisation in An Garda Síochána and allow for redeployment of approximately 500 experienced Gardaí to frontline policing duties by the end of this year. This fully reflects the Governments’ continuing support for the Commissioner in reaching the target of 4,000 Garda staff by 2021.

From information provided to me by the Garda authorities, I understand that the current estimated full year cost of employing 50 newly attested Gardaí is €2,206,580; the current cost

of employing 100 newly attested Gardaí is €4,413,160, and the current cost of employing 200 newly attested Gardaí is €8,826,320. This estimate includes basic salary (at the first point on the Garda pay scale), fixed allowances, an estimate of variable allowances which newly attested Gardaí may qualify for depending on their assignments and employer's PRSI. This estimate does not include any payments made to trainee Gardaí while attending the Garda training college for 32 weeks, nor does it include the impact of any pay increases this year (including the 1.75% pay rise scheduled for 1 September 2019) or in the years to 2022 as referred to by the Deputy.

Garda Civilian Staff Recruitment

354. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated cost of recruiting an additional 100 civilian staff to An Garda Síochána. [31304/19]

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, as well as capital investment amounting to € 92 million this year.

The Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling the administration and business of An Garda Síochána, including by arranging for the recruitment and training of personnel. Further, the allocation of Garda resources and distribution of personnel are a matter for the Commissioner, in light of identified operational demands.

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The Government provided funding in Budget 2019 to sustain continued recruitment into An Garda Síochána and, as part of this recruitment, the Commissioner decided to recruit a net 600 Garda staff this year, which will facilitate the ongoing programme of civilianisation in An Garda Síochána and allow for the redeployment of approximately 500 experienced Gardaí to frontline policing duties by the end of this year. This fully reflects the Government's continuing support for the Commissioner in reaching the target of 4,000 Garda staff by 2021.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that as of 31 May 2019, there were approximately 2,700 Garda staff undertaking administrative, professional, technical and industrial support duties.

I am further informed that such staff positions range from clerical support and financial management functions to specialised roles in HR, IT and telecommunications, as well as finance and procurement, internal audit, communications, research and analysis, accommodation, scene-of-crime support and legal and medical services. Large numbers of Garda staff also work in operational areas including the Garda Central Vetting Bureau, the Garda Information Service Centre, the Fixed Charge Processing Office and the Command and Control Centre.

Bearing in mind this broad range of duties, I am advised by the Garda authorities that the estimated cost of employing 100 Garda staff would be approximately €4,500,000, on the basis of an average estimated cost per civilian employee of approximately €45,000, including employer costs such as PRSI.

Garda Reserve

355. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated cost of increasing the Garda Reserve by 50, 100 and 1,000 members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31305/19]

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, in addition to a capital allocation of € 92 million this year.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling the administration and business of An Garda Síochána, including arranging for the recruitment and training of personnel. Further, the allocation of Garda resources and distribution of personnel are a matter for the Commissioner, in light of identified operational demands.

The Garda Reserve is an invaluable operational resource for An Garda Síochána with Reserve members working alongside Garda members to protect and serve their local communities. In line with commitments outlined under A Policing Service for the Future, a training class of approximately 100 Garda Reserves commenced training in the Garda College in March 2019. The strength of the Garda Reserve as of 31 May 2019, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 491.

I am advised that an allowance is payable to Reserve members who complete a minimum of 208 hours duty annually as a contribution towards expenses incurred in performing their duties. This allowance is currently set at €1,000 per annum. Reserves are also reimbursed for expenses incurred while attending court in respect of their service as a Reserve.

As such, I am advised by the Garda authorities that the estimated cost of increasing the Garda Reserve by 50 members is €50,000, by 100 members is €100,000 and by 1,000 members is €1,000,000.

Garda Resources

356. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated cost of establishing a Garda fraud unit. [31306/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB, formerly known as the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation) has been established since 1995. The remit of the GNECB includes playing a pro-active role in the prevention and detection of fraud, and acting as a central repository for fraud related intelligence and therefore the GNECB effectively houses the Garda fraud unit.

In relation specifically to insurance fraud investigation, which has been discussed on a number of recent occasions in this House, I have previously outlined how the Garda Commissioner is of the view that a divisional focus on insurance fraud is preferable to the establishment of a centralised insurance fraud investigation unit.

The Deputy will no doubt be aware of Deputy Commissioner John Twomey’s appearance in front of the Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach on 9th July. At the Committee, the Deputy Commissioner clearly set out the organisation’s plans for fraud investigation:

“At meetings between Commissioner Harris and Minister D’Arcy, both parties were agreed that private funding of a specialist insurance fraud unit was not the preferred option...

Commissioner Harris has also informed the Minister that in line with the overall Garda strategy, GNECB will focus on major organised frauds including insurance cases and individual insurance frauds will be dealt with at divisional level. This is in line with the greater emphasis on divisional-led policing as outlined in the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland. This divisional-led approach is currently being trialled as part of our four Divisional Policing Model pilots.”

Deputy Commissioner Twomey went on to state:

“The Commissioner believes that it is important that there is sufficient expertise at divisional level to deal with individual frauds. Each division already has a number of Gardaí trained in fraud investigation and 50 more will be trained this year. The resource requirement for each Division will be different and will depend on the number of crimes reported and requiring investigation. Further resources – 6 Sergeants and 6 Gardaí - have also recently been provided to GNECB to assist in all areas of fraud investigation. It is anticipated that a competition for positions in GNECB will commence in the second half of this year.

In the meantime, An Garda Síochána continues to develop in-house expertise in investigating insurance-related fraud. All Detective Gardaí and Detective Sergeants receive fraud training. In addition, since 2016, 132 Gardaí have been trained in the investigation of fraud and e-crime investigation at University College Dublin.”

I trust this information provides a clear picture of the An Garda Síochána’s plans to tackle insurance fraud across the State.

Garda Operations

357. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has received information from An Garda Síochána regarding the rising level of reported murder threats as detailed by the Central Statistics Office; the findings of the work of An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31307/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am aware of reports in the media in recent days, and of the details contained in the most recent CSO crime statistics, regarding an increase in the reported incidents of threats to murder.

The increases are not confined to just one area of the country, but are across all Garda regions.

I am of course concerned at the increase.

I note that there have been substantial increases in areas that are experiencing gang and family feud-related violence. There have been increases in threats to murder in Dublin North, Louth, Limerick and Dublin West. However, as the Deputy is well aware, there are a number of targeted Garda Operations currently ongoing to tackle the threat of serious, violent criminals and Gardaí are currently finalising a strategy to tackle serious assaults against the person.

While there has been a substantial increase in the number of threats to murder over the last 5 years, I note the yearly decrease of 14.3% in incidents of homicide - down from 84 incidents to the end of Q1 2018 to 72 incidents at the end of Q1 2019. It is also worth highlighting that Gardaí have prevented a number of potential homicides, in many cases almost immediately before they were about to be carried out, in recent years through targeted policing operations and I commend them for their ongoing vigilance and bravery in this regard.

To be of assistance to the Deputy, and to address my own concerns, I have also sought the views of the Garda Commissioner on this matter and will contact the Deputy directly once a response has been received.

Garda Transport Data

358. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 238 and 239 of 16 April 2019, the status of the cost and the number of vehicles hired by An Garda Síochána in 2019. [31308/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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 allocation and efficient use of Garda resources.

I have requested the relevant information from the Commissioner and I will write to the Deputy directly when I receive it.

Legislative Programme

359. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the Bills in his Department undergoing drafting; the drafting status of each Bill; the Government Bills for which amendments are being drafted; the Private Members’ Bills for which amendments are undergoing drafting and which have passed Committee Stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31309/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be very familiar with the various stages which legislation goes through prior to its enactment as law, its progress being dependent on various factors, including the cooperation of Members of these Houses.

My colleague the Chief Whip outlined earlier today the significant progress made on the legislative programme during the current Dáil term, with 34 Bills either enacted to date or due to pass both Houses of the Oireachtas by the end of this week. This includes 13 Acts or Bills sponsored by my Department.

A further Bill, the Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2016 remains before the Oireachtas having completed Committee Stage on 30th January.

In addition to this, the following Bills are currently being drafted in consultation with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel:

- Communications (Data Retention and Disclosure) Bill
- Criminal Justice (Money Laundering & Terrorist Financing)(Amendment) Bill
- Criminal Justice (Mutual Recognition of Decisions on Supervision Measures) Bill
- Criminal Justice Bill
- Criminal Records (Exchange of Information) Bill
- Criminal Justice (Community Sanctions) Bill

- Criminal Procedure Bill
- European Convention on Human Rights (Compensation for delays in Court proceedings) Bill
- Sex Offenders (Amendment) Bill
- Transfer of Sentenced Persons (Amendment) Bill
- Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences (PMB) Bill 2017
- Transfer of Sentenced Persons and Transfer of Execution of Sentences Bill
- Landlord and Tenant Law Reform Bill
- Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017
- Explosives Bill
- Parental Leave and Benefit Bill.

Direct Provision Data

360. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons in direct provision accommodation centres between the end of December 2018 and the end of June 2019, by centre and month in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31310/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): The statistical data requested by the Deputy is contained in tabular excel spreadsheets at the following link:

[Occupancy]

The Deputy should note that a further 988 persons are currently accommodated in emergency accommodation in hotels and guesthouses.

Direct Provision Data

361. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reported capacity of each direct provision centre at the end of June 2019, in tabular form; the reported capacity of each direct provision centre in January 2018; if works to increase capacity have taken place; and if so, the nature of the works. [31311/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): In January and again in September of 2018, the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) of my Department published a call in the national press for expressions of interest from potential contractors to meet the increasing demand for accommodation for persons in the protection process. The criteria against which the Department assessed the offers of accommodation were availability, standard of property, ability to provide communal social spaces for residents, ability to cater at mealtimes and proximity to various other services.

Seven new accommodation centres were opened following those calls for expressions of

interest.

Simultaneously, staff in my Department worked with existing accommodation providers to identify additional capacity in existing centres. This involved the identification of additional or unused areas within a centre by centre staff, followed by upgrade or refurbishment works by the centre operator to ensure that all any new accommodation provided met statutory requirements and then final approval of the increase in capacity by the Department. This process was ongoing during 2018.

In August 2018, my Department, in conjunction with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP), commenced a series of regional Requests for Tender (RFT) competitions for accommodation and other services for persons seeking international protection. To date, seven such competitions have been held. Two are complete and the remainder are underway. Additional capacity was also identified as part of those competitions. As the results of some of the competitions have yet to be published, the identity of those premises remains confidential.

Tabular information on the capacity of centres is as follows:

Centre Name	County	Capacity 7th January 2018	Capacity 30th June 2019
Knockalisheen	Clare	250	250
King Thomond Hotel*	Clare		115
Ashbourne House	Cork	95	95
Davis Lane*	Cork		52
Kinsale Road	Cork	275	299
Glenvera	Cork	119	130
Millstreet	Cork	250	304
Clonakilty Lodge	Cork	110	110
Georgian Court**	Dublin	110	
The Towers	Dublin	225	250
Hatch Hall	Dublin	215	220
Watergate House**	Dublin	68	
Eglinton Hotel	Galway	200	210
Great Western House	Galway	162	162
Atlas House Killarney	Kerry	90	90
Atlas House Tralee	Kerry	100	100
Johnson Marina	Kerry	90	90
Linden House	Kerry	57	57
Park Lodge	Kerry	55	55
Atlantic Lodge*	Kerry		98
The Hazel Hotel*	Kildare		143
Eyre Powell	Kildare	87	152
The Montague Hotel	Laois	202	202
Hibernian Hotel*	Laois		63
Hanratty's Hotel	Limerick	118	118
Mount Trenchard	Limerick	85	85
Richmond Court	Longford	80	80
Carroll Village	Louth	60	60

Centre Name	County	Capacity 7th January 2018	Capacity 30th June 2019
The Old Convent	Mayo	245	245
Mosney	Meath	600	600
St. Patrick's	Monaghan	175	212
Globe House	Sligo	215	218
Bridgewater House	Tipperary	115	161
Atlantic House	Waterford	82	82
Ocean View	Waterford	100	100
Birchwood House	Waterford	145	145
Viking House	Waterford	81	81
The Grand Hotel*	Wicklow		111
Temple*	Westmeath		100
Athlone	Westmeath	300	300

* denotes new accommodation centre opened between January 2018 and June 2019

** denotes accommodation centre closed between January 2018 and June 2019

Direct Provision Data

362. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of young persons under 18 years of age in direct provision not attending school. [31312/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): While an international protection claim is being examined, the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) offers accommodation and related services to anyone without means. The Department of Education and Skills provides school places for children resident in the centres.

All children in Ireland, including children seeking international protection, can access pre-school, first and second level education in a manner similar to Irish nationals, until they have reached the age of 18 years.

Children residing in accommodation centres under contract to the Department of Justice and Equality to accommodate international protection applicants are provided with information and assistance regarding enrolment in local schools. The assistance of TUSLA Educational Welfare Service is sought where there are local difficulties in securing a school place.

The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) does not maintain statistics on the school attendance of children residing in accommodation centres.

Direct Provision Data

363. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons who have been refused accommodation in direct provision centres to date in 2019; the alternatives offered to such persons; and the length of time between refusal and their being offered accommodation. [31313/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): While an international protection claim is being examined, the Reception and Integration

Agency(RIA) offers accommodation and related services to anyone without means. There is no obligation on anyone to accept the offer of accommodation.

Accommodation is provided under the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 which came in to effect in June 2018. No applicant for international protection has been refused accommodation in 2019. Under the regulations listed above RIA may provide material reception conditions in accommodation other than that which is usually provided, where the accommodation capacity normally available is temporarily exhausted.

The pressure our accommodation system currently faces is clear. The Reception and Integration Agency is accommodating 6082 people in its 39 accommodation centres and a further 988 people are in emergency accommodation in hotels and guesthouses. The use of emergency accommodation is not ideal. However, we must ensure that each person arriving today to claim protection, with no advance warning, tonight has shelter, food and any urgent medical care required.

In this context, RIA continues to seek additional capacity, including through the ongoing regional procurement process to minimise its use of emergency beds.

Direct Provision Data

364. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons living in direct provision who have taken up paid employment since the introduction of the limited right of asylum seekers to work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31314/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): When an international protection applicant is issued with a labour market access permission under the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 and takes up employment, the employer (or applicant in the case of self-employment), is obliged to inform the Minister for Justice and Equality within 21 days. A standard form for this purpose is available on the website of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department.

I am advised by the INIS that, based on the returned declaration forms received to date, a total of 1,267 applicants have indicated they have commenced employment or self-employment, of which 896 are living in Direct Provision. As the employer or applicant has 21 days from the time they take up employment or self-employment to return the declaration form, there is likely to be a time lag between the actual date of commencement of employment and INIS being notified of same.

Departmental Communications

365. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the oversight of his Department of directives, circulars, advice or requirements issued since 2016; if surveys have been carried out of compliance with these communications to date; the surveys carried out; the results of the surveys; the compliance rate; the actions taken by his Department following these results; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31329/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Different oversight arrangements apply in relation to circulars and other advices issued from time to time, typically by the Department of Finance or the Department of Personnel, Expenditure and Reform. These

concern issues as diverse as financial management, human resources ICT expenditure, and the governance of State Bodies.

In appropriate cases, policy documents are drawn up and circulated to relevant staff, particularly concerning HR matters. In other cases, compliance is ensured in a range of different ways. For example, oversight of ICT expenditure is the responsibility of the Department's ICT Governance Group, whereas the Financial Management Unit of my Department monitors financial compliance through the budget management process.

Compliance by agencies under the aegis of my Department with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies is ensured through regular, formal governance meetings, with arrangements being reviewed on an annual basis by a sub-group of the Department's Management Board.

Climate Change Policy

366. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the recurring weekly meetings attended by either him or the Secretary General of his Department in 2019 at which climate change and-or preparations within his Department to enact a climate plan has been an agenda item; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31345/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, responsibility for Climate Action rests with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment who have published the Climate Action Plan 2019. This Plan sets out an ambitious course of action over the coming years to address this issue.

Action 149 of the plan, which relates to deployment of electric vehicles in the public sector, includes a task for An Garda Síochána to assess the suitability of electric/hybrid vehicles as Ministerial vehicles. I can confirm that the feasibility of the use of hybrid or electric vehicles is already under consideration within An Garda Síochána. Garda management has confirmed to me that 2 electric vehicles were purchased in 2018, in order to evaluate the potential and limitations of electric vehicles in Garda operational environments on a pilot basis. This pilot is ongoing.

In addition I can advise the Deputy that my Department is very active on climate action generally within the scope of its own administrative remit. An Energy Performance Forum has been established. It is chaired by the Energy Performance Officer (Assistant Secretary) with representation from across the Justice and Equality sector. On the 9 January, the EPO wrote to the bodies operating under my Department's aegis, advising them 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 immediately. In addition, bodies were asked to provide details, by the end of November 2019, on the measures being taken to minimise waste generation and to maximise recycling.

My Department also 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.

Furthermore my Department has developed a Resource Efficiency Action Plan in consultation with staff of the Department of Communication, Climate Action and the Environment. This sets out the measures being taken to reduce waste generation and to maximise recycling. It benchmarks energy, water and waste figures for 2018 for the Department's Headquarters and sets out plans for reducing energy use and waste generation across the whole Department.

Community Policing

367. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the community garda numbers by Garda district as of 1 June 2019; the corresponding number for 1 June in each of the years 2014 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31356/19]

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, including personnel, 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.

Community policing is at the heart of An Garda Síochána as it recognises that every community, either urban or rural, has its own concerns and expectations. The role of a community Garda is not a specialist role in An Garda Síochána; rather it is the case that all Gardaí have a role to play in community policing in carrying out their duties. The official categorisation of Community Garda simply refers to those who are exclusively assigned to building relationships with local communities and civil society including giving talks to schools, community groups and others. It is a matter for the Divisional Chief Superintendent to determine the optimum distribution of duties among the personnel available to him or her having regard to the profile of the area and its specific needs.

As Community Garda are assigned on a Garda Divisional basis, I am informed by the Commissioner that a breakdown by District as requested by the Deputy is not readily available.

However, the strength of the Community Garda by Division, in each of the years 2009 to 31 May 2019 is available on my Department's website through the link below.

http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Community_Policing

For general information on Garda Facts and Figures below is the link to the website

http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/An_Garda_Siochana_facts_and_figures.

Visa Applications

368. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 374 of 12 June 2019, if further issues have arisen in respect of the visa for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31369/19]

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 is currently being examined and the visa office in Abuja have contacted the applicant to seek further information and clarification on documentation already received. Once this information is received, a 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.

11 July 2019

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).

Refugee Status Applications

369. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when an application for a family to join will be considered in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31370/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that a proposal under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, Humanitarian Admissions Programme (IHAP) scheme was received from the person referred to by the Deputy.

IHAP, which operates under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, provides an opportunity to Irish citizens and persons with Convention refugee status, subsidiary protection status, and programme refugee status, who have immediate eligible family members from the current top 10 major source countries of refugees (Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Somalia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Myanmar, Eritrea and Burundi) to propose to the Minister for these family members to join them in Ireland.

The IHAP programme was established to provide humanitarian admission to Ireland for 530 eligible family members of Irish citizens and those with protection status in Ireland. The first call for proposals under the Programme was made summer of 2018, and 166 people were ultimately granted permission to come to the State. A second call for proposals under the IHAP issued in December 2018, with a closing date for proposals of the 8th February 2019, with over 800 proposals received in respect of over 1700 potential beneficiaries. Processing of these proposals is ongoing.

The person concerned submitted a proposal under window one. The proposer was notified in writing of the outcome by letter dated 19 December 2018. A further proposal was received under window two of the IHAP, and a decision in respect of this proposal issued on 28th June 2019

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

Naturalisation Applications

370. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status

of an application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31371/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the processing of the application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy is on-going.

A letter issued to representatives of the person concerned on 12 March 2019 requesting certain documentation and a reply is awaited. Upon receipt of the requested documentation the case will be further processed.

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

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

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

Naturalisation Eligibility

371. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a person and their child (details supplied) qualify for naturalisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31372/19]

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 persons referred to by the Deputy.

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.

Where sections 6A and 6B of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, are applicable, a child born in the island of Ireland on or after 1 January 2005 has an entitlement to Irish citizenship if, at the time of the birth of the child, one of his or her parents had, during the period of 4 years immediately preceding the person's birth, been resident in the island of Ireland for a period of not less than 3 years or periods, the aggregate of which is not less than 3 years. Periods of unlawful residence, periods of residence which were for the sole purpose of having an application for refugee status determined or periods of residence where permission was granted for the purposes of study are excluded from the determination of periods of reckonable residence. Entitlement of a child to Irish citizenship is determined by the Passport Office following receipt of an application for a passport on the child's behalf.

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

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

Residency Permits

372. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if extended leave to remain of stamp 4 status will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31373/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that, in response to a notification pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned has submitted written representations.

These representations, together with all other information 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.

Immigration Status

373. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the application to upgrade an application for residency and naturalisation will be validated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31374/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that there is no record of a current application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy. A decision on her previous application issued by letter on 22 October 2018.

The records indicate that the person's permission to reside in the State expired on 22 November 2016. All non-EEA nationals are required to keep their permission to remain in the State up to date at all times, and to have such permission registered. Failure to do so may adversely affect an application for a certificate of naturalisation.

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

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

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

Immigration Status

374. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when an update of stamp 4 status will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31375/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the name of the person referred to by the Deputy does not match the reference number supplied. As it is not possible to correctly identify the person to whom the Deputy is referring, I cannot provide the information sought at this time. However, if the Deputy wishes to clarify the identity of the person concerned and resubmit his Question, I will provide a substantive reply.

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

Naturalisation Applications

375. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the examination of an application for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31376/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy continues to be processed

and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible. If further documentation is required it will be requested from the applicant in due course.

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

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

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

Deportation Orders

376. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the deportation order will be revoked in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31377/19]

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 issued on 12 June 2019. This Order requires the person concerned to remove themselves from the State and remain outside the State. The enforcement of Deportation Orders are a matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

It is open to the person concerned to submit representations requesting that the Deportation Order be revoked, pursuant to Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). However, I wish to make clear that such an application would require substantial grounds to be successful.

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

Deportation Orders

377. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the deportation order will be revoked in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31378/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person referred to is the

subject of a Deportation Order made on 11 March 2005.

As previously advised, representations were received on behalf of the person concerned pursuant to Section 3 (11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), to revoke the Deportation Order. Following the consideration of those representations, a decision was taken in July 2018 that the Deportation Order should be affirmed and this decision was communicated to the person concerned by registered post dated 16 July 2018.

Further representations were received on behalf of the person concerned requesting that the Deportation Order be revoked, pursuant to Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). I wish to make clear that such an application would require substantial grounds to be successful.

The Deputy might wish to note that the effect of a Deportation Order is that the person named on the Order is legally obliged to leave the State and to remain outside of the State. The enforcement of the Deportation Order in this case is now an operational matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

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

Residency Permits

378. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the residency position of persons (details supplied) will be regularised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31381/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that it would appear the persons' presence in the State may be unlawful. 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 persons 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 they entered the 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.

Public Service Vehicles

379. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps

being taken to protect and ensure the safety of taxi drivers in view of reports of alleged assaults following the refusal to pay fares; if he is satisfied that legal protections for all public transport workers are adequate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31394/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Firstly, I must clarify that the provision of quality services by small public service (SPSV) drivers, while having due regard to their protection, is an objective of the National Transport Authority (NTA) under section 19(2)(e) of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 and is therefore within the remit of my colleague, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport.

However, I am informed that An Garda Síochána has advised the Taxi Regulation Directorate (within the NTA) on what to do in the event of crime perpetrated against a SPSV operator and has provided consultation to the NTA in developing a Skills Development Programme for SPSV operators. The programme outlines the steps SPSV operators can take to make life safer, more secure and compliant with current health and safety legislation, and there is a specific section on looking after their personal security.

Separately, I am informed that 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 NTA in consultation with the Garda Crime Prevention Unit and contains a chapter entitled Staying Safe. The chapter offers a range of information and suggestions on how to deal with difficult customers or dangerous situations. This includes suggestions on taking extra care in isolated areas, making eye contact with the customer when the customer gets into the car, and arranging a code word with the dispatch operator or a colleague that can be used in communication with them if danger is perceived.

Information regarding ways to reduce the risk of robbery is also provided. An Garda Síochána has recommended that taxi drivers:

- avoid carrying large sums of cash where possible;
- not show, or tell, customers how much cash they have and be discrete with their cash when giving a customer change;
- not display valuables; and,
- lock their vehicles while in isolated areas or waiting for a customer to arrive.

An Garda Síochána also advises that taxi drivers who have been the victims of robbery or fare evasion should not chase the perpetrators because this might put their

personal safety at further risk. In addition, it is advised that taxi drivers should not take any action that might be deemed to be illegal or, again, put themselves at risk, such as detaining a passenger by force. The advice from An Garda Síochána to taxi drivers is to make contact immediately on 999 or 112 if they have been the victim of an assault, robbery or fare evasion and, if safe to do so, remain at that location until Gardaí arrive.

Finally, matters relating to legal protections for public transport workers would generally fall to my colleague, Minister Ross, at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Crime Data

380. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of reports of domestic abuse made to An Garda Síochána in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to

date in 2019. [31395/19]

381. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of reports of domestic abuse made to An Garda Síochána in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019 that were recorded as incidents. [31396/19]

382. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of reports of domestic abuse made to An Garda Síochána in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019 that were recorded as crimes. [31397/19]

383. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the type of abuse experienced by the alleged victim, that is, physical, financial and so on in reports of domestic abuse made to An Garda Síochána in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in numbers or percentages . [31399/19]

384. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of reports of domestic abuse made to An Garda Síochána in the context of coercive control and psychological abuse since the introduction of the Domestic Violence Act 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31400/19]

385. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of alleged victims of the reports of domestic abuse made to An Garda Síochána that were over 50 years of age in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [31401/19]

386. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of alleged victims of the reports of domestic abuse made to An Garda Síochána that were over 25 years of age in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [31402/19]

387. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of alleged victims of the reports of domestic abuse made to An Garda Síochána who were experiencing the abuse from their partner in a same-sex relationship in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [31403/19]

388. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of alleged victims of the reports of domestic abuse made to An Garda Síochána identified as being from the LGBTQIA community and which were experiencing domestic abuse from a family member due to their sexuality in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [31404/19]

389. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of alleged victims of the reports of domestic abuse made to An Garda Síochána which were women in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [31405/19]

390. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of alleged victims of the reports of domestic abuse made to An Garda Síochána which were men in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [31406/19]

391. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of alleged perpetrators of the reports of domestic abuse made to An Garda Síochána which were women in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [31407/19]

392. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of alleged perpetrators of the reports of domestic abuse made to An Garda Síochána which were men in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [31408/19]

393. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the type of

abuse reported, that is, physical, sexual, financial, honour-based violence, psychological, forced marriage and so on of the reports of domestic abuse made to An Garda Síochána in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [31409/19]

394. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the relationship between the victim and perpetrator under headings (details supplied) based on the reports of domestic abuse made to An Garda Síochána in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [31410/19]

395. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of victims considered disabled, physically or intellectually, of the reports of domestic abuse made to An Garda Síochána in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [31411/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 380 to 395, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy will be aware, An Garda Síochána have put a number of organisational measures in place to address and improve their response to domestic abuse such as: the Domestic Abuse Intervention Policy, the appointment of Divisional Inspectors, the establishment of the National Protective Services Bureau and Divisional Protective Services Units and various awareness raising initiatives.

Furthermore, since February 2018, a key improvement has been made in relation to data available from the PULSE system which now supports the recording of domestic violence as a modus operandi feature.

With regard to the specific information sought by the Deputy, I have requested a report from the Garda authorities and I will contact the Deputy directly once the information is to hand.

Insurance Fraud

396. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the consequences for lawyers and legal advisers for bringing fraudulent personal injury cases to court; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31428/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The rights and obligations of solicitors, who are deemed to be officers of the court, derive from section 78 of the Judicature (Ireland) Act 1877 along with section 61 of the Courts (Supplemental Provisions) Act of 1961. Substantial rights and duties accrue, therefore, by virtue of this relationship. The Superior Courts have an inherent supervisory role over solicitors including, particularly, the High Court, which can impose sanctions for professional misconduct up to and including the striking off of any solicitor concerned. This is to ensure that solicitors comply with their ethical obligations and act with the highest standards of conduct while also allowing the court to discipline or penalise solicitors who have failed in their duty to the court. The court therefore relies on solicitors to comply with their duties and to take careful instructions from their clients, to prepare their pleadings carefully, and to represent their client as best they can while complying with their duties to the court of candour and disclosure.

Similarly, barristers have a duty to the court. Under the Professional Code of the Honorable Society of the King's Inns it is the duty of barristers to act at all times with honesty and integrity and not to engage in conduct which is prejudicial to the administration of justice. They are also obliged to comply with the provisions of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 and any relevant code issued by the Regulatory Authority. Specifically, barristers have an over-rid-

ing duty to the court to ensure, in the public interest, that the proper and efficient administration of justice is achieved and they must assist the court in the administration of justice and must not deceive or knowingly mislead the court. The Code of Conduct of the Bar of Ireland also provides that a barrister shall not knowingly make, procure or countenance the making of any false or misleading statement of fact, whether express or implied, written or parol, with regard to any matter in which the barrister is engaged to any court or other body.

It should be noted, therefore, that the courts supervision of these matters is in addition to those broader measures that also apply to solicitors and barristers in the conduct of their business under their respective professional regulatory regimes. These are matters which will fall, to a growing extent, to the Legal Services Regulatory Authority which will come into substantial operational mode in this area from October 2019. This will happen under Part 6 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 which I will be commencing at that time. The Authority will then deal with disciplinary and conduct matters in relation to both solicitors and barristers. This will be bolstered by the separate establishment of the new Legal Practitioners' Disciplinary Tribunal which will address serious misconduct in relation to both solicitors and barristers - including in terms of their possible striking off or disbarment with the approval of the High Court.

As I have set out, there are serious consequences for any legal practitioner who may be found to have acted in contravention of those duties owed to the court, including as the Deputy has raised, where this may involve an element of fraud. I would also point out that this is without prejudice to any investigation of such fraudulent matters by the competent authorities under the criminal law.

Insurance Fraud

397. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the integrated insurance fraud database will be up and running; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31429/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I would like to thank the Deputy for raising this matter again. On 6 February 2018, in response to parliamentary question 65, I advised the Deputy that my Department had established a Working Group to progress the action points raised under recommendation 25 of the Cost of Insurance Working Group's Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance, i.e. the establishment of a fully functioning integrated insurance fraud database for industry.

This Working Group continues to meet in order to establish an appropriate mechanism whereby insurance companies can share information to assist in the combatting of fraud. However, data protection-related issues have dominated the group's deliberations and ultimately have made it impossible to establish the database by the end of 2018, as had been scheduled.

The Working Group has engaged in discussions with the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner (ODPC), the respective UK bodies dealing with insurance fraud (the Insurance Fraud Enforcement Department and the Insurance Fraud Bureau), and completed a report which includes the recommended agreed parameters of the database, who is to be responsible, how it will be funded, and who will have access.

As noted last year, the application of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the related Data Protection Bill will have a significant impact on any new data sharing arrangements between industry members and between the industry and An Garda Síochána. As such, the establishment of any new data sharing structures will require careful consideration against

the changes to the legislative landscape. More generally, a critical balance will also be sought to ensure that data sharing between insurers is maximised while, at the same time, the data rights of the public are protected. Any changes, therefore, must be proportional to their effect.

The report of the Working Group was submitted to the Office of the Attorney General and the ODPC and in response, the ODPC strongly endorsed the group's view that a detailed Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) was required in order to answer outstanding concerns regarding the potential addition of new datasets to Insurance Ireland's existing InsuranceLink database, and the increased sharing of data.

The ODPC recommended that further work be completed to detail the evidential requirements for the creation of a new database or the enhancement of the existing InsuranceLink database. The benefits of such a database should be assessed against the potential harm or detriments that could occur to individuals and their fundamental rights. The Office of the Attorney General has also considered the Working Group's report and further consultation will take place following the conclusion of the outstanding data protection matters.

In October last year, Insurance Ireland completed a DPIA in relation to matters such as the information currently held on InsuranceLink, as well as the specific additional data it is proposed will be shared, plus the additional circumstances under which the data will be shared.

Since receiving the DPIA, my officials conducted preliminary consultations with the ODPC, followed by more detailed consultations with the Department's internal Data Protection Support and Compliance Office (DPSCO). Subsequently, it was agreed by the Working Group (which met most recently in June 2019) that my officials would submit Insurance Ireland's DPIA on InsuranceLink to the ODPC on behalf of Insurance Ireland. The DPIA was submitted to the ODPC, in accordance with Article 36 of the GDPR, on 14 June 2019 and a response is awaited.

Engagement will continue with the insurance industry to see if it is possible to develop an enhanced version of the existing industry database, with the management of the database to be with an independent, not-for-profit body. This approach will provide for complete and open access to the data held on the database for all existing and new entrant market participants.

Subject to consultation with the ODPC, the next phase towards implementation of recommendation 25 will require the identification of such an appropriate independent body to manage the database. These matters will continue to be monitored by the Cost of Insurance Working Group, who produce public-facing reports to track the progress of each recommendation on a routine basis: <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/fbc791-the-cost-of-insurance-working-group>

Courts Service Data

398. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the Courts Service will establish and maintain a register of personal injury actions; the reason this has not been done; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31432/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, recommendation 27 of the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance prepared by the Cost of Insurance Working Group is to review section 30 of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004 which provides that the Courts Service will establish and maintain a register of personal injuries actions.

My Department submitted a report to the Cost of Insurance Working Group in February

2019 following its review of section 30 of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004. The main conclusion within the report is that the Courts Service believes that it is not in a position to proceed with the setting up of a register at this time for a number of reasons, including data protection concerns, technical/resources considerations, and the lack of perceived benefits from developing a register only including Court actions.

I understand that the Cost of Insurance Working Group now regard this action as completed but not as envisaged.

I would like to take this opportunity to point out that the Department of Finance produces regular quarterly updates on the progress of the main Report of the Working Group on the Cost of Insurance by reference to the specific recommendations made, including those which fall to my Department. The most recent of these, publicly available on the website of the Department of Finance, is the 8th Quarterly Progress Update which was published on 4 March 2019, which can be accessed on <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/2621f0-m/>.

Naturalisation Certificates

399. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when consideration will be given to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31457/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that there is no record of a current application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy. A decision on his previous application issued by letter to his legal representative on 14 May 2018.

A determination on whether an applicant satisfies the statutory criteria attendant to naturalisation can only be made after an application is received, and every application is considered on its individual merits, regardless of whether the applicant had applied previously.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for a certificate of naturalisation if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. The fact that a person may have had an application refused does not preclude or disqualify them from submitting a fresh application in the future. Indeed, the letter advising an applicant of a negative decision also informs them that they may re-apply for the grant of a certificate of naturalisation at any time. The letter advises that, when considering making such a re-application, they should give due regard to the reasons for the refusal which were contained in the submission attached to the refusal letter and that any further application will be considered taking into account all statutory and administrative conditions applicable at the time of application.

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

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

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

Brexit Preparations

400. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the resources that will be made available to businesses in the event of a no-deal Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31358/19]

422. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the preparations underway in her Department for a hard no-deal Brexit; the schemes being operationalised with other Departments; when these will be ready to be deployed; and when her Department will publish such plans. [31116/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 400, 422.

Since the June 2016 decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union, my Department and its agencies have worked to put a wide range of Brexit supports in place for businesses. The package of Brexit supports encompasses finance, advisory and awareness. DBEI's focus is on helping firms to improve their competitiveness and innovation, and to diversify markets.

My Department and its agencies are working to provide extensive supports, schemes and advice to ensure that businesses are prepared for Brexit. The suite of enterprise and finance supports now in place covers the spectrum of potential Brexit impacts and aims to assist businesses in identifying key risk areas and the practical preparatory actions to be taken over the coming months.

I made Brexit one of my top priorities in the allocations of funding for 2019 in my Department and I have allocated further funding to Brexit-related support from agencies and offices of my Department as part of Budget 2019. I have allocated an additional €5 million capital funding to the Local Enterprise Offices, an increase of 22% for 2019, and a further €1 million allocated to InterTrade Ireland to help SMEs prepare for the particular North-South challenges associated with Brexit. I have allocated an additional €3m to Enterprise Ireland and €2m to IDA Ireland to expand their global footprints and drive the diversification of trade and investment. Additional resources have also been distributed across Science Foundation Ireland and the Health and Safety Authority and the NSAI for 2019 to support enterprises adjust to the new relationships with the UK and pursue new opportunities.

InterTrade Ireland (ITI) works with SMEs on an all-Ireland basis and is particularly well-placed, given its remit to develop cross-border trade, to help SMEs prepare for the particular North-South challenges associated with Brexit.

The ITI Brexit Advisory Service provides a focal point for SMEs working to navigate any changes in cross-border trading relationships arising as a result of Brexit. As part of the service, ITI has organised a series of awareness events focused on improving knowledge of customs processes and procedures and identifying actions that can be taken in areas such as logistics and supply chain management. To date, more than 4,000 SMEs have directly engaged with the Brexit Advisory Service.

ITI offers a Brexit Start to Plan voucher and Brexit Implementation Voucher schemes, which enables businesses to get professional advice on how best to plan, prepare and implement for the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. These supports help businesses obtain

advice on specific areas such as tariffs, currency management, regulatory and customs issues and movement of labour, goods and services.

ITI Brexit Start to Plan vouchers are worth up to €2,250 (inclusive of VAT) each. 1,613 businesses have applied for a Brexit Start to Plan voucher, of which 1,405 have been approved. ITI new Brexit Implementation Voucher provides financial support up to £5,000/€5,625 (inclusive of VAT), with InterTradeIreland paying 50%. This will allow businesses to implement critical changes making them better prepared to deal with a new trading relationship.

The Local Enterprise Offices [LEOs] are the first-stop-shop for anyone seeking guidance and support on starting or growing their business. The LEOs have organised various events to enable companies to learn about the potential impacts and opportunities of Brexit.

In addition, 644 LEO clients have received one-to-one mentoring solely focused on Brexit. Technical Assistance Grants for Micro Export are offered as an incentive for LEO clients to explore and develop new market opportunities. 605 LEO clients have been approved for the Technical Assistance Grant.

The Local Enterprise Office interactive one day Prepare Your Business for Customs workshop helps businesses understand the key customs concepts, documentation and processes required to succeed in a post Brexit environment. 531 Participants have so far attended this Customs Training. Also, additional capital funding of €5 million was announced in Budget 2019 for local enterprise development.

Moreover, the six LEOs in the Border region are working together with their Northern Ireland counterparts under the EU Co-Innovate Programme. The aim of Co-Innovate is to give SMEs from the manufacturing and tradable services sectors in the eligible regions the tools and tailored support to help them to innovate, differentiate and compete successfully.

The €300 million Brexit Loan Scheme, developed in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, provides relatively short term working capital, 1 to 3 years, to eligible businesses with up to 499 employees to help them innovate, change or adapt to mitigate their Brexit challenges.

The Future Growth Loan Scheme was announced in Budget 2019. The scheme will provide a longer-term facility, 8 to 10 years, of up to €300m to support strategic capital investment for a post-Brexit environment by business at competitive rates. This is jointly funded by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Loans of €50,000 to €3m will be available, with loans of under €500,000 being provided on an unsecured basis. The scheme is available to eligible Irish businesses, including those in the primary agriculture and seafood sectors, to support strategic, long-term investment in a post-Brexit environment.

Enterprise Ireland has established a Prepare for Brexit online portal and communications campaign, as well as an online “Brexit SME Scorecard” to help Irish businesses self-asses their exposure to Brexit and a “Be Prepared Grant” to support SME clients in planning to mitigate risks arising from Brexit. It has also launched a new Eurozone Strategy to help SMEs broaden their export footprint beyond the UK.

Over 3,700 business have used Enterprise Ireland’s Brexit Scorecard to date and 85% of EI client firms are now taking actions. EI is working closely with regionally-important larger companies in exposed sectors such as food to support strategic investments to build resilience – EI invested €74 million in these businesses in 2018. EI has also hosted 11 Brexit Advisory Clinics.

In addition, eligible EI client companies can respond to the threats and opportunities posed

by Brexit by accessing the Agile Innovation Fund. This fund supports clients to quickly develop innovations and respond to opportunities and threats in new and existing markets. The new Fund allows companies to access up to 50% in support of innovation projects with a total cost of up to €300,000. A recent EI survey showed that EI clients that have availed of Innovation Capability, Funding and Collaboration support saw a 67% increase in global sales.

EI also launched a Customs Insights online course which is a new online training support to help all businesses understand how customs work including the documentation and process required to operate and succeed post Brexit. The Customs Insights course explains in clear and simple terms the main customs rules and included the key actions companies can take to prepare for customs after Brexit and the options from Revenue that are available to make the customs process more efficient. This will be available for any company to use whether they are importers or exporters and also whether they are agency clients or not.

The majority of the above schemes are open to all SMEs, not just agency clients. Enterprise Ireland will continue to engage with its clients to ensure they have the supports required to prepare for any kind of Brexit.

In my meeting with Commissioner Vestager on 24th January 2019, we discussed the severe challenges that Irish businesses, especially SMEs, will face when the UK leaves the European Union and the need for appropriate and timely State supports. We agreed that Irish officials will continue to work closely with the Commissioner's team in addressing any State aid issues that may arise to ensure a rapid and appropriate response as the ultimate shape of Brexit and its firm-level implications become known. The Commissioner emphasised that the Commission stands ready to act urgently in mitigation against the impacts of Brexit on Irish firms.

In addition, in November 2017, the Commission approved a Rescue and Restructuring Scheme for Ireland for Undertakings in Difficulty. Under the scheme, an undertaking is considered to be in difficulty when, without intervention by the State, it will almost certainly be condemned to going out of business in the short or medium term. This scheme was put in place as it was considered prudent to have contingency measures in place so that my Department can respond swiftly to changing circumstances as necessary. In May 2018 this scheme was extended to include Temporary Restructuring support for those enterprises with acute liquidity needs. To date, no enterprise has sought rescue and restructuring aid for temporary restructuring support.

While the nature of the UK's departure from the EU still remains to be determined, Brexit continues to represent a significant challenge for businesses in Ireland. I want businesses, particularly those most impacted by Brexit, to know my Department and agencies are here to help.

Cyber Security Protocols

401. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the cybersecurity protocols under the remit of her Department; if it has had a cybersecurity breach in the past 12 months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30580/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department has not had a cybersecurity breach in the past 12 months.

In line with best practice my Department adopts a defence in depth approach to cybersecurity protection with a combination of technological controls and processes in place. These controls include policies and practices on system patching and upgrades, penetration testing of internet facing systems, and good practice least privileged access principles.

My Department recognises that ensuring the security of information and information systems is an ongoing process. This includes regular reviews of systems and practices and my Department has just concluded one such review of its security practices which will inform work in this area going forward. This work builds on existing initiatives which focus on ensuring continuity of ICT availability, on building good ICT security practice, and on building staff awareness of best practices approaches to ICT security.

Local Enterprise Offices Data

402. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of local enterprise offices here; the number of staff that work in each office in tabular form; the number of staff that work in the LEO section of her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30616/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): There are 31 Local Enterprise Office (LEOs) located across the Local Authority network in Ireland. The LEOs are the 'first-stop-shop' for advice and guidance, financial assistance and other supports for anyone intending to start or grow a business.

In respect to my Department, there are 5 DBEI officials with specific LEO Liaison Unit responsibilities comprising one Principal Officer, one Assistant Principal Officer, one Higher Executive Officer, one Executive Officer and one Clerical Officer.

The following table sets out the number of sanctioned LEO staff through the DBEI pay allocation for each of the 31 LEOs. The LEOs report their staffing complement quarterly with the next deadline for submission on the 15th July 2019.

LEO	Sanctioned LEO Staffing Allocation funded through DBEI Pay Contribution as at 31 March 2019	Actual LEO Staffing funded through DBEI Pay Contribution as at 31 March 2019
Carlow	5	5
Cavan	5	5
Clare	6	6
Cork City	8	8
Cork N&W	9	9
Cork South	7	7
Donegal	6	6
Dublin City	11	11
Dublin South	9	8
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	8	5
Fingal	9	9
Galway	8	8
Kerry	6	6
Kildare	8	8
Kilkenny	6	5
Laois	5	4
Leitrim	5	5
Limerick	9	8
Longford	5	5
Louth	6	5
Mayo	6	6

LEO	Sanctioned LEO Staffing Allocation funded through DBEI Pay Contribution as at 31 March 2019	Actual LEO Staffing funded through DBEI Pay Contribution as at 31 March 2019
Meath	8	8
Monaghan	5	4
Offaly	5	5
Roscommon	5	5
Sligo	5	5
Tipperary	8	7
Waterford	8	8
Westmeath	6	6
Wexford	6	6
Wicklow	6	6
Total	209	199

Fire Safety Regulations

403. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her attention has been drawn to upcoming changes to the furniture and furnishings (fire safety) regulations of the UK (details supplied); if she has liaised with UK officials on the findings of their 2009 research and 2014 consultation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30639/19]

404. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if consideration has been given to reassessing fire safety regulations for domestic furniture in view of environmental and health concerns relating to flame retardants; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30640/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 403 and 404 together.

In the area of furniture fire safety, there are no harmonised EU standards. The Irish standards and regulations were introduced to protect consumers by preventing the rapid spread of a fire started on or near furniture. These standards are in line with those introduced in the UK, which is particularly relevant given the cross-border trade in furniture on the island of Ireland and the presence of furniture manufacturers along the border area.

The UK has undertaken two consultations (in 2014 and 2016) on the suitability of the UK regulations but has yet to amend its regulations. In view of the similarity of the regulations in both jurisdictions, my Department has liaised very closely with the relevant department in the UK and continues to monitor the situation to keep abreast of developments in that jurisdiction. My Department also liaises, both formally and informally, with other stakeholders in Ireland on the issue.

Having similar regulations in place on both sides of the border gives consumers clarity and certainty that uniform safety standards apply, while manufacturers have certainty that their products can be sold in both jurisdictions without going to the added expense of manufacturing furniture according to different standards and legislation. Any change in existing regulations, or replacement thereof, will have to provide a robust level of safety when it comes to furniture going on fire.

My Department is conscious of the need to ensure that if replacement regulations are to be introduced, they must be effective and evidence-based, bearing in mind the tension between

short term effects (in relation to flame retardant chemicals providing time to escape a fire and the impact on fire crews' operations) and possible long-term health considerations. There is also a need to ensure that if the Regulations are to change there will be no reduction in safety for the consumers of Ireland.

Brexit Preparations

405. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the percentage of businesses that have a formal Brexit plan in place; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30732/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): While the nature of the UK's departure from the EU still remains to be determined, Brexit continues to represent a significant challenge for businesses in Ireland. That is why my Department and its agencies have put in place extensive supports, schemes and advisory resources to ensure that businesses are prepared for Brexit. While we cannot yet know the form that Brexit will take, these measures aim to raise awareness and, where appropriate, to assist businesses in identifying key risk areas and practical preparatory actions regardless of the circumstances of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

My Department's ongoing engagement with businesses indicates that the proportion of businesses preparing for Brexit is increasing, particularly among those businesses identified as most exposed to Brexit-related impacts, and that awareness of the key Brexit challenges is also increasing. Almost 60% of Irish SMEs report a good understanding of the likely implications of Brexit impacts that are relevant to their business. The findings of our latest research suggest that planning for Brexit is increasing with almost 50% of SMEs taking some form of active engagement (up from 42% in 2018) in the form of planning or any other mitigating steps. Among the most impacted businesses, progress is also being made, for example more than half of exporters indicate that they have a Brexit plan. Among Enterprise Ireland clients, 85% have taken action in respect of Brexit.

Over the last two years my Department has worked to raise awareness of the key Brexit challenges which include supply chain, tariffs, customs, regulatory standards, working capital and movement of labour, goods and services; to build business preparedness levels; and to put a comprehensive set of supports in place for businesses. My Department and I have been active in the promotion of schemes and supports through participation in different campaigns, including the whole-of-Government 'Getting Ireland Brexit Ready' public information campaign. This campaign features workshop events throughout the country, aimed primarily at business and people most impacted by Brexit. In addition to these, Enterprise Ireland has also rolled out a series of Brexit Advisory Clinics to help businesses across the country to better understand their exposure to Brexit and the mitigating actions available to them.

While there is little clarity on the means by which the UK will leave the EU in October, my Department and its agencies are working to provide extensive supports to ensure that businesses across the country are prepared for the UK's exit from the EU, whatever the circumstances of its departure. Evidence now shows a marked increase in the number of impacted businesses preparing for change, which is both encouraging and welcome but I am conscious that the delays to Brexit may have led some businesses to defer their immediate planning. However, the UK's exit from the EU will mean changes for Irish businesses and I want businesses to know that my Department and its agencies are here to help.

Brexit Data

406. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the uptake of each Brexit related support under the remit of her Department in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30733/19]

443. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the uptake of the schemes which are available to businesses to prepare for Brexit in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31426/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 406 and 443 together.

As nature of the UK's departure from the EU still remains to be determined, Brexit continues to represent a significant challenge for businesses in Ireland, one which cannot be underestimated. That is why my Department and its agencies have put in place extensive supports, schemes and advisory resources to ensure that to ensure that businesses around the country are prepared for Brexit.

While we cannot yet know the form that Brexit will take, these measures aim to assist businesses in identifying and managing key risk areas and develop practical preparatory actions regardless of the circumstances of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

For example, I allocated an additional €5m to the network of Local Enterprise Offices, €3m to Enterprise Ireland, €2m to IDA Ireland and €1m to InterTradeIreland to help businesses prepare for Brexit, together with funding for the longer-term Future Growth Loan Scheme and the IDA Regional Property Programme. I also provided extra staff for the regulatory bodies of my Department to ensure they are properly resourced to address the additional demands that Brexit will create.

The Local Enterprise Offices [LEOs] are the first-stop-shop for anyone seeking guidance and support on starting or growing their business. The LEOs have organised various events to enable companies to learn about the potential impacts and opportunities of Brexit.

In addition, 644 LEO clients have received one-to-one mentoring solely focused on Brexit. Technical Assistance Grants for Micro Export are offered as an incentive for LEO clients to explore and develop new market opportunities. 605 LEO clients have been approved for the Technical Assistance Grant.

The Local Enterprise Office interactive one day Prepare Your Business for Customs workshop helps businesses understand the key customs concepts, documentation and processes required to succeed in a post Brexit environment. 531 Participants have so far attended this Customs Training.

InterTrade Ireland also plays a major role as part of Ireland's Brexit response and offers Brexit-related advisory services to eligible businesses. So far this year, more than 3,200 SMEs have directly engaged with the Brexit Advisory Service.

ITI offers a Brexit Start to Plan voucher and Brexit Implementation Voucher schemes, which enables businesses to get professional advice on how best to plan, prepare and implement for the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. These supports help businesses obtain advice on specific areas such as tariffs, currency management, regulatory and customs issues and movement of labour, goods and services.

ITI Brexit Start to Plan vouchers are worth up to €2,250 (inclusive of VAT) each. 1,613 busi-

nesses have applied for a Brexit Start to Plan voucher, of which 1,405 have been approved. ITI new Brexit Implementation Voucher provides financial support up to £5,000/€5,625 (inclusive of VAT), with InterTradeIreland paying 50%. This will allow businesses to implement critical changes making them better prepared to deal with a new trading relationship.

The Brexit Loan Scheme provides relatively short-term working capital, 1 to 3 years, to eligible businesses with up to 499 employees to help them to innovate, change or adapt to mitigate their Brexit challenges. Businesses can confirm their eligibility with the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) and, if deemed eligible, can apply to one of the participating finance providers for a loan under the scheme.

As at 5 July, there have been 669 applications for eligibility under the scheme, of which 608 have been approved to date by SBCI. 150 of those applications have progressed to sanction at bank value, to a total value of €32.93 million.

The Future Growth Loan Scheme makes up to €300 million of loans available with a term of 8-10 years. This scheme is available to eligible businesses in Ireland and the primary agriculture (farmers) and seafood sectors to support strategic long-term investment. The Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, the scheme operator, opened for eligibility applications on 17th April and up to July 8 it received 524 eligibility applications and issued 482 eligibility letters.

Enterprise Ireland has established a Prepare for Brexit online portal and communications campaign, as well as an online “Brexit SME Scorecard” to help Irish businesses self-assess their exposure to Brexit and a “Be Prepared Grant” to support SME clients in planning to mitigate risks arising from Brexit. It has also launched a new Eurozone Strategy to help SMEs broaden their export footprint beyond the UK.

Over 5,300 business have used Enterprise Ireland’s Brexit Scorecard to date and 85% of EI client firms have a plan in place, while 199 applications for the Be Prepared grant have been approved. 266 EI clients have received funding under its “Act On” programme, which supports the engagement of a consultant to help clients identify weaknesses and improve resilience. EI has also hosted 16 Brexit Advisory Clinics.

EI also launched a Customs Insights Online course at the beginning of the year. This is a new online training support to help all businesses understand how customs work including the documentation and process required to operate and succeed post Brexit. The Customs Insights course explains in clear and simple terms the main customs rules and included the key actions companies can take to prepare for customs after Brexit and the options from Revenue that are available to make the customs process more efficient. This will be available for any company to use whether they are importers or exporters and also whether they are agency clients or not. There have been over 1,260 Customs Insights Course participants.

While I have seen a very positive uptake of the supports available, I am conscious that the delays to Brexit may have led businesses to defer their immediate planning. However, the UK’s exit from the EU will mean changes for Irish businesses. I want businesses to know that my Department and its agencies are here to help. The existing supports, schemes and advice are in place to ensure that businesses are prepared for any Brexit scenario.

Scheme	Uptake (28 June 2019 unless otherwise stated)
Brexit Loan Scheme	669 applications received, 608 approved by SBCI, 150 Loans progressed to sanction at bank level to a value of €32.93 million.(Uptake as of 5 July)
Future Growth Loan Scheme	524 applications received, 482 approved by SBCI, 17 Loans progressed to sanction at bank level to a value of €2.96 million.(Uptake as of 8 July)

Scheme	Uptake (28 June 2019 unless otherwise stated)
Enterprise Ireland Brexit Scorecard - online platform for Irish companies to self-assess their exposure to Brexit	5,334 Brexit Scorecards have been completed. 1095 LEO clients have completed the scorecard.
Enterprise Ireland Be Prepared Grant	199 Be Prepared Grants have been approved
Enterprise Ireland Market Discovery Fund - A support to EI clients to research new markets	171 companies have been approved under this initiative[1]
Enterprise Ireland Prepare to Export Scorecard	3,833 Prepare to Export Scorecards have been completed
Enterprise Ireland Customs Insights Online Course	1,269 Customs Insights Course participants
Enterprise Ireland Agile Innovation Fund - Gives rapid fast-track access to innovation funding	55 Agile Innovation projects have been approved
Enterprise Ireland Brexit Advisory Clinics	16 Brexit Advisory Clinics have been run with over 1,200 in attendance
Enterprise Ireland Brexit "Act On Programme" – A support funding the engagement of a consultant to devise report with recommendations to help clients address weaknesses and improve resilience	266 "Act on" Plans have been completed
Enterprise Ireland Strategic Consultancy Grant – A grant to assist EI clients to hire a strategic consultant for a set period	1,073 Strategic Consultancy Grants have been approved
Local Enterprise Office Technical Assistance Grant for Micro Export - an incentive for LEO clients to explore and develop new market opportunities	605 clients were approved assistance under the Technical Assistance Grant[2]
Local Enterprise Office LEAN for Micro - The LEO Lean4Micro offer was developed in collaboration between the EI Lean department and the LEOs to tailor the EI Lean offer for LEO micro enterprise clients	340 LEO clients have participated in the programme
Local Enterprise Office Mentoring	644 mentoring participants solely focused on Brexit
Local Enterprise Office Brexit Seminars/Events	4,655 Participants at the Brexit Information events
Customs Training Participants	531 Participants attended Customs Training
InterTradeIreland Brexit Advisory Service	3,219 SMEs have directly engaged with the Brexit Advisory Service in 2019. This is in addition to the 4,175 engagements in 2018.
InterTradeIreland Brexit Start to Plan Vouchers	There have been 1,613 applications, with 1,405 approved and 20 still pending assessment.
Pilot Online Retail Scheme administered by Enterprise Ireland	11 retailers were awarded funding in March 2019. A second call of the Scheme will open on 19 June and will close 31 July 2019.

1. The Market Discovery Fund figure listed is lower than that of the end of February document figure of 251. The updated figure refers to the number of businesses approved, while the earlier number of 251 referred to the number of projects approved. This is now how it is reported to the Board, where projects was used previously.

2. The figure of 651 provided on 08 May was incorrect and should have indicated uptake of 551. This was due to human error

Living Wage

407. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the estimated cost of implementing a living wage €12.30 for all employees directly employed and or in agencies under her remit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30764/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Remuneration for staff within my Department is set by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in line with Government policy. I have no remit in this area.

With regard to the Deputy’s specific question, please see calculations set out below.

The additional salary cost to the Department of introducing a minimum hourly rate of €12.30 per hour for directly employed staff is estimated to be €14,684 (€16,152 inclusive of employers PRSI) per annum. This figure includes the Offices of the Department (Companies Registration Office, Registry of Friendly Societies, Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement, Patents Office, Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court).

In respect of the Agencies of the Department, I have set out the information in the paragraph and table below.

The indicative additional annual cost across the Agencies funded through my Department's Vote would be €88,083. This covers the Competition & Consumer Protection Commission, Enterprise Ireland, Health and Safety Authority, IDA Ireland, Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority, National Standards Authority of Ireland and Science Foundation Ireland. A breakdown by Agency is set out in the table below.

Name of Agency	Cost per annum
Competition and Consumer Protection Commission	€1,357
Enterprise Ireland	€20,451
Health and Safety Authority	€22,078
IDA Ireland	€34,417
Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority	€1,459
National Standards Authority of Ireland	€8,312
Science Foundation Ireland.	0
Total	€88,083

It should be noted that the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB) and InterTrade Ireland are not included in the table and paragraph above. This is because PIAB is self-financing and does not receive any Pay provision through my Department's Vote. Any additional Pay cost on foot of the introduction of a living wage of €12.30 per hour would have to be borne through the fees mechanism operated by the PIAB. The staff of Inter-Trade Ireland, which is part-funded through my Department's Vote, are all based in Northern Ireland.

Departmental Data

408. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the different income streams directly paid by persons to her Department or agencies under her remit, such as motor tax; the number of persons making annual payments; the value of same; the number of payments made through staged or increment payments; the value of same; the additional income generated as a result of payments being made on an incremental basis; if incremental payments are not available, the reason for same; the corresponding figures for 1999 and 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30847/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Several of the Department's Offices, such as the Companies Registration Office, the Patents Office and the Employment Permits area of the Department provide services to the public with a fee generation element. These fee charges are to cover the economic cost of the State providing the service to the public. These fee charges are recorded as Appropriations-in-Aid (A&As) in the

annual Appropriation Account for the Department.

Typically, the Department will generate in the region of €50m in A&As [or Receipts] per annum from Offices' fee generation and other sources, such as pension related deductions and the pension levy on staff. The actual level of such receipts being returned to the Exchequer is usually dependent on the level of economic activity being undertaken in the economy.

It does not appear that any of the A&As received by my Department fall under the scope of the Deputy's question. Details of the of the most recently published AinAs, as per the 2017 Appropriation Account, are set out in the following table. Should the Deputy wish to receive further information on any of the specific income streams listed this can be provided.

Appropriations-in-aid 2017		€ '000
Employment Rights and Industrial Relations		
1	Receipts from the Social Insurance Fund	—
2	Employment permit fees	7,670
3	Employment agency licences	378
4	WRC fixed penalty notices	7
5	WRC court award costs	19
Insurance and Company Law		
6	Companies Registration Office	19,560
7	Registry of Friendly Societies	57
Trade, Competition and Market Rights		
8	Receipts under the Trade Marks Act 1963 and Patents Act 1964	9,353
9	Occasional trading licences	—
10	Competition and Consumer Protection Commission	535
11	Merger notifications	576
Other		
12	ODCE legal	9
13	Local enterprise development	—
14	Miscellaneous	713
15	Enterprise policy a	3,189
16	Competition and Consumer Protection Commission b	1,130
17	IAASA pay refund	—
18	PIAB pay and superannuation	1,207
19	HSA superannuation	481
20	Temporary Loan Guarantee Scheme	584
21	Expert Group on Future Skills Needs	343
22	Receipts from pension related deduction on public service remuneration	6,731
	Total	52,542

Appropriations-in-aid 2017		€ '000
a	Enterprise Policy shows amounts received from the Enterprise agencies in relation to staff pension contributions. The agencies are Inter-trade Ireland, IDA, EI and SFI.	
b	Receipts under this line are in part-recoupment of the expenditure under subhead C.8.	

Project Ireland 2040

409. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the capital projects which have been delayed under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of her Department and agencies in tabular form; when these projects will commence; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30876/19]

410. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the capital projects which have commenced under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of her Department and agencies in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30912/19]

411. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if expenditure estimates for capital projects under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of her Department and agencies match projected cost requirements in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30958/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 409 to 411, inclusive, together.

Project Ireland 2040 is the overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of the country. Its foundation is the National Planning Framework (NPF) and it includes a detailed investment plan for the period 2018-2027.

Project Ireland 2040, in highlighting the employment challenge, has identified the likely need to create in excess of 660,000 additional jobs in the period up to 2040. Project Ireland 2040 contains 10 Strategic Outcomes, one of which is; ‘A Strong Economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills’. The Department together with its Enterprise agencies have a key role to play in delivering this Strategic Outcome. The National Development Plan sets out the configuration for public capital investment over the period 2018-2027 to drive the implementation of Project 2040 and the National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF. Insofar as the capital funding for DBEI is concerned, the Plan commits a total of €3.16 billion for DBEI capital priority projects over the first five years of the plan out to 2022, i.e. an increase of over 28%.

The Capital funding provided to my Department is mainly in the way of grants to support the multi-annual programmes of our enterprise development and innovation agencies.

The NDP identified the following specific Business, Enterprise and Innovation Priority Investments under the “Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills” National Strategic Outcome, whose delivery is the prime responsibility of DBEI;

- Expansion of Advanced Manufacturing Supports, linking centres and capacity across all regions Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund

- Strengthened SFI Research Centres and EI Technology Centres in higher education in all

regions

- Participation in EU High Performance Computing Programme
- Upgrading of the Tyndall National Institute in Cork
- New Space Technologies Programme, to the benefit of firms in the regions
- Membership of CERN
- New cycles of the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions, benefiting Higher Education in all regions
- New Regional Sectoral Clusters to scale and internationalise enterprise in all regions
- New regional 'Technology and Innovation Poles', led through the Institutes of Technologies
- Brexit Business Transformation through firm level supports
- Expanding Enterprise Ireland budget for research and development
- Expanding IDA Regional Property Programme, to attract investment to regions
- A National Design Centre
- Seed and Venture Capital Funding to support regional start-ups and growth
- eHubs for entrepreneurship and start-ups in every county

The additional €65million in capital money provided to my Department through the 2019 Estimates has allowed it to progress a number of the DBEI priority projects further in 2019. Specifically,

- the €20m funding provided to the Disruptive Technologies Fund ensured that the funding for projects approved under the first phase of the Fund could be drawn down in 2019
- the additional €10m provided to the IDA has enabled it to continue and expand its programme of providing property solutions, strategic sites and grants to deliver FDI across the regions of the country
- the €6m provided to the Future Growth Loan Scheme, which builds upon the €17m provided to the Scheme in 2018, will assist business to access the finance necessary to enable them to strategically transform/adapt to the impact of Brexit
- the additional €2.75million in capital funding provided to EI has enabled it to progress a number of regionally focussed initiatives with Institutes of Technology through a programme of Regional Innovation and Technology Clusters to support regions across the country to build enterprise capability
- the capital funding provided to EI will also allowed it to roll out the new €175million Seed and Venture Programme which will focus on fostering a strong pipeline of high growth innovative businesses by increasing the availability of risk capital for start-up/early stage enterprises
- the Department's increased capital funding will ensure that Ireland can continue to expand and deepen its membership of and collaborations with international research organisations such as the European Southern Observatory and the European Space Agency

- the additional capital funding also allowed the new programmes for Postgraduate Research at Masters and PhD levels to continue to be rolled out

- the additional funding being provided to SFI has enabled it to refresh its Research Centres Programme thereby strengthening collaboration with enterprises across all regions of the country

- the additional funding being provided to the Tyndall Institute has enabled it to continue to upgrade and expand and stay at the forefront of new technologies

The capital allocation for DBEI in the first five years of the NDP to 2022 will enable us to continue the positive start to delivering on the ambition of the NPF and NDP. It is recognised that the full implementation of the Priority Investment Projects under NSO 5 will also require the allocation of substantial capital funding over the period of the Plan and DBEI and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) will work together as part of the annual estimates processes to ensure that all the aforementioned Business, Enterprise and Innovation Priority Investment Projects are fully implemented within the lifetime of the Plan to secure the desired outcomes.

Capital Expenditure Programme

412. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of capital projects being undertaken by her Department; the final agreed tender price; the estimated cost of each capital project in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31068/19]

413. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the capital projects completed since 2010; the final agreed tender price for each project; the actual cost of each project; if the actual cost exceeded the tender price; the reason therefor in each case in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31084/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 412 and 413 together.

The Capital funding provided to my Department is mainly in the way of grants to support the multi-annual programmes of our enterprise development and innovation agencies.

The following table sets out the breakdown of the capital allocation across my Department's subheads from 2011-2019. Due to a change in the Vote structure between 2011 and 2019 some subhead numbers may no longer correspond with those previously published. I have used the current structure for the sake of clarity.

Subhead	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
A.4 - INTERTRADE IRELAND	6,695	5,695	5,695	5,530	5,530	5,760	6,000	6,000	6,000
A.5 - IDA IRELAND	142,000	132,000	137,000	112,000	90,000	89,000	79,000	86,000	86,000
A.6 - NSAI - G-I-A FOR ADMIN & GEN EXPS	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500
A.7 - ENTERPRISE IRELAND	65,750	63,000	63,000	56,000	50,000	49,000	55,000	70,500	72,500
A.8 - LOCAL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT	27,500	22,500	22,500	18,500	18,500	18,500	15,000	15,000	15,000
A.9 - TEMPORARY PARTIAL CREDIT GUARANTEE SCHEME	500	500	500	500	500	1,500	500	10,000	

11 July 2019

Subhead	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
A.10 - MATCHING FUNDING FOR INTERREG	3,000	3,000	3,000	2,770	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	2,000
A.14 - FUTURE GROWTH LOAN SCHEME	6,000								
A.15 - HUMANITARIAN RELIEF SCHEME	1								
B.4 - SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME	300,250	293,250	289,000	278,100	270,330	258,040	275,200	291,200	295,393
Enterprise Ireland	122,000	122,000	122,000	117,600	113,430	110,600	127,000	132,000	131,393
Science Foundation Ireland	172,750	166,750	162,500	157,000	154,000	144,540	145,300	156,000	160,800
Tyndall Institute	5,500	4,500	4,500	3,500	2,900	2,900	2,900	3,000	3,000
International Leverage								200	200
B.5 - PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH IN THIRD LEVEL INSTITUTIONS	24,300	14,300	14,400	10,377	32,014	16,700	16,700	26,800	27,007
B.6 - SUBSCRIPTIONS TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS, ETC.	23,504	20,255	19,405	18,723	18,626				
European Molecular Biology Conf	202	202	200	195	191				
European Molecular Biology Laboratory	1,248	1,248	1,223	1,186	1,112				
EUREKA - Involved in S&T Research	33	33	33	33	33				
COST	11	11	0	0	11				
European Space Agency	18,313	17,814	17,779	17,279	17,279				
CECAM	30	30	30	30					
LOFAR	91	91	90						
ELIXIR	76	76	50						
ESO (European Southern Observatory)	3,500	750							
B.9 - DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES INNOVATION FUND	20,000								
SHANNON FREE AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LIMITED							3,600	5,000	3,600
TOTAL	620,000	555,000	555,000	503,000	489,000	442,000	454,500	514,000	508,000

The enterprise supports are mainly by way of grants to our Enterprise Agencies such as the IDA to enable them to attract Foreign Direct Investment and to EI, the Local Enterprise Offices and Intertrade Ireland to enable them to support local indigenous and cross border businesses to start, scale and export. My Department's Jobs and Enterprise Development Programme also supports a number of specific initiatives in the area of access to finance for SMEs and other indigenous businesses.

The innovation supports are mainly to research focussed bodies such as SFI, Enterprise Ireland, the Tyndall Institute, and supporting Ireland's membership of International Research Organisations such as the European Space Agency, the European Southern Observatory and other Research focussed Agencies.

In terms of reviews, the Enterprise Agencies themselves and the Department, through its Enterprise Strategy, Competitiveness and Evaluation Division and the Irish Government's Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) of the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, undertake regular assessments, ongoing reviews and formal evaluations of the various Capital programmes being supported by the exchequer to ensure that they are;

- in line with Government policy;
- meeting a national strategic need;
- represent best use of resources available to the Agency;
- effective and can be delivered to ensure best value for money for the Exchequer.

Brexit Staff

414. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of Brexit staff hired by her Department and agencies under her remit in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019, following the announcement of additional staff recruitment as a Brexit measure in Budgets 2017, 2018 and 2019; and the number of new staff hires and replacement staff in tabular form. [31102/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): With regard to my own Department, a dedicated Brexit Unit was established in 2016 and is led at Assistant Secretary level within the EU Affairs, Trade Policy and Licensing Division, to coordinate and represent the Departmental and Agencies response to Brexit and to support me in my position at the Cabinet Committee dealing with Brexit. The Unit also leads on engagement with a broad range of stakeholders to inform and validate our response to Brexit.

When the Unit was set up in 2016 it consisted of three staff, one Principal Officer, one Assistant Principal Officer and one Higher Executive Officer. Additional staffing of two Assistant Principal Officers, one Higher Executive Officer and one Clerical Officer were appointed in 2017. The Department also appointed a further AO to the Unit in early 2019 but this position has recently become vacant.

Also within this Division, two officials (Assistant Principal Officer and Administrative Officer) working in the Trade Policy Unit are assigned to Brexit related trade matters as part of their portfolios.

In the Division with responsibility for Indigenous Enterprise, two posts were approved (Assistant Principal Officer and Administrative Officer) to work solely on Brexit mitigation measures to support business impacted by Brexit.

A team of three was approved to establish a new Getting Business Brexit Ready Unit. This unit was comprised of one Assistant Principal Officer, one Administrative Officer and one Executive Officer. All three appointments were made in January 2019. A decision was later made to subsume the AP role into our Communications team to promote awareness of DBEI Brexit supports to all businesses in Ireland.

Staff expertise is also being drawn from across a number of different policy areas of the Department in shaping our Brexit response and a number of areas that are most impacted have been assigned additional staff including but not exclusively to deal with Brexit. We are continually prioritising the Brexit challenges and will actively keep the staffing requirements under review through workforce planning.

I have set out in the table below the number of additional staff appointed to Brexit related positions in my Department and in the Agencies under its remit during 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019.

In relation to the second part of the Deputy's question, it is not possible to provide the

numbers for all new hires and replacement staff over the three-year period in the time allotted. However, I have supplied the total headcount for my Department and each of the relevant agencies in the following table for further information.

Department/Agency	2017	2018	2019	Headcount as at end Q2 2019
Department	5	3	4	915
NSAI	0	4	4	150
HSA1	0	6	4	179
SFI	2	3	0	61
Enterprise Ireland ²	27	20	5	624
IDA Ireland	10	7	0	313

1 The HSA have advised that a further two staff will be in place by end July and recruitment is underway for a further 2 posts.

2 The recruitment process in Enterprise Ireland is ongoing with 5 posts remaining to be filled.

While there are eight Agencies under the remit of my Department, the 5 listed above are the agencies in receipt of funding for additional Brexit related posts.

Given the wide mission that my Department and its Agencies have, the UK's decision to leave the European Union continues to impact significantly on all policy fields. In this context, officers across all areas may deal with Brexit related policy issues and/or queries depending on their nature; and many other posts within the Department and its Agencies have responsibilities relating to Brexit.

Brexit Data

415. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of applicants and participants in Brexit schemes and supports provided by her Department or agencies under her remit in tabular form; and the amount allocated and expended to each such scheme in each year since being established. [31103/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As the nature of the UK's departure from the EU still remains to be determined, Brexit continues to represent a significant challenge for businesses in Ireland, one which cannot be underestimated. That is why my Department started developing supports for businesses from the time when Brexit first became a possibility.

My Department and its agencies have put in place extensive supports, schemes and advisory resources to ensure that to ensure that businesses around the country are prepared for Brexit. While we cannot yet know the form that Brexit will take, these measures aim to assist businesses in identifying and managing key risk areas and develop practical preparatory actions regardless of the circumstances of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

My Department's total exchequer allocation increased by 9.1% year on year, up from €871m to €950.2m. This is made up of a record €620m in capital and €330.2m in current funding, which includes an increase of €65m in capital – up 11.7% on last year's allocation of €555m; and, an increase of €14.2m in current – almost 4.5% more than our 2018 allocation of €316m. I also provided extra staff for the regulatory bodies of my Department to ensure they are properly

resourced to address the additional demands that Brexit will create.

I allocated an extra €5m to the 31 Local Enterprise Offices [LEOs], up 22% on 2018. The LEOs are the first-stop-shop for anyone seeking guidance and support on starting or growing their business. The LEOs are there to support businesses in preparing for Brexit, to ensure that businesses are informed and have plans in place to manage the new trading relationships on the island and with the UK more generally. The LEOs have organised various events to enable companies to learn about the potential impacts and opportunities of Brexit.

In addition, 644 LEO clients have received one-to-one mentoring solely focused on Brexit. Technical Assistance Grants for Micro Export are offered as an incentive for LEO clients to explore and develop new market opportunities. 605 LEO clients have been approved for the Technical Assistance Grant.

The Local Enterprise Office interactive one day Prepare Your Business for Customs workshop helps businesses understand the key customs concepts, documentation and processes required to succeed in a post Brexit environment. 531 Participants have so far attended this Customs Training.

As part of my Department's response to Brexit, I allocated €3 million in additional resources to Enterprise Ireland [EI] in budget 2019. EI has established a Prepare for Brexit online portal and communications campaign, as well as an online "Brexit SME Scorecard" to help Irish businesses self-assess their exposure to Brexit and a "Be Prepared Grant" to support SME clients in planning to mitigate risks arising from Brexit. It has also launched a new Eurozone Strategy to help SMEs broaden their export footprint beyond the UK.

Over 5,300 businesses have used EI's Brexit Scorecard to date and 85% of EI client firms have a plan in place, while 199 applications for the Be Prepared grant have been approved. 266 EI clients have received funding under its "Act On" programme, which supports the engagement of a consultant to help clients identify weaknesses and improve resilience. EI has also hosted 16 Brexit Advisory Clinics.

EI also launched a Customs Insights Online course at the beginning of the year. This is a new online training support to help all businesses understand how customs work including the documentation and process required to operate and succeed post Brexit. The Customs Insights course explains in clear and simple terms the main customs rules and included the key actions companies can take to prepare for customs after Brexit and the options from Revenue that are available to make the customs process more efficient. This will be available for any company to use whether they are importers or exporters and also whether they are agency clients or not. There have been over 1,260 Customs Insights Course participants.

I also allocated €2.75m additional capital to EI to start developing regional innovation and technology clusters with Institutes of Technology right across the country, positioning them as drivers of world-class start-ups and growth enterprises and helping businesses adjust to market changes, including Brexit.

As part of my Department's response to Brexit, I allocated €2million in additional resources to IDA Ireland, while an extra €10 million has been allocated for the Agency's Regional Property Programme. IDA Ireland continues to work closely with international clients, from a range of sectors, to help them assess and prepare for the potential impacts of Brexit, and to capitalise on any opportunities for additional Brexit-related foreign direct investment (FDI) in the future.

The IDA offers support and advice on Brexit-related risks and opportunities and the Agency's Brexit Toolkit, which is available to clients, includes the full range of supports across train-

ing, research and development and capital investment.

The Agency is working hard to avail of new investment opportunities from non-traditional target markets. The Agency's efforts in this context have already yielded positive results, with over 80 Brexit-related investments and 5,300 associated jobs won to date. In addition, the Agency has recently launched a marketing campaign in key international markets to communicate clearly to both current and potential investors that, Ireland's investment proposition remains strong and that Ireland remains an attractive location for investment.

Funding to InterTrade Ireland has been increased by 18%. InterTrade Ireland plays a major role as part of Ireland's Brexit response and offers Brexit-related advisory services to eligible businesses. So far this year, more than 3,200 SMEs have directly engaged with the Brexit Advisory Service.

ITI offers a Brexit Start to Plan voucher and Brexit Implementation Voucher schemes, which enables businesses to get professional advice on how best to plan, prepare and implement for the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. These supports help businesses obtain advice on specific areas such as tariffs, currency management, regulatory and customs issues and movement of labour, goods and services.

ITI Brexit Start to Plan vouchers are worth up to €2,250 (inclusive of VAT) each. 1,613 businesses have applied for a Brexit Start to Plan voucher, of which 1,405 have been approved. ITI new Brexit Implementation Voucher provides financial support up to £5,000/€5,625 (inclusive of VAT), with InterTrade Ireland paying 50%. This will allow businesses to implement critical changes making them better prepared to deal with a new trading relationship.

The Brexit Loan Scheme, using a combination of Irish Exchequer and EU guarantees, has leveraged up to €300 million of lending at a maximum interest rate 4% at a cost to the Exchequer of €23 million - €14 million provided by my Department and €9 million provided by Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The Brexit Loan Scheme provides relatively short-term working capital, 1 to 3 years, to eligible businesses with up to 499 employees to help them to innovate, change or adapt to mitigate their Brexit challenges. Businesses can confirm their eligibility with the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) and, if deemed eligible, can apply to one of the participating finance providers for a loan under the scheme.

As at 5 July, there have been 669 applications for eligibility under the scheme, of which 608 have been approved to date by SBCI. 150 of those applications have progressed to sanction at bank value, to a total value of €32.93 million.

The Future Growth Loan Scheme, launched in March, makes up to €300 million of loans available with a term of 8-10 years. This scheme is available to eligible businesses in Ireland and the primary agriculture (farmers) and seafood sectors to support strategic long-term investment. The Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, the scheme operator, opened for eligibility applications on 17th April and up to July 8 it received 524 eligibility applications and issued 482 eligibility letters.

The first table attached sets out the uptake of the different Brexit-related supports available through the Department and its agencies as at 28 June 2019.

The second table attached sets out the respective exchequer increases in allocations to ITI, EI, IDA and the LEOs between 2018 and 2019 and the cost/expenditure of the supports available. Whilst these increases are not all due to Brexit, they are mainly provided to assist the enterprise agencies in their responses to the challenges posed by Brexit.

Questions - Written Answers

While I have seen a very positive uptake of the supports available, I am conscious that the delays to Brexit may have led businesses to defer their immediate planning. However, the UK's exit from the EU will mean changes for Irish businesses. I want businesses to know that my Department and its agencies are here to help. The existing supports, schemes and advice are in place to ensure that businesses are prepared for any Brexit scenario.

Scheme	Uptake (28 June 2019)
Brexit Loan Scheme	669 applications received, 608 approved by SBCI, 150 Loans progressed to sanction at bank level to a value of €32.93 million.(Uptake as of 5 July)
Future Growth Loan Scheme	524 applications received, 482 approved by SBCI, 17 Loans progressed to sanction at bank level to a value of €2.96 million.(Uptake as of 8 July)
Enterprise Ireland Brexit Scorecard - online platform for Irish companies to self-assess their exposure to Brexit	5,334 Brexit Scorecards have been completed. 1095 LEO clients have completed the scorecard.
Enterprise Ireland Be Prepared Grant	199 Be Prepared Grants have been approved
Enterprise Ireland Market Discovery Fund - A support to EI clients to research new markets	171 companies have been approved under this initiative[1]
Enterprise Ireland Prepare to Export Scorecard	3,833 Prepare to Export Scorecards have been completed
Enterprise Ireland Customs Insights Online Course	1,269 Customs Insights Course participants
Enterprise Ireland Agile Innovation Fund - Gives rapid fast-track access to innovation funding	55 Agile Innovation projects have been approved
Enterprise Ireland Brexit Advisory Clinics	16 Brexit Advisory Clinics have been run with over 1,200 in attendance
Enterprise Ireland Brexit "Act On Programme" – A support funding the engagement of a consultant to devise report with recommendations to help clients address weaknesses and improve resilience	266 "Act on" Plans have been completed
Enterprise Ireland Strategic Consultancy Grant – A grant to assist EI clients to hire a strategic consultant for a set period	1,073 Strategic Consultancy Grants have been approved
Local Enterprise Office Technical Assistance Grant for Micro Export - an incentive for LEO clients to explore and develop new market opportunities	605 clients were approved assistance under the Technical Assistance Grant[1]
Local Enterprise Office LEAN for Micro - The LEO Lean4Micro offer was developed in collaboration between the EI Lean department and the LEOs to tailor the EI Lean offer for LEO micro enterprise clients	340 LEO clients have participated in the programme
Local Enterprise Office Mentoring	644 mentoring participants solely focused on Brexit
Local Enterprise Office Brexit Seminars/Events	4,655 Participants at the Brexit Information events
Customs Training Participants	531 Participants attended Customs Training
InterTradeIreland Brexit Advisory Service	3,219 SMEs have directly engaged with the Brexit Advisory Service in 2019. This is in addition to the 4,175 engagements in 2018.
InterTradeIreland Brexit Start to Plan Vouchers	There have been 1,613 applications, with 1,405 approved and 20 still pending assessment.
Pilot Online Retail Scheme administered by Enterprise Ireland	11 retailers were awarded funding in March 2019. A second call of the Scheme will open on 19 June and will close 31 July 2019.

	IDA total allocation (current and capital) for 2019 increased by €33.7 million when compared with 2018. Enterprise Ireland total allocation (current and capital) for 2019 increased by €6.8 million when compared with 2018. LEOs total allocation (current and capital) for 2019 increased by €5 million when compared with 2018. ITI total allocation (current and capital) for 2019 increased by €1 million when compared with 2018.
Scheme	Expenditure/Cost
Brexit Loan Scheme	The scheme will cost the Exchequer €23 million (€14 million provided by Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and €9 million provided by Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine).
Enterprise Ireland Be Prepared Grant	€304,553 to 16/05/2019
Enterprise Ireland Market Discovery Fund - A support to EI clients to research new markets	€443,786 to 16/05/2019
Enterprise Ireland Agile Innovation Fund - Gives rapid fast-track access to innovation funding	€736,105 to 16/05/2019
Enterprise Ireland Brexit Advisory Clinics	€265,341 to 16/05/2019
Enterprise Ireland Brexit "Act On Programme" – A support funding the engagement of a consultant to devise report with recommendations to help clients address weaknesses and improve resilience	€480,000 to 16/05/2019
Enterprise Ireland Strategic Consultancy Grant – A grant to assist EI clients to hire a strategic consultant for a set period	€1,373,218 to 16/05/2019
Local Enterprise Office Technical Assistance Grant for Micro Export - an incentive for LEO clients to explore and develop new market opportunities	2018 Expenditure €560,275 1 Jan to 31st March 2019 Expenditure €124,607
Local Enterprise Office LEAN for Micro - The LEO Lean4Micro offer was developed in collaboration between the EI Lean department and the LEOs to tailor the EI Lean offer for LEO micro enterprise clients	2018 Expenditure €951,129 1 Jan to 31st March 2019 Expenditure €127,121
Local Enterprise Office Mentoring	There isn't a specific budget allocation for LEO Brexit mentoring. It is included in the LEOs overall Measure 2 allocation.
Local Enterprise Office Brexit Seminars/Events	2018 Expenditure €128,601 1 Jan to 31st March 2019 Expenditure €33,181
The Prepare Your Business for Customs workshop helps businesses understand the key customs concepts, documentation and processes required to succeed in a post Brexit world.	2018 Expenditure €24,600 1 Jan to 31st March 2019 Expenditure €24,600
InterTradeIreland Brexit Start to Plan Vouchers	InterTradeIreland offer two Brexit Vouchers – a planning voucher which provides 100% financial support towards professional advice to help Businesses identify Brexit exposures and to plan. The second "implementation" voucher provides financial support up to £5,000/€5,625, which allows businesses to implement critical changes making them better prepared to deal with a new trading relationship post-Brexit. InterTradeIreland pay 50% of the cost of this voucher. Expenditure to date in 2019: £860,000.

<p>Pilot Online Retail Scheme administered by Enterprise Ireland</p>	<p>Eleven retailers were awarded funding in March 2019 as part of the new €1.25m fund, with €625,000 available under the first competitive call to support retail businesses to strengthen their online offering. There will be a second competitive call in 2019 with a fund of €625,000.</p>
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Employment Data

416. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the female employment rate in addition to the corresponding EU average rate; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31108/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department is fully aware of the importance of maintaining and increasing employment rates in the labour market. Particularly, as we draw closer to full employment, it is essential we continue to provide enterprise in Ireland with a high-quality, adaptable and flexible talent pool. My Department closely monitors the trends in labour market employment rates. As of Q1 2019, the employment rate of women aged 15-64 in Ireland is 64.3%. This is higher than the EU average, which is 63.5%.[1]

Future Jobs Ireland is committed to a more equitable, balanced and sustainable development of our workforce. As such it has identified increasing participation in the labour force as one of its key pillars. Future Jobs Ireland sets the target of a substantial 3 percentage point increase in overall participation rates for people aged 25 to 69 years by 2025 with higher increases for females and older people. In order to achieve this target, the framework details relevant ambitions underpinned by deliverables. The ambitions and deliverables relevant to increasing female participation include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Encouraging participation in the labour force through high-quality Early Learning and Care. This ambition is underpinned by deliverables to complement the implementation of the Affordable Childcare Scheme including the introduction of additional ways to reduce costs, enhance supply and improve quality.

- Fostering participation in the labour force through flexible working solutions. This ambition assists in the development of an inclusive society. It is underpinned by a number of deliverables including the development of guidance for employers on family-friendly working options and the extension of unpaid Parental Leave to allow for greater flexibility of parents.

Improving incentives to participate in the labour force. This ambition includes a deliverable to consider income tax arrangements for second earners that optimise financial incentives to work, taking account of the impact that the income tax system may have on female participation in the workforce.

- Encouraging adult dependents and beneficiaries of other full-time welfare payments to engage in activation, enter and/or stay in the workforce. This ambition is underpinned by deliverables such as the development of a return to work service as part of the Public Employment Service offering; assisting women returned to work in the technology sector through Skillnets Ireland Women ReBOOT programme; and a review of recent analyses of inactivity to identify policy issues to support the development of policy responses.

Undertaking promotional campaigns to encourage greater levels of participation in the

labour force. This ambition is underpinned by deliverables including a communications campaign to promote awareness of the Public Employment Service as a real recruitment option, especially for those groups with lower participation rates; and the development of promotions for female participation as part of Jobs Week 2019 and Jobs Fairs.

[1] Employment rates by sex, age and citizenship (%), European Labour Force Survey, Eurostat, Q1 2019

Enterprise Data

417. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the annual number of exporting firms between Enterprise Ireland client companies and IDA supported companies over the 2014 to 2018 period and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31110/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Enterprise Ireland supports companies in urban and rural areas to start, innovate and remain competitive in international markets, now and into the future. Enterprise Ireland client exports reached €23.8bn in 2018, representing an increase of 6% on 2017.

Enterprise Ireland client company exports increased in 2018 across sectors such as FinTech, Digital Technologies, Engineering, Construction, Consumer Retail, Life Sciences, Food and Business Process Outsourcing. In 2018 Enterprise Ireland client companies reported strong employment performance with 215,207 people employed in companies supported by the agency.

Enterprise Ireland records client exports as part of the Annual Business Review (ABR) survey. The following table presents the number of EI client companies that reported exports in the ABR survey 2014-2018.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
No. of EI client companies reporting exports	2,014	2,039	2,142	2,133	1,897

Source: ABR 2014-2018

Note: The table above shows the number of Enterprise Ireland clients that returned an ABR survey, that recorded an export value in the year in question. The ABR Survey takes place once a year, after year end so there are no 2019 figures available.

IDA Ireland clients in the main service markets outside of Ireland. However, there may be some instances where clients also service the domestic market. According to the 2017 Annual Business Survey of Economic Impact (ABSEI), 97% of goods and services produced by IDA Ireland clients were exported outside of Ireland.

The total number of IDA Ireland clients as outlined in the Annual Employment Survey (AES) for the period 2014 to 2018 is included in the following table.

Note: The AES Survey takes place once a year, after year end so there are no 2019 figures available.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
No. of IDA client companies	1,262	1,308	1,397	1,465	1,444

Source: AES 2014-2018

Enterprise Data

418. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the exporting firm to active enterprises ratio in each year over the 2014 to 2018 period and to date in 2019; the corresponding EU average rate; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31111/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Table 1 shows the number of goods exporting enterprises and the total number of active enterprises in Ireland for the years 2015-2017 as sourced from the CSO. It also shows the ratio of goods exporting enterprises to all active enterprises for these years. The ratio of goods exporting enterprises to total enterprises was 3.7% in 2015, 3.5% in 2016 and 3.5% in 2017. Data for 2018 and 2019 are not yet available.

Table 1: Ratio of goods exporting firms to all active enterprises for Ireland, 2015-2017

-	2015	2016	2017
Goods Exporting Firms (Source: CSO, Trade by Enterprise Characteristics)	8,561	8,693	8,614
All Active Firms (Source: CSO, Business Demography Statistics)	248,843	250,033	271,166
Ratio of goods exporting firms to all active enterprises	3.7%	3.5%	3.5%

A comparable goods export ratio for the EU as a whole is not available, however comparable data is available for selected EU countries and this is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Ratio of Goods Exporters to All Firms for Selected EU Countries, 2016.
Source: Eurostat

Country	All Firms	Number of Goods Exporters	Ratio of Goods Exporters to All Firms
Belgium	659,387	54,438	8.3%
Bulgaria	347,962	23,068	6.6%
Czechia	1,037,883	17,865	1.7%
Denmark	224,942	25,598	11.4%
Germany	2,801,030	311,904	11.1%
Estonia	85,737	15,111	17.6%
Greece	765,974	18,521	2.4%
Spain	3,026,237	162,821	5.4%
France	3,558,735	107,835	3.0%
Croatia	147,181	7,998	5.4%
Italy	3,849,594	223,322	5.8%
Cyprus	52,325	3,102	5.9%
Latvia	116,393	12,420	10.7%
Lithuania	197,254	15,600	7.9%
Luxembourg	32,391	2,678	8.3%
Hungary	535,507	39,218	7.3%
Netherlands	1,155,256	117,517	10.2%
Austria	406,079	43,044	10.6%

Country	All Firms	Number of Goods Exporters	Ratio of Goods Exporters to All Firms
Poland	2,015,506	121,169	6.0%
Portugal	843,693	48,687	5.8%
Romania	717,388	21,677	3.0%
Slovenia	143,451	22,404	15.6%
Slovakia	454,191	30,394	6.7%
Finland	289,631	14,225	4.9%
Sweden	758,640	45,414	6.0%
United Kingdom	2,467,365	142,520	5.8%

Goods exporters make up the vast majority of exporters in Ireland and data on the number of services exporting enterprises is not available from the CSO.

Enterprise Support Schemes

419. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of participants in the rescue and restructuring scheme since it was established in tabular form; and the amount drawn down to date. [31112/19]

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

The rescue and restructuring scheme was put in place for “Undertakings in Difficulty” and operates under the EU Rescue and Restructuring Guidelines. Under the scheme, an undertaking is considered to be in difficulty when, without intervention by the State, it will almost certainly be condemned to going out of business in the short or medium term.

This scheme was developed as it was considered prudent to have contingency measures in place so that my Department can respond swiftly to changing circumstances, as necessary. However, there are many other supports in place that enterprises can avail of which should prevent them from reaching the point where they are in severe difficulty and at risk of going out of business. However, we also recognise the ongoing uncertainty around Brexit and therefore this scheme is part of a belt and braces approach to supporting enterprise.

To date, no applications for support have been received under the Rescue and Restructuring scheme.

Brexit Supports

420. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the latest figures regarding the Brexit SME loan scheme launched in March 2018 for each item (details supplied) up until the end of the second quarter of 2019, in tabular form. [31114/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Brexit Loan Scheme provides affordable working capital to eligible businesses with up to 499

employees that are or will be Brexit impacted and which meet the scheme criteria. The €23 million exchequer funding (€14 million from my Department and €9 million from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine) has been leveraged to provide a fund of up to €300 million over the lifetime of the scheme.

The scheme features a two-stage application process. First, businesses must apply to the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) to confirm their eligibility for the scheme. Businesses can use guidelines provided on the SBCI website to determine if they are eligible, and if so, to complete the eligibility form. As part of the process, businesses must submit a business plan, demonstrating the means by which they intend to innovate, change or adapt to meet their Brexit challenges. The SBCI assesses the applications and successful applicants receive an eligibility reference number.

Successful applicants can then apply for a loan under the scheme with one of the participating finance providers using their eligibility reference number. Participating finance providers are the Bank of Ireland, Ulster Bank and Allied Irish Bank. Approval of loans is subject to the finance providers' own credit policies and procedures.

The figures in the table are those as to 5th July 2019. The Department receives a report each quarter from the SBCI on the uptake of the scheme. A number of requested figures have not been included in this table as they pertain to the relationship between banks and their client SMEs and so are beyond the remit of these reports. Some questions requested the same information and have, therefore, been answered once.

-	Requested Details (as at 5 July 2019)
Number of businesses which have applied to the SBCI to confirm eligibility for the scheme	669
Number of businesses which have had their applications assessed by SBCI	622
Number of businesses which have not had their applications assessed by SBCI	47
Number of businesses which have had a successful application and received an eligibility reference number	608
Number of businesses which had a successful application and received no eligibility reference number	N/A
The number of businesses who did not have a successful application and received no eligibility reference number	14
List of current finance providers	Bank of Ireland, Ulster Bank and AIB
Number of SMEs which have progressed to sanction at finance provider level	150
Total value of loans progressed to sanction at finance provider level	€32,926,800
Current interest rate for those in receipt of approved loans	Maximum interest rate under the scheme is 4%

Enterprise Support Schemes

421. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the

latest figures regarding the future growth loan scheme launched in March 2019 for each item (details supplied) up until the end of the second quarter of 2019 in tabular form. [31115/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Future Growth Loan Scheme makes up to €300 million worth of loans available with a term of eight to ten years and is open to eligible Irish businesses, as well as the primary agriculture and seafood sectors, to support strategic long-term investment. Finance provided under the scheme is competitively priced and has favourable terms, for example, no security is required for loans up to €500,000.

The scheme has been developed by my Department and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in partnership with the Department of Finance, the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland and the European Investment Fund.

Loans to businesses under the scheme can be used to fund investments in equipment, machinery, buildings and associated overhead costs for organisational and/or process innovation. Loans to primary agriculture under the scheme can be used to fund investment in tangible and intangible assets on agricultural holdings linked to primary agricultural production.

The Future Growth Loan Scheme features a two-stage application process. Applications for eligibility under the scheme is made through the SBCI website. The SBCI assesses the applications and those successful will be issued an eligibility reference number.

Eligible businesses will then be able to apply for a loan under the scheme with one of the participating finance providers using the eligibility reference number. Approval of loans are subject to the finance providers' own credit policies and procedures.

The figures in the table are those as to 5th July 2019. The Department will receive a report each quarter from the SBCI on the uptake of the scheme. A number of requested figures have not been included in this table as they pertain to the relationship between banks and their client SMEs and so are beyond the remit of these reports. Some questions requested the same information and have, therefore, been answered once.

-	Requested Details (as at 5 July 2019)
Number of businesses which have applied to the SBCI to confirm eligibility for the scheme	524
Number of businesses which have had their applications assessed by SBCI	485
Number of businesses which have not had their applications assessed by SBCI	39
Number of businesses which have had a successful application and received an eligibility reference number	482
Number of businesses which had a successful application and received no eligibility reference number	N/A
The number of businesses who did not have a successful application and received no eligibility reference number	3
List of current finance providers	Bank of Ireland with additional providers joining in the coming weeks

-	Requested Details (as at 5 July 2019)
Number of SMEs which have progressed to sanction at finance provider level	17
Total value of loans progressed to sanction at finance provider level	€2,957,200
Current interest rate for those in receipt of approved loans	Maximum interest rate of 4.5% for loans less than €250,000 and 3.5% for loans more than or equal to €250,000

Question No. 422 answered with Question No. 400.

Economic Growth Initiatives

423. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the action and corresponding timeline for delivery in each year over the 2019 to 2025 period under the five pillars under Future Jobs Ireland; the actions targeted for 2019 and corresponding timeline to be completed; and the actions completed or not completed by the timelines set to date in 2019. [31117/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): On 10 March 2019, I, along with the Taoiseach and the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, launched Future Jobs Ireland 2019: Preparing Now for Tomorrow's Economy. This whole-of-Government framework, which forms a key part of Ireland's economic agenda over the medium term, aims to ensure our enterprises and workers are resilient and prepared for future challenges and opportunities

Future Jobs Ireland 2019 is the first in a series of annual reports as part of a multi-annual framework. It outlines 2019's ambitions and deliverables and also longer-term ambitions for the future of the economy. Each year we will set out the steps to deliver on these ambitions with the ultimate goal of increasing the resilience of our economy and future-proofing it.

Future Jobs Ireland focuses on five Pillars in the areas of:

1. embracing innovation and technological change;
2. improving SME productivity;
3. enhancing skills and developing and attracting talent;
4. increasing participation in the labour force; and
5. transitioning to a low carbon economy.

Future Jobs Ireland 2019 includes 26 meaningful and impactful Ambitions which contain 127 Deliverables in total for completion in 2019. These Deliverables are built on extensive engagement, including through the national Future Jobs Summit held in November 2018 which brought Government and stakeholders together to discuss the Pillars within Future Jobs Ireland. The Deliverables for 2019 are outlined in the table at the link. Each Deliverable has a quantifiable output, lead Department and timeframe the details of which can be found in Appendix A of Future Jobs Ireland 2019 available on gov.ie (<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/33b78d-future-jobs-ireland-preparing-now-for-tomorrows-economy/?referrer=/futurejobsireland>).

Implementation of Future Jobs Ireland 2019 is ongoing. It is expected that a Progress Report providing an update on the progress of the Deliverables that were to be implemented in the first half of the year will be published shortly.

[Tables]

European Council Meetings

424. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the status of the recent items discussed at the informal EU Competitiveness Council meeting in Helsinki; if an overview of decisions regarding recent trade agreements agreed or being negotiated will be provided; and the status of discussions on trade with the United States of America and recent developments regarding proposed duties on EU imports. [31118/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The discussions at the informal EU Competitiveness Council, which took place on 5th July, were on the theme of sustainable growth. Ministers focussed on integrating the single market, the digital economy and a modern industrial policy. In the afternoon, the Council discussed smart solutions for a competitive and climate neutral Europe. Trade matters are discussed by a different Council formation, whereas the Competitiveness Council - or COMPET - is generally composed of "industry" Ministers.

With regard to your request for an overview of EU Trade agreements and trade discussions, the EU's suite of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), go beyond the reduction or elimination of conventional tariff barriers to include:

- non-tariff and regulatory barriers, services,
- investment,
- recognition of professional qualifications,
- intellectual property rights,
- access to public procurement,
- regulatory cooperation,
- sustainable development,
- labour and environment.

They help to open new markets, break down barriers and provide new opportunities for Irish-based firms.

The latest up-to-date information on specific FTAs is as follows:

EU-Canada (CETA) - On 21st September 2017, CETA was "provisionally applied", under which EU/Irish companies gain access to the removal of customs duties and substantially improved access to the Canadian public procurement market. CETA also opened up new sectors of the Canadian services market, reduced regulatory barriers and provided more transparent rules for market access.

Ireland already has a strong trading relationship with Canada which is reflected in the €3.2

billion worth of annual trade between both countries. The value of Irish exports to Canada is worth €2.4 billion whilst the value of Irish imports from Canada is worth €780 million.

EU-Japan - The EU-Japan Economic Partnership (EPA) was signed in Tokyo on the 17th July 2018. The European Parliament and Japan's National Diet voted to ratify the EPA in December 2018 and the Agreement entered into force on 1st February 2019. Tariff reductions will be delivered on a phased basis over a period of up to 15 years. It is expected that the Agreement will open up new opportunities for Irish exporters and companies across a wide range of sectors, including the agri-food sector, which will see particular benefits with new access for dairy products and beef. It will also facilitate greater ease in doing business in the financial services, med-tech, and green energy sectors and across the full range of trade interests that Ireland and Japan share. The Agreement also creates opportunities for Irish-based manufacturers in our pharmaceutical sector through an expansion of existing Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) on Good Manufacturing Practice to cover new pharmaceutical products.

EU-Mexico - On 21 April 2018, the EU and Mexico announced that they had reached Political Agreement in their negotiations to modernise the existing EU-Mexico Global Agreement to broaden its scope to include regulatory cooperation, more trade in agriculture and food, common phytosanitary standards (food safety and animal and plant health), sustainable development, rules of origin, public procurement. The EU and Mexico hope to finalise the full legal text before the end of the year. The final text will be reviewed by lawyers from both parties, a process called "legal scrubbing". After this, the agreement will be submitted for the approval of EU Member States and of the European Parliament before signature. The Agreement will provide a platform to increase Irish exports to Mexico, this will be significant for Ireland's important Agri-food sector especially for dairy, pork and beef products. Ireland is a significant exporter to Mexico of powdered milk and milk derivatives. There are also many exciting opportunities in Mexico for Irish businesses including in the automotive, aeronautics, electronics, financial and telecommunications sector.

EU-Singapore - The EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (FTA) was signed by the EU and Singapore at the 12th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit on 19th October 2018. The FTA was ratified by the European Parliament on 12 February 2019. The aim is for the FTA to enter into force during 2019. The deal goes beyond many other free trade accords in committing to open up public procurement, an area where the EU has many leading suppliers, and agreeing on technical standards in areas such as motor vehicles, electronics and green technologies.

EU-Vietnam - A Free Trade Agreement (FTA) was successfully negotiated with Vietnam in 2015. The European Commission and Vietnam signed the FTA on 30 June 2019 in Hanoi. The hope is that it will be ratified by the European Parliament during 2019. The EU-Vietnam FTA will eliminate over 99% of tariffs and will unlock a market with huge potential for Irish exports. The FTA will also create opportunities by addressing other barriers to trade and will address trade-related areas such as public procurement, regulatory issues, competition, services, investment, intellectual property rights, and sustainable development. The Agreement creates opportunities for the Irish Agri-food sector, in particular. Ireland's food exports to Vietnam have grown considerably in recent years and the FTA will support further growth. There are opportunities for Ireland to grow exports in dairy products, pork, seafood, and alcoholic beverages by taking advantage of reduced tariffs under the FTA. Currently tariffs on EU exports of spirits to Vietnam are particularly high at 48% and will be eliminated under the FTA. The elimination of tariffs of 15% on frozen pork products is also significant for Irish producers.

EU-Mercosur - The EU has recently reached political agreement on FTA with the Mercosur region (Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay). The EU-Mercosur Agreement is the EU's largest trade deal to date. The Agreement covers a population of over 770 million with trade in

goods and services valued at €122 billion. It aims to reduced and, in some areas, eliminate trade tariffs between the EU and the Mercosur region. In 2018, Ireland exported €0.5 billion worth of goods to the Mercosur region. In 2017 – the latest year for which data is available – services exports to Mercosur totalled almost €1.5 billion. Trade with this 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. 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 Free Trade Agreement will make exports from Ireland more attractive and potentially increase the demand for Irish products. The final text of the Agreement will be reviewed by lawyers from both parties, a process called “legal scrubbing” and translated into the various EU and Mercosur languages. After this, the agreement will be submitted for the approval of EU Member States and of the European Parliament before signature - a process we believe will take 2 years based on previous FTAs.

EU-Australia and New Zealand - Negotiations for separate FTAs with Australia and New Zealand commenced in July 2018. Three rounds of negotiations have been held with the most recent taking place from 25th-29th March 2019. The fourth round is expected to take place during July 2019. Good progress has been made in many areas to date, however more challenging discussions are also anticipated on sensitive issues such as recognition of the EU’s Geographic Indicators for food and beverages, and in finding agreement on the structure of tariff offers. To date there have been four rounds of negotiations for an EU-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement with the most recent taking place from 13th-17th May 2019 in Wellington. Overall, progress has been constructive with some chapters capable of being closed.

EU-Chile - The EU and Chile launched negotiations for a modernised Association Agreement in November 2017. There have been three rounds of discussions to date, the latest taking place in Brussels, 28 May-1st June 2018. Over the course of the round the negotiating teams discussed all the issues covered by the Agreement. While no date has been confirmed for the fourth round of negotiations, both sides agreed on work in relation to various areas, and contact will continue to this effect to continue advancing in all areas of preparation for the next round of negotiations.

Indonesia - Indonesia is a member of the ASEAN group. The first FTA negotiations with Indonesia took place in September 2016. The eighth round of negotiations took place in Jakarta from 17 - 21 June 2019. The potential for further progress before October is limited as Indonesia will not have a new government in place until then following elections in April. The negotiations are approximately at the half-way point. Good progress has been made in a number of areas, however more difficult discussions undoubtedly lie ahead.

EU-US trade discussions - On the 25th July 2018, European Commission President Juncker and President Trump met in Washington to launch a new phase in the close friendship and strong trade relations between the United States and the European Union. They agreed a Joint EU-US Statement to –

- work together toward zero tariffs, zero non-tariff barriers, and zero subsidies (on non-auto industrial goods) and to work to reduce barriers and increase trade in services, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, medical products, as well as soybeans,

- strengthen strategic energy cooperation to potentially increase US imports of (LNG) to diversify the EU’s energy supply,

- launch a close dialogue on standards to ease trade barriers, reduce bureaucratic obstacles,

and slash costs, and

- work closely together with like-minded partners to reform the WTO and to address unfair trading practices, including intellectual property theft, forced technology transfer, industrial subsidies, distortions created by state owned enterprises, and overcapacity.

An EU-US Executive Working Group (EWG), was established on foot of the July joint statement, co-chaired by EU Trade Commissioner Cecelia Malmström and the U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer. The EWG is vehicle for carrying forward this joint agenda and is scheduled to meet again in early May 2019.

On 15 April 2019 the EU Council voted by qualified majority to approve the negotiating directives for the commencement of trade negotiations with the US in the sectors of conformity assessment (making it easier for companies to prove their products meet technical requirements on both sides of the Atlantic) and one on the elimination of tariffs for industrial goods (excluding agricultural products). The approval of the negotiating directives is a key step on the road to a possible future trade agreement between the EU and US. Furthermore, these mandates will enable the EU Commission, in consultation with Member States, to work towards removing tariff and non-tariff barriers to EU-US trade in industrial goods, key goals of the July 2018 Joint Statement of EU Commission President Juncker and US President Trump.

A recent economic analysis released by the EU Commission found that a targeted EU-US agreement eliminating tariffs on industrial goods would increase EU exports to the US by 8% and US exports to the EU by 9% by 2033. In this context where Ireland and the US have a bilateral trading relationship worth more than €100 billion per annum, the potential gains for Ireland, and resultant employment, from an EU-US trade agreement would be very positive.

It will be a matter for the EWG to determine the timing of future EU-US trade negotiations.

In relation to the Deputy's reference to proposed duties on EU imports, I assume that this refers to two long-running disputes between the EU and US regarding alleged subsidies provided to their respective commercial aircraft manufacturers, Boeing (US) and Airbus (EU). In both cases the WTO has found that the EU in relation to Airbus, and Washington State in relation to Boeing, provided subsidies to support these airlines in contravention of WTO rules.

The US has requested the authority to impose countermeasures worth \$11.2 billion, commensurate with their estimation as to the adverse effects caused by EU subsidies to Airbus. However, a WTO arbitrator is currently evaluating the claim and the report is due before the end of 2019 such that the amount has yet to be determined. However, in advance of the arbitrator's decision, the US published in April 2019 a draft list of products that may attract increased tariffs. This US list is divided into two sections, the first included aircraft related products and is targeted at the four Member States (France, Germany, Spain and the UK) that provided support to Airbus the second section targets a wide range of products to be applied across all 28 EU Member States. Included in both sections are products that Ireland exports in significant volumes to the US, including aircraft and aircraft parts, butter, cheese and liqueurs.

On 1st July the Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) published a supplementary list of product lines which may be subject to increased tariffs. The list includes agricultural products exported by the EU 28. Dairy spreads, Italian cheeses, olives, coffee and pasta are all included, as are Irish and Scotch whiskies, as well as pork products. This supplemental list adds 89 tariff subheadings with an approximate trade value of \$4 billion to the initial list published in April. In line with its standard procedures, the USTR has invited written submissions on the supplemental list and will hold a public hearing on 5th August 2019.

It is important to note that the US lists (initial and supplemental) are only proposed lists and it will be for the WTO arbitrator in the case to determine the amount of possible damage. Only after the WTO Arbitration report is issued can the US choose products to impose tariffs on and only up to a value that matches the amount awarded.

The EU has stressed that the arbitrator in the Airbus case has yet to release its report which could permit the EU to impose tariffs on the US to the value of the arbitration findings,

Importantly, the EU remains open for discussions with the United States on both cases and believes the US estimate of \$11 billion worth of tariffs to be greatly exaggerated. Ireland continues to support the EU position of seeking a negotiated resolution to the Airbus/Boeing disputes that is to the benefit of both sides and has encouraged discussions to start as early as possible to this end.

Finally, at a national level, my Department continues to monitor the potential impacts of the trade measures being proposed by the US. Officials in my Department continue to engage with the European Commission on the matter as it is important that we maintain a common EU position, principally given that the EU Commission has competency on trade matters under the EU Treaties.

European Council Meetings

425. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if changes to EU state aid rules as a policy lever to support exposed firms and exports from a no-deal Brexit were discussed at the informal EU Competitiveness Council meeting in Helsinki; and if not, the reason Ireland did not raise the issue. [31119/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My colleague Minister Breen attended the informal EU Competitiveness Council meeting on 5 July to which the Deputy refers. State Aid rules did not feature on the agenda of this meeting. The Competitiveness Council is a consultative committee and is not a forum for direct representations from Member States. Changes to State Aid rules is therefore not part of the remit of the Council.

However, my Department and its agencies are providing extensive supports, schemes and advice to ensure that businesses are prepared for Brexit. My Department has been working closely with the EU Commission and DG Competition since November 2017 through the Irish/EU Technical Working Group on State Aid. The Group comprises senior representatives from DG Comp, my Department, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and Enterprise Ireland. Its objective has been to scope and design schemes to support enterprises impacted by Brexit in line with State Aid rules.

Through the mechanism of the Technical Working Group Ireland has fully utilised the provisions of the State aid framework to enable the investment by Enterprise Ireland of €74 million in Brexit impacted businesses in 2018. Options available through the Agriculture Guidelines are also being developed to support large food companies.

Earlier this year I met with Commissioner Vestager. The focus of the meeting centred around the severe challenges that Irish businesses will face when the UK leaves the EU and the need for appropriate and timely State supports. It was agreed that Irish officials will continue to work closely with the Commissioner's team in addressing any State aid issues that may arise to ensure a rapid and appropriate response as the ultimate shape of Brexit and its firm-level implication become known. The Commissioner emphasised that the Commission stands ready

to act urgently in mitigation against the impacts of Brexit on Irish firms.

Should issues arise that require an approach that does not fit within the existing State aid rules, this will be raised as part of these Working Group discussions.

Appointments to State Boards

426. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the reason the application of a person (details supplied) to be a member of the National Competitiveness Council was not successful; and the criteria for selecting persons on the council to ensure there is SME representation. [31120/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The call for expressions of interest for members of the National Competitiveness Council was advertised on the State Boards website by the Public Appointments Commission (and on the DBEI and NCC websites) on 10 May.

The following criteria were outlined in the Call for Expressions of Interest Booklet:

“Expressions of interest are now being sought from suitably qualified persons, (for example, economists, or individuals who have a direct experience of competitiveness and productivity issues from a business perspective), at an appropriately senior level, for consideration for appointment as a Member of the NCC for a period not exceeding 6 years.

Members are drawn from civil society (e.g. union representatives, business representatives, businesses, and academia) and must have an interest in, and understanding, of the factors that affect the competitiveness of the Irish economy and of the policies that can influence productivity levels in the economy. As evident from the work programme of the Council and its publications (see Section B above), this involves the Council and its members considering and commenting on a wide range of important national and sectoral policy issues.

The members of the NCC are appointed by the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

The Minister shall have regard to the desirability for gender balance and regional and international perspective on the Board as the Minister considers appropriate.

The Minister shall have regard to the particular skills, knowledge and abilities of applicants when making appointments to the Board.

Desirable attributes include but are not limited to:

- Demonstrated understanding of the factors that affect the competitiveness of the Irish economy and the policies that can influence productivity levels in the economy
- Experience of effective leadership at a senior level in an applicant’s area of expertise
- Demonstrated understanding of the policy development process
- Critical thinking skills with a proven ability to grasp the detail of a wide range of issues
- Experience of participation on similar committees or groups.”

Applications were received by the closing date on 7 June. The selection panel shortlisted candidates and submitted the shortlist to me from which to appoint new members to replace

those stepping down/retiring from the Council.

I appointed three highly qualified people to the Council on 26 June 2019 arising from the above process.

Project Ireland 2040 Implementation

427. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of payments issued to date for successful applications made under the disruptive technologies innovation fund by county; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31122/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan): The Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF) is a €500 million fund established under Project Ireland 2040 and forms a key part in the delivery of the Pillar 1 goal of Future Jobs Ireland to embrace innovation and technological change.

In December 2018, 27 collaborative projects were approved for funding under the first call of the DTIF. The DTIF will see investment in the research, development and deployment of disruptive technologies and applications on a commercial basis. The successful projects represent the health, food, ICT and manufacturing sectors in Ireland.

There are 104 organisations involved across the 27 projects that will receive funding and these include large enterprises, SMEs, colleges and public research bodies. Several colleges and public research bodies are involved in multiple projects. There are 18 successful projects involving partners based outside Dublin and they are located country-wide in Limerick, Cork, Galway, Kildare, Monaghan, Waterford, Louth and Tipperary.

As indicated in December 2018, the 27 projects involve a request for DTIF funding of approximately €75 million of which €20 million is due to be drawn down during 2019. The DTIF is being administered by Enterprise Ireland on behalf of my Department.

Contracts are now being finalised by Enterprise Ireland in respect of each of the 27 projects and grant drawdown will commence shortly. With this Fund, as with typical grant funding programmes, most recipients will have to incur up to six months of costs before grant payments will issue. A proportion of the funding can be provided in advance to the higher education institutions involved in the projects and, in certain circumstances, to small firms below 50 employees.

By September 2019, the first payments under DTIF Call 1 will have been made and we will be in a position to provide information by county at that point. I expect that it will be late in 2019 before we can report on the full 2019 drawdown of DTIF funding.

Pending this, the details of each of the successful projects including the partners involved in each, a brief description of each project and the value of funding approved is available on my Department's website.

Together with my colleagues, Paschal Donohoe, TD, Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure & Reform and Patrick O'Donovan, TD, Minister of State for Finance and Public Expenditure & Reform, my Department launched the 2nd call of the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund at an event in the University of Limerick on Friday 5 July. Over 300 delegates registered for the event, which included an information session on the Fund and a networking session for potential applicants. Details of the Fund are available at www.dbei.gov.ie/dtif. The closing date for applications under Call 2 of the DTIF is Wednesday 18 September at 15.00.

Brexit Preparations

428. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the web addresses for each State agency under her remit that have a dedicated web page portal to Brexit that provides information relating to preparing for Brexit, business supports and advice. [31123/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In addition to Brexit information on the Enterprise Agency websites, my own Department's website has a dedicated Getting Business Brexit Ready page at www.dbei.gov.ie/brexit. This page provides information on the steps companies can take to limit the impact of Brexit on their business, including information on issues such as certification, working capital and financing.

Details of the range of Brexit-related advisory and supports across all Departments is available at www.gov.ie/brexit.

Enterprise Ireland provides a range of supports to help companies plan for both the opportunities and challenges that Brexit poses. While the outcome of the Brexit negotiations remains uncertain, Enterprise Ireland is actively supporting Irish companies to prepare and take action.

Enterprise Ireland has established a Prepare for Brexit online portal (www.prepareforbrexit.com). The online portal provides information on the range of Enterprise Ireland supports available to assist Irish companies to respond to the challenges and opportunities posed by Brexit.

The National Standards Authority of Ireland has a dedicated Brexit portal on its website (www.nsai.ie/brexit). The development of Brexit portal was central tool in raising awareness of the possible Brexit ramifications in standards and certification for Irish businesses.

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission has dedicated Brexit web pages on both the consumer and business sections of its website, which are:

<https://www.cpc.ie/consumers/shopping/brexit/> and <https://www.cpc.ie/business/help-for-business/guidelines-for-business/brexit/>

Science Foundation Ireland's website contains information on Brexit at the following address: <http://www.sfi.ie/funding/international/>

The Patents Office has a dedicated Brexit page outlining Intellectual Property information and supports for business at:

<https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/commercialise-your-ip/taking-ip-global/ip-rights-in-the-eu-brexit/>

The Health and Safety Authority has a Brexit portal at: <https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Topics/Brexit-it/>

The Local Enterprise Offices national website has information on Brexit supports at: <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Discover-Business-Supports/Brexit/>

Individual LEOs also have information on Brexit related supports on their respective websites.

Brexit Preparations

429. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the national Brexit mentorship and training programmes open to SMEs and which are in operation. [31124/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) and Enterprise Ireland provide a range of supports to help companies plan for both the opportunities and challenges that Brexit poses. While the outcome of the Brexit negotiations remains uncertain, the LEOs and Enterprise Ireland are actively supporting Irish companies to prepare and take action.

The LEOs and Enterprise Ireland are providing companies with mentorship and training programmes to prepare for any kind of Brexit. These include:

- The Brexit SME Scorecard online tool is an important first step in helping small businesses think about how their businesses may be impacted by Brexit. Developed by Enterprise Ireland, questions in the scorecard are built around six key business pillars to help SMEs self-diagnose how prepared they are. A comprehensive report is automatically generated to assist with planning and to highlight what further supports are available.

- The Brexit Act On Programme has been developed to focus on three main areas of capability: (1) Financial and Currency Management; (2) Strategic Sourcing; and, (3) Customs and Logistics. Delivered over the course of two half day sessions with an independent consultant, the initiative assists companies decide on specific actions over a short period to address some of the risks and opportunities from Brexit.

- The Brexit Mentor Programme was developed for businesses to work with an experienced mentor on a one-to-one basis to identify key areas of exposure within their business. With advice and guidance from their mentor, businesses develop strategies that are more robust, which address issues and maximise potential opportunities around Brexit.

- Prepare Your Business for Customs is a one-day interactive workshop, run regionally by Local Enterprise Offices, which provides businesses with a better understanding of the potential impacts, formalities and procedures to be adopted when trading with a country which is outside the Single Market and Custom Unions. Open to all businesses, these workshops cover areas such as what export and import procedures apply, how tariffs work and how to correctly classify goods.

- Customs Insights course from Enterprise Ireland which helps businesses understand the key customs concepts, documentation and processes required to move goods from, to and through the UK. The online course, which is open to companies of all sizes, provides learners with a firm understanding of the customs implications for their business and the options from Revenue to make this process more efficient.

- LEAN for Micro which has been adapted by Enterprise Ireland for Local Enterprise Office clients to help small businesses boost competitiveness, increase performance and profitability as well as building resilience within their companies. Under this programme, clients can avail of five days of consultancy with a Lean Expert (a qualified practitioner), who will work with the company to introduce lean principles, undertake a specific cost reduction project and assist the company in benchmarking its performance.

- Technical Assistance for Micro-Exporters (TAME) Grant supports clients to explore and develop new export market opportunities, such as participation in international trade fairs and development of export related marketing and websites. With a focus on helping companies to diversify, this scheme is a match-funding opportunity with up to €2,500 available.

- The Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) which is the world's largest support network for small and medium-sized enterprises that have international growth ambitions. The EEN is active in more than 60 countries around the globe, bringing 3,000 experts together from more than 600-member organisations. Through the Local Enterprise Offices, the EEN can help small businesses get expert advice, source technologies and identify trusted business partners.

- Be Prepared Grant, launched in June 2017 by Enterprise Ireland, supports the costs of SME clients in preparing a plan to mitigate risks and optimise opportunities arising from Brexit. This grant support, of up to €5,000, can be used to help cover consultancy, travel and out of pocket expenses associated with researching the direction of their Brexit action plan.

Brexit Supports

430. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to introduce trade support measures such as further export trade financing and export credit guarantees as a mitigation measure to Brexit. [31125/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The availability of and access to sufficient working capital is critical for the success of any business. Trade financing and credit insurance products can help SMEs by bridging the gap between exporters' and importers' differing expectations about when payment should be made.

Under the 2017 Action Plan for Jobs, a High Level Group chaired by my Department was established to progress the development of an export finance strategy for Ireland. The group's work led to the development of the Brexit Loan Scheme, which provides low cost working capital at favourable terms and conditions to businesses impacted by Brexit.

My Department will work together with the Department of Finance to build on the learnings from this Scheme in further achieving the availability of appropriate financing supports for exporting Irish businesses.

In addition, SBCI has been working with non-bank finance providers to improve the availability of market solutions for SMEs with regard to trade finance options. For example, a new trade finance product was developed by Bibby Financial Services in collaboration with SBCI making available €70 million in funding to Irish SMEs. The new product allows businesses to buy, receive and sell goods before needing to pay for them and it is ideally suited to Irish SMEs needing to bridge the gap between paying suppliers and receiving payment from customers.

While the nature of the UK's departure from the EU still remains to be determined, Brexit continues to represent a significant challenge for businesses in Ireland. Supports such as the Brexit Loan Scheme are designed to provide short-term finance and with Brexit on the horizon, investment in working capital diversification has never been more important.

Skills Shortages

431. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on a recommendation in a report (details supplied). [31128/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Minister for Education and Skills leads on skills development in the economy and works closely with a range of stakeholders across Government, industry and the education and training sector to ensure the availability of relevant talent and skills, which is a key enabler of enterprise,

especially SMEs, productivity and innovation.

EI provides a range of supports tailored to meet the requirements of its client companies including the following programmes tailored for the sales and marketing area:

- The Go Global 4 Growth programme is targeted at ambitious top teams from all sectors, committed to adapting and evolving their business functions to prepare for global growth.

- The International Selling Programme is targeted exclusively at maximising export sales for ambitious Irish SMEs. The programme aims to deliver an international sales plan based on a combination of sales methodologies, skills-based learning, in-company assignments and access to a panel of experienced sales experts and business advisors.

- The Excel at Export Selling workshops are aimed at rapidly embedding the proven tools of best international selling practice into Irish companies across all industry sectors who are looking to upskill for export growth and want access to selling skills development.

- EI's Strategic Marketing Review is designed to bring structure and focus to a company's marketing operations through a diagnostic framework. The programme assists the management of Irish exporting companies to develop a strategic planning framework to achieve sales growth.

The LEOs provide a wide range of high-quality soft supports tailored to meet specific business requirements such as:

- Sales & marketing for Business Growth
- Essential Steps to Achieving More Sales
- The Art of Successful Tendering
- Promoting Your Business Using Social Media
- Developing an Effective E-mail Marketing Campaign
- Digital Marketing
- Improving your digital strategy through social media management.

These courses give participants an insight into the various elements of sales and marketing including sales process management, prospecting and evaluating leads, essential sales skills, promoting a business, pricing from a marketing perspective, the integration of online and off-line marketing, target marketing and customer segmentation, USP identification, customer identification, direct marketing, and essential skills of customer service.

The LEOs also deliver the Trading Online Voucher which offers financial assistance of up to €2,500 along with training and advice to help business trade online. It is a prerequisite of the scheme that any business applying for a voucher completes an information session covering various topics, including developing a website, digital marketing, social media for business and search engine optimisation.

The overall management and leadership skills and practices in SMEs are also of some importance in this context. Future Jobs Ireland 2019 sets the ambition to improve leadership and management skills in SMEs in Ireland. A range of management development training is provided by Enterprise Ireland, Skillnet Ireland, and others, both public- and private-sector, and provision is to be increased under the Skillnet Ireland SME Management Development

Programme and Springboard+ 2019. World Management Survey data suggest that managerial practices are poor in SMEs in Ireland compared to other OECD countries. It is essential that SME managers become more aware of their own development needs and seek out and participate in further training wherever possible. Research is being initiated to quantify the comparative performance of managers in Irish SMEs, as well as the adequacy of training provision, which will allow the identification of any gaps or weaknesses that may exist.

Skills Shortages

432. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on a recommendation in a report (details supplied). [31129/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My colleague, the Minister for Education and Skills leads on skills development in the economy and works closely with a range of stakeholders across Government, industry and the education and training sector to ensure the availability of relevant talent and skills, which is a key enabler of enterprise, especially SMEs, productivity and innovation.

Regarding the sales supports provided through my Department to SMEs, some of the marketing supports and training available from Enterprise Ireland (EI) and the 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) for their clients are outlined as follows.

EI provides a range of supports tailored to meet the requirements of its client companies including the following programmes tailored for the sales and marketing area:

- The International Selling Programme is targeted exclusively at maximising export sales for ambitious Irish SMEs. The programme aims to deliver an international sales plan based on a combination of sales methodologies, skills-based learning, in-company assignments and access to a panel of experienced sales experts and business advisors.

- The Excel at Export Selling workshops are aimed at rapidly embedding the proven tools of best international selling practice into Irish companies across all industry sectors who are looking to upskill for export growth and want access to selling skills development.

- The Go Global 4 Growth programme is targeted at ambitious top teams from all sectors, committed to adapting and evolving their business functions to prepare for global growth and incorporates modules including Strategic Sales and Marketing.

- EI's Strategic Marketing Review is designed to bring structure and focus to a company's marketing operations through a diagnostic framework. The programme assists the management of Irish exporting companies to develop a strategic planning framework to achieve sales growth.

EI also provides supports such as the Market Research Centre and its network of International offices to support client companies to address and develop their sales and marketing skills.

The LEOs provide a wide range of high-quality soft supports tailored to meet specific business requirements. LEOs recognise the importance of sales and marketing capability development and across the network run courses such as:

- Sales and marketing for Business Growth
- Essential Steps to Achieving More Sales

- The Art of Successful Tendering
- Promoting Your Business Using Social Media
- Developing an Effective E-mail Marketing Campaign
- Digital Marketing
- Improving your digital strategy through social media management.

These courses give participants an insight into the various elements of sales and marketing including sales process management, prospecting and evaluating leads, essential sales skills, promoting a business, pricing from a marketing perspective, the integration of online and off-line marketing, target marketing and customer segmentation, USP identification, customer identification, direct marketing, and essential skills of customer service.

The LEOs also deliver the Trading Online Voucher which offers financial assistance of up to €2,500 along with training and advice to help business trade online. It is a prerequisite of the scheme that any business applying for a voucher completes an information session covering various topics, including developing a website, digital marketing, social media for business and search engine optimisation.

Enterprise Ireland Data

433. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the status of the Enterprise Ireland skills audit tool and the extra supports initiative which help SMEs to meet skills needs; and the 2019 funding allocation to these items. [31130/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In recent client surveys, Enterprise Ireland client companies highlighted that skills were a major challenge to their company development and growth. In response to this challenge, Enterprise Ireland, in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation, identified the need to run Skills Analysis Workshops around the country, which would provide client companies with an appropriate toolkit to assess their skill needs.

Under this collaborative programme, Enterprise Ireland rolled out the Spotlight on Skills Workshops, which were designed and delivered by the Irish Management Institute. The Spotlight on Skills workshops are part of the Skills for Growth Initiative, which is led by the Department of Education and Skills. The aim of these workshops is to assist companies to identify their skills needs to support the growth of their business.

The output from these workshops deepens Enterprise Ireland's understanding of the specific skills needs within EI client companies and, in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills and the Regional Skills Fora managers, helps to inform engagement with the Higher Education, Further Education and other training providers to tailor future supports to assist client companies to meet their skill requirements.

The workshops were open to all Enterprise Ireland client companies and aimed at members of the senior management team. The programme aims to empower the SME client base to examine and articulate their skills requirements.

It is anticipated that after completion of the workshop and follow-on implementation support, participants will have: adopted a framework to assess the skill needs of their business

and applied this tool or framework within the company, and they will have the ability to communicate with confidence the current and future skills needs of their business for engagement with the Regional Skills Managers, Enterprise Ireland, key stakeholders including the Regional Skills Fora and the Higher or Further Education institutes or other training providers.

A total of 23 Spotlight on Skills Workshops have taken place to date between Q4 2017 to Q2 2019 across the following regions; North East, North West, West, Midlands, Mid-East, Mid-West, Dublin, South East and the South West. A total of 223 companies have participated in the workshops, with 371 individual participants having attended. The industry sectors that have participated include; Food, ICT & International Services, Industrial, Life Science and Consumer.

Since the commencement of this initiative in 2017, Enterprise Ireland has to date paid approximately €169,000 to support its implementation.

Consumer Protection

434. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on placing targeted caps on the prices paid by consumers in which they have rolling contracts in order to ensure vulnerable consumers are not exploited by loyalty penalties on goods or services products. [31131/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The loyalty penalties referred to in the Deputy's question occur where long-standing customers pay significantly more than new customers for the same services. Competition among suppliers focuses on attracting new customers with lower introductory prices with the result that customers who stay with the same supplier can end up paying higher prices. As such penalties may have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable consumers such as those on low incomes or those who have difficulty in accessing online offers, I share the Deputy's view that this is an issue that needs to be examined and, where required, addressed.

The information available to me suggests however that loyalty penalties are concentrated in a small number of sectors where contracts are automatically renewed or rolled over or are of indefinite duration, principally electronic communications services, energy, banking and insurance. As these are regulated sectors for which I have no direct responsibility, the Deputy's question is more appropriate to the Ministers with responsibility for the sectors concerned.

National Training Fund

435. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the recommendation of the National Competitiveness Council that the National Training Fund must have a clear mandate and objectives regarding in-company training; her further views on reorienting the expenditure profile of the fund to provide greater support to effective in-employment training programmes; and if she had discussions in this regard with the Minister for Education and Skills. [31132/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The National Competitiveness Council (NCC) plays an important institutional role in ensuring that the Government has an independent voice raising important competitiveness and productivity issues.

Under the Council's Terms of Reference, it is required to prepare two annual reports, one of which - the Competitiveness Challenge - outlines the main competitiveness challenges facing the business sector over the medium term, and the policy responses required to meet them. It also produces research and statements on the cost of doing business, productivity and other areas relevant to the competitiveness agenda.

As Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, I am responsible for presenting the findings of the NCC to the Taoiseach and Government.

The Deputy is referring to a recommendation in the 2017 Competitiveness Challenge. In the intervening period there have been significant developments in the national training fund, which were noted in the 2018 Competitiveness Challenge.

As part of the process announced in Budget 2018, of increasing the NTF levy to 1% of reckonable earnings by 2020, an independent review of the Fund was commissioned by the Department of Education and Skills to examine a number of strategic policy and operational issues associated with the NTF and to inform its future direction. My Department and its enterprise development agencies inputted into this review, which was published in August 2018.

The review had a number of key recommendations, which relate directly to enhancing support for in-company training, including:

- A focus on close to labour market skill requirements, and in targeted interventions to support enterprise training and prepare individuals to take up employment opportunities
- Introduce greater information sharing and coordination across programmes to increase employer buy-in
- Increase focus on supporting in-company training underpinning increased productivity and innovation capacity particularly in SMEs
- Fund SME upskilling as a target theme in Higher Education competitive funding programmes
- Implement a structured process to facilitate NTF focused inputs from employers, employees and representative bodies prior to annual expenditure decisions

The Review indicated that the NTF should be more responsive to employer needs, highlighting the importance of increasing the role of employers in determining the priorities and strategic direction of the fund and the need for additional and refocused expenditure on programmes relevant to employers.

An Implementation Plan to deliver on these recommendations was published by the Department of Education and Skills alongside Budget 2019 and is now being actioned. Budget 2019 also began the process of aligning the Fund with the recommendations set out in the Review, in particular those related to close to labour market and in-company training.

As the economy approaches full employment, the reforms to the Fund and the associated reorientation of expenditure will be key supports to the objectives set out in Future Jobs Ireland- a central part of Ireland's economic agenda over the medium term, to ensure we are well positioned to adapt to the technological and other transformational changes our economy and society will face in the years ahead.

The pace of technological change means that workers across all skills levels must be prepared to reskill and upskill throughout their working careers. This is a theme that is emphasised

in Future Jobs Ireland, which aims to boost participation in lifelong learning from 8.9% to 18% in 2025.

To this end, Future Jobs highlights the reforms to the National Training Fund and sets out a series of actions related to the implementation or expansion of in-employment programmes supported under the Fund- apprenticeship and traineeship offerings, the EXPLORE Digital Skills programme, Skillnet Ireland's training provision, especially in the area of emerging technologies, SOLAS' Skills to Advance initiative, Springboard+, and the forthcoming Human Capital Initiative.

My Department will continue to work with the Department of Education and Skills to ensure that the National Training Fund is fully aligned with the skills needs of enterprise, that it works to support the increasing in-company training needs of firms, and that it contributes to realising the ambitious lifelong learning target set out in Future Jobs Ireland.

European Council Meetings

436. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the date of each EU Competitiveness Council Ministers' meeting since June 2016; the specific meetings at which she or her predecessors made the case for the need for a revision of state aid rules of regulation EU 1407/2013 to protect exposed Irish enterprises and exporters from a potential Brexit; the date of each such meeting at which this was raised in tabular form; the status of progress being made at EU level to increase state aid thresholds to support Irish enterprises in the event of a hard no-deal Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31137/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Since the Brexit Referendum, the then Minister for Business, Enterprise & Innovation, Mary Mitchell O'Connor, attended meetings of the Competitiveness Council on 29th September 2016, 28th November 2016 and 20th February 2017. My colleague, Minister Breen, attended meetings of the Council on 30th November 2017, 12th March 2018, 28th May 2018 and 16th July 2018. The meeting on the 27th September 2018 was attended by the Permanent Representative and I attended the meeting on 29th of November 2018.

To date in 2019 the meetings on 18 February and 27 May were attended by the Deputy Permanent Representative, the meeting on 2 May was attended by an official from my Department and the meeting on 5 July was attended by Minister Breen.

State Aid rules did not feature on the agenda of these meetings. The Competitiveness Council is a consultative committee and is not a forum for direct representations from Member States. Changes to State Aid rules is therefore not part of the remit of the Council.

However, my Department and its agencies are providing extensive supports, schemes and advice to ensure that businesses are prepared for Brexit. My Department has been working closely with the EU Commission and DG Competition since November 2017 through the Irish/EU Technical Working Group on State Aid which was established following a meeting between my predecessor, Francis Fitzgerald and the Commissioner for Competition, Margrethe Vestager. The Group comprises senior representatives from DG Comp, my Department, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and Enterprise Ireland. Its objective has been to scope and design schemes to support enterprises impacted by Brexit in line with State Aid rules.

Through the mechanism of the Technical Working Group Ireland has fully utilised the provisions of the State aid framework to enable the investment by Enterprise Ireland of €74 million in Brexit impacted businesses in 2018. Options available through the Agriculture Guidelines

are also being developed to support large food companies.

Earlier this year I met with Commissioner Vestager. The focus of the meeting centred around the severe challenges that Irish businesses will face when the UK leaves the EU and the need for appropriate and timely State supports. It was agreed that Irish officials will continue to work closely with the Commissioner's team in addressing any State aid issues that may arise to ensure a rapid and appropriate response as the ultimate shape of Brexit and its firm-level implication become known. The Commissioner emphasised that the Commission stands ready to act urgently in mitigation against the impacts of Brexit on Irish firms.

Should further issues arise that require an approach that does not fit within the existing State aid rules, this will be raised as part of these Working Group discussions.

Brexit Supports

437. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of food businesses that applied for working capital under the Brexit loan scheme which opened in March 2018; the number of such businesses sanctioned financing to date; and the value of same. [31208/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The €300 million Brexit loan scheme provides relatively short-term working capital of one to three years for eligible businesses with up to 499 employees to help them to innovate, change or adapt to mitigate their Brexit challenges. Businesses can confirm their eligibility with the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, SBCI, and, if deemed eligible, can apply to one of the participating finance providers for a loan under the scheme.

Given its significant exposure to the UK market, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine contributed 40% of the State funding. As a result, at least 40% of the fund will be available to food businesses.

In terms of the number of applicants for the Brexit loan scheme, the latest data available to my Department show that, at close of business on 5 July, 669 eligibility applications were received by the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, of which 608 were deemed eligible by it. Of the 608 eligible applicants, 150 have progressed to sanction with their banks. The value of the sanctioned loans from banks on 28 June was €32.93 million.

To date, 107 food businesses have applied for eligibility under the Brexit Loan Scheme while 28 food businesses have been sanctioned financing for a total value of €7.98 million.

In addition to the Brexit loan scheme, my Department, together with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Finance and with the support of the European Investment Bank guarantee, has developed the Future Growth Loan Scheme. The scheme is making up to €300 million worth of loans available with a term of eight to ten years and is open to eligible Irish businesses, as well as the primary agriculture and seafood sectors, to support strategic long-term investment. Finance provided under the scheme is competitively priced and has favourable terms, for example, no security is required for loans up to €500,000. The scheme opened for eligibility applications on 17 April since then the SBCI has received 524 eligibility applications and issued 482 eligibility letters. With Brexit on the horizon, the availability of both the Brexit loan scheme and the future growth loan scheme means that qualifying Irish businesses will have access to low cost capital without delay. It forms part of the supports in place for Irish business to cope with potential Brexit challenges.

Brexit Supports

438. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of farmers in addition to food businesses who applied to the future growth loan scheme which opened in March 2019; the number of farmers and such businesses sanctioned financing to date; and the value of same. [31209/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Future Growth Loan Scheme makes up to €300 million worth of loans available with a term of eight to ten years and is open to eligible Irish businesses, as well as the primary agriculture and seafood sectors, to support strategic long-term investment. Finance provided under the scheme is competitively priced and has favourable terms, for example, no security is required for loans up to €500,000.

The scheme has been developed by my Department and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in partnership with the Department of Finance, the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland and the European Investment Fund.

Loans to businesses under the scheme can be used to fund investments in equipment, machinery, buildings and associated overhead costs for organisational and/or process innovation. Loans to primary agriculture under the scheme can be used to fund investment in tangible and intangible assets on agricultural holdings linked to primary agricultural production.

The Future Growth Loan Scheme features a two-stage application process. Applications for eligibility under the scheme is made through the SBCI website. The SBCI assesses the applications and those successful will be issued an eligibility reference number.

Eligible businesses will then be able to apply for a loan under the scheme with one of the participating finance providers using the eligibility reference number. Approval of loans are subject to the finance providers' own credit policies and procedures.

The scheme opened for eligibility applications on 17 April, and since then the SBCI has received 524 eligibility applications and issued 482 eligibility letters. In relation to the agri-food sector, to date, 279 primary agriculture businesses and 48 food businesses have applied for eligibility with 261 and 48 respectively receiving eligibility letters. In addition, 12 applicants have been sanctioned financing for a value of €1.68 million.

With Brexit on the horizon, investment in innovation and diversification has never been more important. The Future Growth Loan Scheme unlocks a large fund of affordable financing to support businesses in investing for the future.

Enterprise Ireland Funding

439. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of businesses that availed of the Enterprise Ireland grant for the online grant scheme; her views on whether restrictions are blocking applicants; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31254/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Retailing supports jobs in every city, town and village in the country and so it is critical that our retail sector is competing at the forefront of the digital revolution. As Chair of the Retail Consultation Forum, I have prioritised supporting the retail sector to develop their online capability in order for them to expand their market reach nationally and internationally and enhance their

competitiveness.

Increasing the international sales of Irish companies translates into sustaining and creating high-quality, sustainable jobs across the country – something that this Government is firmly focused on through the Future Jobs Ireland framework. In support of this, I introduced a new pilot Online Retail Scheme, administered by Enterprise Ireland, in September 2018. The €1.25m fund, is targeted at retailers with an online presence to encourage acceleration of their online offerings and can be used to fund research, strategy development, implementation and training.

The fund will provide grants between €10,000 and €25,000 on a match fund basis with the purpose of enhancing their online offering. Applications for funding under this pilot Scheme are considered on a competitive basis under calls for applications. Once the fund criteria is met, at least half of the total number of funds will be awarded to Irish retail businesses based outside of Dublin. By delivering the Online Retail Scheme, I intend to support Irish retailers to innovate, and through innovation, increase their competitiveness and international reach.

The first call opened on 24th October 2018 and closed on 5th December 2018, I announced the eleven successful applicants on 1st March 2019 in Skibbereen, Co. Cork. The approved applications were in sectors ranging from; pharmacy, giftware, lifestyle, entertainment, outdoor clothing and equipment, garden furniture and safety equipment. Following the first call, my Officials in conjunction with EI, undertook a review of the feedback on Call 1 to examine ways in which the Scheme offering could be strengthened.

On foot of that, I approved that the eligibility criteria of the scheme be expanded to widen the reach of the scheme. The scheme will now accept applications from Irish-based retailers with 10 or more full-time employees (including over 250 employees). Call 1 of the Online Retail Scheme was open to applications from Irish owned retail businesses with 20 or more employees, and who have a physical retail outlet. By opening up the Scheme to more retailers for Call 2, I expect to see even stronger interest and volume of applications.

In addition, Enterprise Ireland delivered advisory clinics for retailers at the Retail Excellence Retail Retreat Conference 21-22 May, 2019. The clinics offered retailers an opportunity to raise questions or issues in relation to the application process for Call 2 of the pilot Online Retail Scheme and receive expert advice from Enterprise Ireland.

Peer learning is an integral aspect of the pilot Online Retail Scheme in order to encourage knowledge sharing. Enterprise Ireland have already held online retail specific workshops with the successful entrants from Call 1 and further workshops are planned for the successful applicants from Call 2.

The second call of the pilot Online Retail Scheme opened for applications on 19 June 2019 and will close at 3pm on 31 July 2019. I look forward to announcing the successful applicants from Call 2 later this year.

IDA Ireland Portfolio

440. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she will consider approving Mullingar as a preferred location for an advanced technology unit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31263/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As part of its €150m Regional Property Programme (RPP) the IDA are directly investing in a building programme to help ensure property solutions are in place for overseas companies con-

sidering investing or expanding in Ireland, thereby encouraging more foreign direct investment (FDI) in the regions. Budget 2019 also saw the Agency allocated an additional €10m for the RPP bringing its yearly capital budget for property to €47m.

While Mullingar has not been selected by the IDA as a location for an Advanced Technology Unit (ATU), the Agency continues to draw the attention of investors to the town. The IDA operates a Business and Technology Park in Ardmore with marketable lands and also owns land in the Clonmore area. These lands are being actively marketed by the IDA to prospective and existing clients through its network of offices in Ireland and overseas. In addition to this, the Agency also actively engage with owners of privately owned buildings and lands in the Mullingar area as potential locations for investment.

County Westmeath has benefitted from the RPP. In 2014, the IDA successfully constructed an ATU in Athlone and secured Aerie Pharmaceuticals as a tenant. Under the current first phase of the RPP, the construction of an Advanced Office Building (AOB) in Athlone is expected to begin late this year or in 2020. In the second phase of the RPP, construction will begin on an additional AOB for Athlone in 2020. Once the first and second phases of the RPP are completed there will be a total of three buildings constructed in Westmeath and I am confident that these will stimulate further investment and job creation for the entire county. My Department will continue to keep the IDA's property requirements under review in the time ahead.

More broadly, the FDI trend in Westmeath is positive. There are currently 21 IDA client companies located in the County, employing 3,466 people. Three of these companies are located in Mullingar, employing approximately 150 people. The wider County has seen an almost 17% increase in FDI employment from 2017 to 2018 and the IDA actively engages with its client base to support them in growing their business and footprint further.

Departmental Communications

441. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the oversight of her Department of directives, circulars, advice or requirements issued since 2016; if surveys have been carried out of compliance with these communications to date; the surveys carried out; the results of the surveys; the compliance rate; the actions taken by her Department following these results; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31318/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As the Deputy will be aware, in addition to their statutory responsibilities, both my Department and those bodies under its aegis are subject to normal Civil and Public Service Governance practices and procedures across all areas of operations including Corporate Governance, Finance, Human Resources, Procurement etc.

As such it is standard practice that directives, circulars, advice or requirements issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, or other Government Departments or Agencies in relation to matters under their remit, are brought to the attention of Department staff and the management of bodies under the remit of the Department.

Climate Change Policy

442. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the recurring weekly meetings attended by either her or the Secretary General of her Department in 2019 at which climate change and or preparations within her Department to enact a climate plan

has been an agenda item; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31334/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I welcome the recent publication of the Climate Action Plan 2019. The plan was published following intensive engagement between my officials and officials from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment on the actions proposed for delivery by enterprise and by my Department and its agencies. I also met with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment during the development of the plan.

The Secretary General of my Department chairs weekly meetings of the Department's Management Board. The Assistant Secretary General with responsibility for coordinating my Department's inputs to the plan provided updates on the status of the plan and the nature of the actions proposed for delivery by the Department and its agencies to the Management Board as required. Officials who were directly engaged with officials from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment on the development of the plan also gave a presentation to the Management Board on the plan.

Following the publication of the plan, a paper was circulated to our Ministerial Management Board outlining the actions proposed for delivery by my Department and its agencies.

The above actions are in addition to the regular and ongoing engagement between officials across the Department and its agencies on the plan and the steps for delivery of the actions assigned to the Department therein.

My Secretary General will attend the first meeting of the Climate Action Delivery Board next week. My Department is committed to the delivery of the actions in the plan.

Question No. 443 answered with Question No. 406.

Personal Injury Claims

444. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation when a new book of quantum for personal injuries will be published; the work ongoing on the book of quantum; if the book of quantum will be phased out in view of the fact that guidelines from the judicial council are forthcoming; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31427/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Personal Injuries Commission (PIC) was established by my Department in 2017 to compare Ireland's personal injury claims processes against other jurisdictions, to benchmark international personal injury awards with those in Ireland, to report on alternative compensation and resolution models and make recommendations which could enhance the Irish claims environment.

During its 18 month work programme which concluded in July 2018, the PIC delivered two reports with 14 recommendations. One of its recommendations was that a Judicial Council, when established, be requested by the Minister for Justice and Equality to compile judicial guidelines for appropriate general damages for various types of personal injury.

The Judicial Council Bill, which completed Report and Final Stages in the Seanad on 9 July 2019, will provide for the establishment of a Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee whose sole purpose will be to develop guidelines for various types of personal injury which will fall to be adopted by the Judicial Council.

The enactment of the Judicial Council Bill will effectively supersede the requirement for a Book of Quantum, as the Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee will draw up guidelines on the level of damages which should be awarded in personal injuries actions. This should help to promote consistency in the level of personal injuries damages awarded by the courts.

[BOQ]

National Dementia Strategy

445. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health if a commitment will be made in budget 2020 to invest €18 million towards community supports and home care for persons with dementia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31026/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As a response to the challenges facing people with dementia and their families and carers, the National Dementia Strategy was launched in December 2014. The Strategy contains 35 priority and additional actions and its implementation is being led by the National Dementia Office in the HSE. The Office has made substantial progress towards developing evidence-based care pathways for people with dementia. Progress made to date and future plans, are recorded in the mid-term review of the Strategy's implementation, which was published in May 2018.

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. 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.

Nationally, the HSE is providing approximately €7.9 million for Dementia-Specific Intensive Homecare Packages this year to 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.

€400,000 has been allocated by the HSE towards the cost of the Dementia Adviser service this year, and the HSE has agreed to continue to provide this level of funding in future years. There are currently 9 dementia advisors working across 12 counties, with 7 of these posts funded by the HSE.

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.

National Dementia Strategy

446. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the level of dementia services and supports by county; his plans to increase funding for dementia support services in 2019 and 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30468/19]

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

This year, the HSE is providing 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.

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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 dementia support services, will be considered as part of the national Estimates and budgetary process and National Service Planning.

Vaccination Programme

447. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the status of the implementation of a national pertussis whooping cough vaccination programme for pregnant women in the health service. [30471/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) is an independent committee which makes recommendations to my Department on vaccination policy in Ireland. In 2012, NIAC recommended a low dose tetanus (T), diphtheria (d) and acellular pertussis (p) booster (Tdap) to provide protection for babies in the first few months of life. In September 2013, the HSE made Tdap vaccine available free of charge for pregnant women via the National Cold Chain Delivery Service to GPs and maternity hospitals.

In September 2016, NIAC published new recommendations for Tdap:

- pregnant women should be offered Tdap as early as possible after 16 weeks and up to 36 weeks gestation in each pregnancy, to protect themselves and their infant;

- Tdap vaccine can be given at any time in pregnancy after 36 weeks gestation although it may be less effective in providing passive protection to the infant;

- Tdap vaccine should be offered in the week after delivery to those women who were not vaccinated during their pregnancy.

The pertussis vaccine is provided free of charge to pregnant women. Since November 2018 all pregnant women receive pertussis vaccination from their GP free of charge.

Infectious Disease Epidemics

448. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if a case and incident management system for health protection to support more efficient and robust reporting and management of infectious disease outbreaks has been developed. [30472/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department is currently developing a National Framework for the Control of Infectious Diseases, to be completed in 2020.

The goal of the framework is to ensure a coordinated, strategic approach to maintaining and improving infectious disease control to meet ever-changing risks to society in Ireland, within the international context of infectious disease. The framework will address infectious disease prevention, surveillance, diagnosis, and treatment, as well as enhanced organisation and delivery of infectious disease control, in order to drive improvements and support an integrated approach to the control of communicable disease in Ireland.

Measures to support more efficient and robust reporting and management of infectious disease outbreaks will be explored in this context.

Infectious Diseases

449. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the measures being taken in 2019 to enhance the control of tuberculosis. [30473/19]

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.

Public Health Policy

450. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the development of a new operating model for public health. [30474/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): An Implementation Oversight Group has been established by my Department (together with an Implementation Working Group established in the HSE) to oversee the development and implementation of a new model for the delivery of public health medicine in Ireland. I am informed that all work modules are on track and it is intended that the HSE will present a draft future model to my Department for consideration in early September. Engagement with the IMO regarding consultant status and remuneration for specialists in Public Health Medicine will intensify through August and September.

HSE Data

451. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients who availed of physiotherapy in a primary care setting during the first six months of 2019. [30475/19]

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.

Occupational Therapy Data

452. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients who availed of occupational therapy in a primary care setting during the first six months of 2019. [30476/19]

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.

Speech and Language Therapy Data

453. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients who availed of speech and language therapy in a primary care setting during the first six months of 2019. [30477/19]

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.

HSE Data

454. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients who availed of the community nursing service during the first six months of 2019. [30478/19]

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.

General Practitioner Data

455. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the number of general practitioner out-of-hours contacts during the first six months of 2019. [30479/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to a service matter, I have arranged for it to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

HSE Data

456. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the number of children with complex medical conditions availing of paediatric homecare following discharge from hospital during the first six months of 2019. [30480/19]

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.

Home Help Service

457. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 135 of 20 June 2019 and the response of the HSE and in view of the commitment of Minister of State with special responsibility for mental health and older people to Dáil Éireann (details supplied), the cost of complying with the case; and the figure referenced in the comment that a significant portion of the funding is available to address the cost implications of the revised contract for HCSAs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30482/19]

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

National Dementia Strategy

458. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter regarding support for persons with dementia (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30493/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As a response to the challenges facing people with dementia and their families and carers, the National Dementia Strategy was launched in December 2014. The Strategy contains 35 priority and additional actions and its implementation is being led by the National Dementia Office in the HSE. The Office has made substantial progress towards developing evidence-based care pathways for people with dementia. Progress made to date and future plans, are recorded in the mid-term review of the Strategy's implementation, which was published in May 2018.

11 July 2019

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.

Nationally, the HSE is providing approximately €7.9 million for Dementia-Specific Intensive Homecare Packages this year to 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.

€400,000 has been allocated by the HSE towards the cost of the Dementia Adviser service this year, and the HSE has agreed to continue to provide this level of funding in future years. There are currently 9 dementia advisors working across 12 counties, with 7 of these posts funded by the HSE.

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.

Health Strategies

459. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the implementation of the recommendations of the HSE intercultural health strategy 2018-2023. [30496/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): The implementation of the HSE's 'Second National Intercultural Health Strategy 2018-2023' is a service matter and therefore the Deputy's question has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

EU Directives

460. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the way in which he is im-

proving access to primary care services for refugees in emergency reception and orientation centres and-or resettlement phase in line with the EU Reception Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU to support persons seeking asylum with particular regard to development and implementation of a vulnerability assessment. [30497/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): The EU Reception Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU provides for the regular monitoring and provision of adequate supports for applicants in detention who are vulnerable persons, including their health.

The Department of Health and the HSE are actively involved in the government-led Refugee Programmes and the Cross-Department group. The HSE in addition plays a key role at a local level via Inter-Agency groups to plan and deliver the health services required in the Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres and in the locations where the refugees are eventually housed. Elements of health screening, registration with GPs, access to medical cards, provision of a range of primary care services have been integral to optimal resettlement of groups of refugees across the country.

In 2018, the HSE implemented initiatives to improve access to primary care services for refugees in emergency reception and orientation centres. These included chronic disease management, mental health supports and the oral health needs of children and adults. This work will continue in 2019.

The HSE is developing a health vulnerability assessment, as part of the vulnerability assessment under the EU Reception Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU. The HSE has carried out a consultation with various stakeholders as part of this process to meet the conditions of the Directive and to provide for any health needs of refugees and a report is being prepared.

As the Deputy's question is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

Health Strategies

461. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the Traveller health action plan. [30498/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): Under the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, the HSE is committed to developing and implementing a detailed action plan to continue to address the health needs of Travellers, using a social determinants of health approach.

The HSE has circulated a draft of the action plan to stakeholders and has received a number of detailed comments and observations. The HSE has outlined a process which will lead to the completion of the plan in quarter 4 2019, taking into account the feedback received. The process will include liaising with Traveller representative groups and other stakeholders in finalising the plan.

The Department of Health is fully committed to providing the leadership and resources to ensure the implementation of the plan. To this end, the Department will host a workshop on the plan with senior management to tease out any policy and resource issues arising from the action plan.

I am very supportive of the health action plan and look forward to receiving the plan in quarter 4, 2019.

Health Strategies

462. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the implementation of agreed HSE assigned actions under the second national strategy on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence 2016-2021. [30499/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2016-2021 is a whole of Government response to Domestic and Sexual violence and contains a number of health-related actions assigned to the HSE. As the implementation of these actions is a matter for the HSE the Deputy's question has been referred to them for attention and direct reply.

Drug Trials

463. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health if a drug investigation or approval is in place for RTA 408 which may be an effective treatment for Friedreich's ataxia (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30501/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): No medicine containing RTA 408 is authorised anywhere in the EU. RTA 408 (also known as omaveloxolone) is an investigational medicinal product currently undergoing clinical trials. The publicly accessible European clinical trials register lists two ongoing trials registered on the European Clinical Trials Database (EudraCT). Both are Phase II clinical trials, one of which is specifically investigating the safety, efficacy, and pharmacodynamics of RTA 408 in the treatment of Friedreich's Ataxia.

Phase II trials test the efficacy of a drug and aim to find out:

- if the new treatment works well enough to be tested in a larger phase III trial
- which diseases the treatment works for
- more about side effects and how to manage them
- more about the best dose to use.

If phase II clinical trials prove successful, trials can advance to phase III.

A medicinal product cannot be placed on the market in Ireland unless it has a marketing authorisation granted by the Health Products Regulatory Authority or a centralised marketing authorisation issued by the European Commission. Following a successful application by the pharmaceutical company RTA 408 it has been designated as an orphan drug by the Commission. Therefore, a marketing authorisation application can only be submitted to the European Medicines Agency on behalf of the Commission.

For a medicinal product to be granted a marketing authorisation an applicant company must submit a dossier of all the trials and studies undertaken on the drug substance and the final pharmaceutical product, in order to provide evidence that the medicine adheres to clear and predefined standards of quality safety and efficacy relevant to its proposed therapeutic use. This dossier normally includes the results of phase III clinical trials.

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

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 licensed indications which have been granted a marketing authorisation.

Disability Services Data

464. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons with disabilities who have transitioned from congregated settings to homes in the community during the first six months of 2019. [30502/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Report "Time to Move on from Congregated Settings – A Strategy for Community Inclusion" proposes a new model of support in the community moving people from Congregated settings to the community in line with Government policy. The Report identified around 4000 people (based on 2008 census) with disabilities in Ireland living in congregated settings, defined as a residential setting where people live with ten or more people.

The Programme for Partnership Government contains a commitment to continue to move people with disabilities out of congregated settings, to enable them to live independently and to be included in the community. The objective is to reduce this figure by one-third by 2021 and ultimately, to eliminate all congregated settings.

By the end of this year, we will have exceeded this target and under 2,100 people with a disability will remain living in congregated settings. I want to emphasise that the appropriate supports and resources are being put in place to ensure that people are supported as they move out of residential centres. The model of care for individuals will be based on a person centred plan (PCP). The PCP may change over time in line with an individual's needs and circumstances and the model of service delivery applicable at a particular time.

Any opportunity for residents to live in smaller settings in the community will come after considerable planning and discussion with those residents and their families. It will be on the basis that it will enhance their life, and anyone who moves will continue to access the services they require.

The HSE has prioritised the transition of a further 160 people from congregated settings in 2019 under its Service Plan, and I am informed that 49 people have moved into their homes in the community to the end of March this year.

As the HSE is responsible for leading out on the recommendations of "Time to Move on from Congregated Settings - A Strategy for Community Inclusion", I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy in relation to the questions posed.

Disability Statistics

465. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons with disabilities who resided in congregated settings at the start of 2019 that are now deceased. [30503/19]

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

“Time to Move on from Congregated Settings – A Strategy for Community Inclusion” proposes a new model of support in the community moving people from Congregated settings to the community in line with Government policy. The Report identified around 4000 people (based on 2008 census) with disabilities in Ireland living in congregated settings, defined as a residential setting where people live with ten or more people.

The Programme for Partnership Government contains a commitment to continue to move people with disabilities out of congregated settings, to enable them to live independently and to be included in the community. The objective is to reduce this figure by one-third by 2021 and ultimately, to eliminate all congregated settings.

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As the HSE is responsible for leading out on the recommendations of “Time to Move on from Congregated Settings - A Strategy for Community Inclusion”, I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy in relation to the questions posed.

Disability Services Data

466. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons with disabilities in congregated settings at the end of June 2019. [30504/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Report “Time to Move on from Congregated Settings – A Strategy for Community Inclusion” proposes a new model of support in the community moving people from Congregated settings to the community in line with Government policy. The Report identified around 4000 people (based on 2008 census) with disabilities in Ireland living in congregated settings, defined as a residential setting where people live with ten or more people.

The Programme for Partnership Government contains a commitment to continue to move people with disabilities out of congregated settings, to enable them to live independently and to be included in the community. The objective is to reduce this figure by one-third by 2021 and ultimately, to eliminate all congregated settings.

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As the HSE is responsible for leading out on the recommendations of “Time to Move on from Congregated Settings - A Strategy for Community Inclusion”, I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy in relation to the questions posed.

Services for People with Disabilities

467. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the progress made in implementing each of the recommendations arising from the report of the review of the Irish health services for individuals with autism spectrum disorders in tabular form. [30505/19]

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.

Addiction Treatment Services

468. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the action taken to date in 2019 to improve addiction treatment and rehabilitation services in north Dublin east inner city. [30507/19]

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.

HSE Reviews

469. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE has undertaken a review of the delivery of relationships and sexuality education in schools in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills. [30508/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter I have referred the Deputy’s question to the Health Service Executive for direct

reply to him.

Healthcare Professionals

470. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a report on the implementation by the HSE of sexual health promotion training for professionals in the youth sector, those working with at risk groups, and for parents. [30509/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter I have referred the Deputy's question to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to him.

Outreach Clinics

471. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the targeted outreach programmes and campaigns delivered to at risk groups. [30510/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter I have referred the Deputy's question to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to him.

Sexually Transmitted Infections

472. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the way in which the HSE has expanded condom distribution services with initial focus targeting those most at risk. [30511/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter I have referred the Deputy's question to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to him.

Crisis Pregnancy Services

473. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE has repeated the indepth general population survey on sexual health and crisis pregnancy to provide up-to-date data to support implementation. [30512/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter I have referred the Deputy's question to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to him.

Vaccination Programme

474. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the extension of the existing national HPV vaccination programme to boys. [30513/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) made a recommendation that the HPV vaccine should be given to boys. As the HPV vaccine is preventative it is intended to be administered, if possible, before a person

becomes sexually active, that is, before a person is first exposed to HPV infection. On foot of NIAC's recommendation, my Department asked the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) to undertake a health technology assessment (HTA) in relation to extending the national immunisation schedule to include human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination of boys in first year of secondary school.

HIQA completed the HTA in December 2018, recommending that the HPV immunisation programme be extended to include boys. A policy decision has been made to extend the HPV immunisation programme to include boys starting in September 2019 with the introduction of a 9-valent HPV vaccine. The HSE National Immunisation Office has developed information materials and a communication strategy for a gender neutral HPV programme which will be available for parents and healthcare professionals in advance of the start of the gender neutral programme.

Cyber Security Protocols

475. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if it has had a cybersecurity breach in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30589/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department implements a multi-layered approach to cyber security and to protecting our ICT systems, data and infrastructure. This includes preventative controls like firewalls, anti-virus and endpoint protection alongside an advanced network intrusion detection system. Software vulnerabilities are managed by maintaining up-to-date versions.

Regular communications are issued to staff, reminding them of their obligations around cyber security and informing them of any emerging threats.

My Department continues to engage with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) based in the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and receives regular updates from the State's national/governmental Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT-IE).

I am advised that there have been no cyber security breaches within the Department in the past 12 months

Addiction Treatment Services

476. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons outside prisons in receipt of opioid substitution treatment during the first six months of 2019. [30595/19]

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.

Homeless Persons Data

477. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the number of service users admitted to homeless emergency accommodation hostels or facilities during the first six months

of 2019 whose health needs were assessed within two weeks of admission. [30596/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As the Deputy's question refers to a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply.

Addiction Treatment Services

478. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons that attended pharmacy needle exchanges during the first six months of 2019. [30597/19]

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.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

479. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if funding can be allocated for orthotics for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30615/19]

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.

Prisoner Transfers

480. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the average, shortest and longest wait, respectively facing a prisoner awaiting a transfer from the Irish Prison Service to the Central Mental Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30617/19]

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 Expenditure

481. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent on taxis by the HSE in the most recent year for which figures exist by each CHO area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30618/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Dental Services Expenditure

482. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the level of funding attributed to the school dental assessment programme in County Kildare in each year since it commenced. [30619/19]

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 Data

483. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of general practitioners licensed to dispense medicines in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in which the 2019 cohort are located; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30624/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to a service matter, I have arranged for it to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medicinal Products Availability

484. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the availability of a drug to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30625/19]

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

Home Help Service Provision

485. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if additional home help hours will be provided for a person (details supplied). [30630/19]

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 Supply

486. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of a drug to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30631/19]

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

Healthcare Infrastructure Provision

487. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the business cases and additional funding applications developed by Letterkenny University Hospital which require additional capital and revenue funding; if the business cases are with the hospital, the Saolta University Healthcare Group and HSE Estates; the status of each such project; the timeline for delivery of each project in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30634/19]

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 Waiting Lists

488. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the status of a procedure for a person (details supplied). [30637/19]

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.

Cancer Screening Programmes

489. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the establishment of a national cancer screening registry. [30644/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Preliminary work is being undertaken on the establishment of a National Cancer Screening Registry. The National Cancer Registry is working with the HSE, including the National Screening Service, to develop proposals in this regard.

Hospital Staff

490. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the roll out of the framework for safe nurse staffing and skill mix in general and specialist medical and surgical care settings; the hospitals in which it is operational; and the timeframe for extending it to all acute settings. [30645/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Framework for safe Nurse staffing and Skill mix in General, Specialist Medical and Surgical care settings in acute Adult hospitals in Ireland which I launched last year sets out for the first time a methodology for calculating the staffing requirement and skill mix needed in our specialist medical and surgical wards in adult hospitals.

The rollout of the Framework has commenced on a phased basis. A procurement process to acquire the ICT infrastructure necessary to support the rollout is under way.

Nursing Home Services

491. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the reason day services at a nursing home (details supplied) were closed from 24 June to 1 July 2019 inclusive without notice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30651/19]

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

492. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision and timeframe for the new community hospital in Killarney, County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30667/19]

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.

Respite Care Services Provision

493. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of respite services for persons with disabilities in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30668/19]

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

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

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

Health Services Staff

494. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of increasing the number of dementia advisers by 10% and 20% in 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30669/19]

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.

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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 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.

With regard to the estimated cost of increasing the number of dementia advisers, as this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy.

Patient Data

495. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons with dementia here; the number of specialists working in this area; the waiting lists to access home care packages specifically for persons with dementia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30670/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): It is estimated that over 55,000 people in Ireland have a form of dementia, with 4,000 new cases each year. After the age of 65, the prevalence of dementia nearly doubles every five years, but onset can occur at much younger ages. Around 4,000 people in Ireland aged under 65 have younger onset dementia. Based on population projections from the CSO, the number of people with dementia will double to 115,000 by 2036 and treble to 157,000 by 2046.

With regard to the remainder of the question, as this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Health Services Staff

496. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of increasing the number of dementia inclusive community co-ordinators by 10% and 20% in 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30671/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Dementia Community Activation Co-ordinator is a position co-funded by the HSE and the Alzheimer Society of Ireland. The Dementia Community Activation Coordinator is working with national organisations and key community stakeholders to support community dementia champions across Ireland. The Co-ordinator seeks to grow the number of champions and people within communities to take action to create sustainable dementia inclusive communities.

As the question relates to a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Questions - Written Answers
Nursing Staff Contracts

497. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if there is a moratorium on overtime for nurses under current HSE expenditure rules; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30672/19]

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

HSE Expenditure

498. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on expenditure profiles in the HSE at the end of the second quarter of 2019; if current expenditure guidelines are impacting on services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30673/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE's latest income and expenditure position at 30 April 2019 shows a revenue deficit of €116.2m which represents 2.3% of the available budget. The main drivers of the deficit are acute hospitals, PCRS and demand led schemes, disability services, and the treatment abroad scheme.

The HSE National Service Plan (NSP) is an important accountability instrument in use by the Department in determining how the HSE is performing against its targets as it captures in a clear and quantified way the range of health and social care services to be provided by the HSE for the allocation it has received. It establishes links between funding, staffing and services and it incorporates activity measures, outcome-based performance indicators and deliverables in key service areas, which are matched with targets and timescales.

The Department provides oversight of the performance of the HSE in relation to the delivery of the services set out in the NSP. The mechanism for this oversight includes the ongoing monthly performance management process in place between the Management Board in the Department and the HSE Leadership (now the HSE Executive Management Team) where the HSE reports monthly to the Department on the performance of the health system against the agreed targets set out in the NSP.

As part of the monthly performance cycle, the HSE provides an update on the application of its Performance and Accountability Framework. This includes the submission of an Escalation report which provides detail on services which are in escalation for the month in question and the actions being carried out to mitigate these. Services in escalation are those which are experiencing significant performance issues.

The latest escalation report is for April 2019 and currently the HSE are reporting 7 areas (6 in acute hospitals and 1 in social care) which have been escalated to the National Performance Oversight Group. Improvement plans and support measures are in place to monitor the ongoing performance of the different areas in escalation.

Neuro-Rehabilitation Services

499. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the status of the pilot project in CHO 6 and CHO 7 to support the roll out of the National Policy and Strategy for the Provision of Neuro-Rehabilitation Services in Ireland 2011-2015. [30681/19]

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 Beds Data

500. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of additional high dependency unit beds in the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30683/19]

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 Beds Data

501. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of additional high dependency unit beds in Cork University Hospital. [30684/19]

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 Beds Data

502. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of an additional 30 bed ward in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda. [30685/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Capacity Review published last year was clear on the need for a major investment in additional capacity in both hospital and community – combined with a widescale reform of the manner and the location of where health services are provided.

As set out in Sláintecare, moving care options for patients closer to their homes and into their local communities is a key part of the solution. In addition, community services are not sufficient to meet the demand, and this is placing additional pressure on hospital services.

An additional 267 acute hospital beds opened under the Winter Initiative 2017/2018, and the National Service Plan for 2019 provides for a comprehensive capacity programme.

The number of available inpatient beds is expected to increase to above 11,000 following the investment planned in the National Service Plan 2019.

In relation to the particular query raised about additional capacity at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda, as this is a service matter, I have asked to HSE to reply to you directly.

Hospital Beds Data

503. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of a 40 bed modular ward block in South Tipperary General Hospital. [30686/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As Minister for Health, I recognise that hospitals are increasingly operating at or above capacity, with year-round demand pressures that are further challenged over the winter months. It is against this background that the Health Service Capacity Review 2018 recommended an increase in acute hospitals beds of over 2,600 by 2031 to support the projected increase in demand for services in the years ahead.

An additional 267 acute hospital beds opened under the Winter Initiative 2017/2018, and the National Service Plan for 2019 provides for a comprehensive capacity programme. The number of available inpatient beds is expected to increase to above 11,000 following the investment planned in the National Service Plan 2019.

Increasing capacity is therefore a priority for the Government. The opening of the modular build at South Tipperary General Hospital is included in the HSE's National Service Plan for 2019 and necessary capital funding is in place for the delivery of the project.

In relation to the particular query raised about the provision of a 40-bed modular build in South Tipperary General Hospital, as this is a service matter, I have asked to HSE to reply to you directly.

Hospital Procedures

504. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of bariatric surgery procedures carried out in hospitals in each of the years 2011 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [30687/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Maternity Services

505. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the establishment of a serious incident management forum for maternity services in each hospital group. [30688/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The National Women & Infants Health Programme is working on a range of measures to improve the quality and safety of maternity services. A key objective is the establishment of a maternity-specific Serious Incident Management Forum in each Hospital Group. I am advised that the establishment of Serious Incident Management Fora is underway across the Hospital Groups and I have therefore asked the HSE to reply directly to you with regard to the current status of this process.

Maternity Services

506. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a report on the pilot anaesthetics model of care for general hospitals with maternity services. [30689/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): One of the priorities set out in the HSE Na-

tional Service Plan 2019 is to pilot an anaesthetics model of care for general hospitals with maternity services. As this work is being led by the National Women & Infants Health Programme, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Maternity Services

507. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the implementation of a phased national plan for benign gynaecology; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30690/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): One of the priorities identified in the HSE National Service Plan 2019 is the implementation of a phased national plan for benign gynaecology. As this work is being led by the National Women & Infants Health Programme, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Maternity Services

508. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE has identified the suite of clinical guidelines required in maternity services; and the gaps identified in terms of the development and-or review of new or existing clinical guidelines. [30691/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The National Clinical Effectiveness Committee (NCEC) is a Ministerial committee whose role is to prioritise and quality assure, to the level of international methodological standards, a suite of national clinical guidelines and national clinical audit prioritised as important for the Irish health system.

To support the National Maternity Strategy 2016-2026, the NCEC is prioritising and quality assuring a set of National Clinical Guidelines for maternity services. For example, the National Clinical Guideline No. 4. Irish Maternity Early Warning System, first published in 2014, was updated and republished by the Department of Health in February 2019.

Guidelines on Intrapartum Care are also in development as a priority to support a risk-based approach to maternity care. The clinical guideline “Risk in Pregnancy” is nearing completion and will undergo quality assurance by the NCEC in the coming months. It is expected that the NCEC will recommend it to the Minister for Health for endorsement as a National Clinical Guideline soon after.

Regarding the specific information requested by the Deputy, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Maternity Services

509. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE has defined the detailed care pathways to be made available to women in all maternity services based on the mode of care proposed in the national strategy thereby enabling a standardised and consistent planning approach. [30692/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Ireland’s first National Maternity Strategy, ‘Creating A Better Future Together, 2016 – 2026’, was published in January 2016. The Strategy aims to ensure that appropriate care pathways - Supported, Assisted and Specialised - are in

place in order that mothers, babies and families get the right care, at the right time, by the right team and in the right place. It recognises that, while all pregnant women need a certain level of support, some will require more specialised care. Accordingly, it proposes an integrated model that delivers care at the lowest level of complexity and encompasses all the necessary safety nets in line with patient safety principles.

The National Women & Infants Health Programme has been established in the HSE to lead the management, organisation and delivery of maternity, gynaecology and neonatal services across primary, community and acute care. As the phased implementation of the Strategy is being led by the Programme, I have asked the HSE to reply to your query directly.

HSE Reports

510. Deputy Stephen Donnelly asked the Minister for Health if the HSE has prepared a detailed implementation plan for the recommendations set out in the report on the use of trans-vaginal mesh. [30693/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As Minister for Health, I requested Dr Tony Holohan, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) to draft a report on the use of Uro-Gynaecological Mesh in the surgical treatment of stress urinary incontinence (SUI) and pelvic organ prolapse (POP) in women. The report covers the clinical and technical issues involved in ensuring both:

1. the safe and effective provision of mesh procedures in urogynaecology and
2. an appropriate response to women who suffer complications as a result of undergoing such procedures.

This report was published on the Department of Health website on 21 November 2018.

In advance of the report's completion, the HSE was requested in May 2018 to begin work immediately on the development of national standardised patient information and informed consent materials and the clarification and development of treatment pathways and appropriate referral services for women suffering serious complications.

The HSE was also asked by the Chief Medical Officer on 24 July to pause all mesh procedures where clinically safe to do so, until a number of key recommendations are implemented.

A Synthetic Mesh Devices Advisory Group was convened by the HSE, to advise on and progress all of the recommendations which included three patient representatives, as well as representatives of the HPRA, the IOG, the RCSI, the CFI and all Hospital Groups to advise on and action all of the recommendations above.

I am informed that an ongoing work programme for the clarification and development of treatment pathways and appropriate referral services for women suffering from mesh-related complications is being progressed by the HSE. This work includes identifying the appropriate specialist clinical expertise and facilities required at hospital group level and nationally to provide comprehensive aftercare services. Pending the completion of this work, the HSE is also examining options to address service requirements for patients with immediate or urgent needs.

As was requested by the Secretary General of my Department in November 2018, the HSE has prepared an Implementation Plan for the complete set of recommendations set out in the CMO's Report, which was approved by the Leadership Team in the HSE and published on the HSE website on 26 April 2019, which I hope provides further clarity on this issue.

11 July 2019

I am informed that the HSE has advised that a detailed progress report on implementation of the recommendations will be provided to my Department and this report is awaited.

At my meeting with the Mesh Survivors Ireland Group on 7 March 2019 I agreed to continue engagement with them on a pathway forward, to ensure that the ongoing clinical management of this patient group is in line with international best practice and emerging evidence.

Midwifery Services

511. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a report on the assessment of midwifery workforce levels against the 2016 birth rate plus methodology in the context of the new model of care. [30694/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE Midwifery Workforce Planning Project Report modelled on Birthrate Plus methodologies was published in April 2016. This Report recommended a range of midwifery staffing ratios across the 19 maternity hospitals/units taking into account the variability in working arrangements and clinical practices between the different sites and services. This Report also acknowledged that the implementation of the National Maternity Strategy 2016 – 2026 would have a significant impact to the way midwifery services are delivered and will consequently have a further impact on workforce requirements. The National Women & Infants Health Programme in the HSE, is leading on the implementation of the National Maternity Strategy, which includes identifying and resolving requirements in relation to staffing.

As this is an operational issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to your query directly.

Maternity Services

512. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE has developed a national suite of KPIs for maternity services including the model of care. [30695/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): A multidisciplinary Steering Group has been established by the HSE National Women & Infants Health Programme to oversee the implementation of the new Model of Care. One of the areas of work identified by the Steering Group is the development of key performance indicators for maternity services. Accordingly, I have asked the HSE to reply to your query directly.

Maternity Services

513. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE has identified and defined the educational supports and training programmes required by staff to ensure a safe, competent and supported maternity workforce. [30696/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): One of the priorities set out in the HSE National Service Plan 2019 is to identify and define the educational supports and training programmes required by staff to ensure a safe, competent and supported maternity workforce. As this work is being led by the National Women & Infants Health Programme, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Applications

514. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the progress to date in the determination of an application for assistance under the fair deal scheme in the case of a person (details supplied); when payment will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30698/19]

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

Medical Card Data

515. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the average annual cost of providing a medical card under the redress for women resident in certain institutions scheme. [30714/19]

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.

Health Strategies

516. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the status of the work to develop a scheme to support survivors of mother and baby home institutions; the supports being considered under the remit of the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30715/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The matters raised by the Deputy are more appropriate to my colleague at the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The Deputy may wish to refer her query to my colleague the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs for further information on work to develop supports for former residents of Mother and Baby homes. Minister Zappone published the recommendations of the First Report of the Collaborative Forum of Former Residents of Mother and Baby Homes on 16 April, 2019. The Report contains 43 recommendations in total, including 21 health and well-being recommendations relating to healthcare provision and health assessment and screening.

Given the range and complexity of the relevant recommendations, I established an Interdepartmental Working Group to undertake an assessment of the Collaborative Forum's health and well-being related recommendations. The Working Group will develop proposals for a package of health and well-being supports, including access to any necessary health and social care measures for former residents of relevant institutions. The group comprises representation from my Department, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Health Service Executive. It is currently examining the scale and scope of healthcare supports which may be provided and is due to report back to Government in September 2019.

Paediatric Services

517. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a report on the development of acute paediatric units in CUH, UHG and UHL in line with the paediatric model of care; and the number of additional consultant paediatricians, clinical nurse specialists

and allied health professionals in whole-time equivalent terms recruited to date in 2019. [30721/19]

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.

Paediatric Services

518. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a report on the development of the all-island paediatric cardiology service in Children's Health Ireland, Crumlin services, to date in 2019. [30722/19]

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.

Paediatric Services

519. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the way in which the paediatric cardiology network in CUH, UHG and UHL has been developed to date in 2019. [30723/19]

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.

Paediatric Services

520. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a report on the increase in staffing for paediatric rheumatology to improve the access and timelines of treatment; and the number and categories of additional medical and health professionals recruited for same in 2019 in whole-time equivalent terms. [30724/19]

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 Recruitment

521. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if an additional allergy consultant, genetics consultant and dermatology consultant have been appointed in Children's Health Ireland in 2019. [30725/19]

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 Recruitment

522. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if there has been an increase in staffing in Children's Health Ireland to include a consultant haematologist and advanced nurse practitioners for the haematology stem cell transplant service to address the increase in demand. [30726/19]

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 Recruitment

523. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if two additional clinical nurse specialists have been appointed to Children's Health Ireland to the outpatient antibiotic therapy service that allows suitable patients on intravenous antibiotics to be discharged early from hospital and treated in their home. [30727/19]

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 Recruitment

524. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if an advanced nurse practitioner has been appointed to the paediatric neurosurgery service in Children's Health Ireland, Temple Street. [30728/19]

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.

HSE National Service Plan

525. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE is on target to achieve savings or cost reduction or improved income generation in a number of areas set out in the HSE 2019 service plan (details supplied); and the achievements in each in the first half of 2019 to date. [30739/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In the National Service Plan the HSE committed to a range of actions/initiatives to address the €499.9m financial challenge arising in relation to the planned service delivery for the year. A Health Budget Oversight Group was set up to monitor the delivery of these actions/initiatives and my Department is committed to the HSE achieving these savings measures. I have referred this question to the HSE for a detailed reply on the actual savings achieved in the first half of 2019.

HSE Staff Data

526. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff at national director level, assistant national director level, general manager level and grade VIII level in the HSE on 1 July 2019 or the latest date available. [30740/19]

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

HSE Funding

527. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a report on the €198.5 million development funding being held by his Department in 2019 for release to the HSE on approval of implementation plans and commencement of specific developments (details supplied); and the funding released for each specific development as of 11 July 2019, in tabular form. [30741/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In early 2019 the HSE introduced an enhanced internal governance structure for the approval of new development funding. The establishment of the processes around this enhanced oversight resulted in a delay in the receipt of drawdown submissions from the HSE in the first half of the year. Delayed submissions have now been received or are due to be received shortly and funding will be released in due course. The temporary delay in funding approval arising from the revised administrative processes has not affected the delivery of the associated services.

The following table outlines the funding released to date in 2019.

New Development Funding 2019	Budget	Funding Released
Description	€000	€000
Acute Hospital Services - National Children's Hospital	6,700	-
Mental Health Services	55,000	30,000
Disability Services	14,500	12,000
Palliative Care	2,000	-
National Screening Services CervicalCheck (including HPV vaccine)	9,000	-
Termination of Pregnancy	12,000	500
Primary Care Scheme Changes	70,300	30,300
System Wide Measures	29,000	14,000
Totals	198,500	86,800

Health Services Data

528. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of adults waiting for an outpatient assessment by a consultant psychiatrist by periods (details supplied). [30742/19]

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

Health Services Staff Data

529. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultant psychiatric posts across the health services; and the number filled by permanent consultant, temporarily filled and those currently vacant. [30743/19]

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

530. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of HSE community mental health teams operational nationally; the number of consultants employed in these teams, either permanently, temporarily filled or currently vacant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30744/19]

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

531. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of HSE child and adolescent mental health service teams established nationally; the number of consultant psychiatric posts allocated to these teams; and the number of these posts which are currently permanently, temporarily or unfilled. [30745/19]

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

532. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of HSE specialist community mental health services for older adults teams across the health service nationally; the number of consultant psychiatric posts allocated to these teams; and the number of these posts which are currently permanently, temporarily or unfilled. [30746/19]

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.

Living Wage

533. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of implementing a living wage €12.30 for all employees directly employed and or in agencies under his remit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30773/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked that the HSE respond to you directly on the aspect of the question that relates to their public sector employees. In relation to Non-Commercial State Agencies under the remit of the Department, this information is being sought and will be forwarded to the Deputy when collated.

Home Help Service Data

534. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health the status of the level of home help services being provided in CH07 at the end of June 2019 compared to June and December

2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30813/19]

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.

Healthcare Infrastructure Provision

535. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health the status of the upgrade of the day care centre building on Drogheda Street, Monasterevin, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30816/19]

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.

National Dementia Strategy

536. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health the status of plans for additional supports and services for those living with dementia and their carers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30817/19]

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.

National Dementia Strategy

537. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of a dementia adviser for County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30818/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As a response to the challenges facing people with dementia and their families and carers, the National Dementia Strategy was launched in December 2014. The Strategy contains 35 priority and additional actions and its implementation is being led by the National Dementia Office in the HSE. Progress made to date and future plans, are recorded in the mid-term review of the Strategy's implementation, which was published in May 2018.

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 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 level of funding available for the Department of Health in 2020 and the quantum of services to be provided by the HSE, including for further expansion of the Dementia Adviser Service, will be considered as part of the national Estimates and budgetary process and National Service Planning.

Cancer Screening Programmes

538. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the details of the 16 laboratories reported in the second Scally report; the locations of each; the dates of each visit by the doctor and their team; and the attendees from the team at each visit in tabular form. [30819/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Supplementary Report of the Scoping Inquiry sets out the 16 laboratories identified by the Inquiry as follows:

Quest Diagnostics	Sonic Healthcare - CPL	Sonic Healthcare - Med-Lab	Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital
Teterboro, NJ	Orlando, FL	Dublin, Ireland	Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital, Dublin
Grand Rapids, MI	Victoria, TX	Salford, Manchester	
Schaumburg/Wood Dale, IL	Austin, TX	TDL, London, UK	
Lansing, IL	San Antonio, TX		
Irving (Dallas) TX	Las Vegas, NV		
Houston, TX	Honolulu, HI		

Dr Scally's Scoping Inquiry into CervicalCheck 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.

Healthcare Infrastructure Provision

539. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the status of the project to construct a rehabilitation unit at Roscommon University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30842/19]

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.

Departmental Data

540. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the different income streams directly paid by persons to his Department or agencies under his remit, such as motor tax; the number of persons making annual payments; the value of same; the number of payments made through staged or increment payments; the value of same; the additional income generated as a result of payments being made on an incremental basis; if incremental payments are not available, the reason for same; the corresponding figures for 1999 and 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30856/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): There are no income streams directly paid by persons into the Department.

I have contacted agencies under the aegis of my Department and they will respond directly on relation to income streams specific to their agency.

Disabilities Assessments

541. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of children in Cork city and county on the waiting list for an autism assessment; the number waiting for pe-

riods (details supplied); the expected waiting time for a child being put on the waiting list on 11 July 2019 in each HSE area in Cork city and county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30866/19]

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 Staff Data

542. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultant vacancies in each hospital and CHO per specialty in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30868/19]

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

Home Help Service Data

543. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of home help hours applied for by week by CHO in the past four years in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30870/19]

544. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of home help hours granted per CHO in the past four years in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30871/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 543 and 544 together.

As these are service matters I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Fire Safety

545. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health when a fire audit was conducted at St. Mary's Hospital in the Phoenix Park; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30872/19]

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.

Fire Safety

546. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the healthcare buildings which have received a fire audit in the past five years; if all the recommendations have been implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30873/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department moved to its current location at Lower Baggot Street less than twelve months ago and has not yet had a fire audit. Details of fire audits for HSE buildings and bodies under the remit of my Department are direct operational matters for the bodies concerned.

Project Ireland 2040

547. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the capital projects which have been delayed under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; when these projects will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30885/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): All capital development proposals are at various stages of development. It is important to recognise that all capital development proposals must progress through detailed appraisal, planning and design, procurement, construction and commissioning stages before a firm timeline or funding requirement can be established.

The availability of funding, the relative priority and the stage in the project's lifecycle determines the timeframe for the delivery of all capital projects.

The Health Service Executive manages public health capital investment to advance priority capital projects in line with national policy and service priorities. In addition, the HSE, in accordance with the Public Spending Code must carefully plan the use of this capital funding to meet the populations health needs and achieve value for money.

Project 2040 Project Ireland 2040 and the National Development Plan are long-term plans which will provide the capital funding to develop infrastructure, equipment and additional service capacity for the public health sector over the next decade. The National Development Plan provides €10.9 billion, representing an increase of 165% in capital funding over the previous decade. The capital funding for Health in the National Development Plan provides the investment for a solid, ambitious plan to improve our health services and modernise how we deliver services through the implementation of Sláintecare.

Departmental Correspondence

548. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health if a copy of all correspondence between his Department and a person (details supplied) will be provided. [30896/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Records such as this are not routinely retrieved and compiled to be provided outside of Freedom of Information requests. Requests for access to records may be submitted under Freedom of Information legislation, to be dealt with by my Department as normal.

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

549. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultant po-

sitions advertised by the Ireland East Hospital Group in the first six months of 2019; the speciality of each advertised position; if each position has been filled; and the number of applications for each speciality in tabular form. [30897/19]

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 Consultant Recruitment

550. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultant positions advertised by the RCSI hospital group in the first six months of 2019; the speciality of each advertised position; if each position is has been filled; and the number of applications for each speciality in tabular form. [30898/19]

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

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

551. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultant positions advertised by the Children's Health Ireland Hospital Group in the first six months of 2019; the speciality of each advertised position; if each position is has been filled; and the number of applications for each speciality in tabular form. [30899/19]

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 Consultant Recruitment

552. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultant positions advertised by the Saolta Hospital Group in the first six months of 2019; the speciality of each advertised position; if each position is has been filled; and the number of applications for each speciality in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30900/19]

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 Consultant Recruitment

553. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultant positions advertised by the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group in the first six months of 2019; the speciality of each advertised position; if each position is has been filled; and the number of applications for each speciality in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30901/19]

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 Consultant Recruitment

554. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultant positions advertised by the South-South West Hospital Group in the first six months of 2019; the speciality of each advertised position; if each position is has been filled; and the number of applications for each speciality in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30902/19]

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

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

555. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultant positions advertised by the University of Limerick Hospital Group in the first six months of 2019; the speciality of each advertised position; if each position is has been filled; and the number of applications for each speciality in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30903/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Nursing Staff Data

556. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of nursing positions vacant in the Ireland East Hospital Group as of 8 July 2019, in tabular from. [30904/19]

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.

Nursing Staff Data

557. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of nursing positions vacant in the RCSI Hospital Group as of 8 July 2019, in tabular form. [30905/19]

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

Nursing Staff Data

558. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of nursing positions vacant in the Children's Health Ireland hospital group as of 8 July 2019, in tabular from. [30906/19]

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.

Nursing Staff Data

559. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of nursing positions vacant in the Saolta hospital group as of 8 July 2019, in tabular form. [30907/19]

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.

Nursing Staff Data

560. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of nursing positions vacant in the Dublin Midlands hospital group as of 8 July 2019 in tabular form. [30908/19]

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.

Nursing Staff Data

561. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of nursing positions vacant in the South/South West hospital group as of 8 July 2019 in tabular form. [30909/19]

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

Nursing Staff Data

562. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of nursing positions vacant in the University of Limerick hospital group as of 8 July 2019 in tabular form. [30910/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Health Services Expenditure

563. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the monthly breakdown of health agency spend to date in 2019; the monthly breakdown in each of the past five years in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30829/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The information requested by the Deputy is not immediately available. I will gather the information and I will issue a full response to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Project Ireland 2040

564. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the capital projects which have commenced under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30921/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is respon-

sible for the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

Community Intervention Teams

565. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the number of referrals to community intervention teams during the first six months of 2019. [30927/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Health Services Data

566. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of the 13,000 extra residential care beds recommended in the health service capacity review. [30931/19]

574. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of providing an additional three million home support hours for older persons. [30942/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 566 and 574 together.

As these are service matters I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Administration

567. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of amending the fees charged under the NHSS to enable nursing home residents with an assessed weekly income of €300 or less to retain a minimum of €60 weekly. [30934/19]

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 Facilities

568. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost, current and capital, of providing a mobile catheterisation laboratory for Waterford University Hospital. [30935/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

Hospital Services

569. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year running costs of opening each medical assessment unit on a seven day basis. [30936/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I understand that the HSE has advised the Deputy that the information sought is not readily available. I have requested the National Director for Acute Hospitals to put a process in place to estimate the additional costs involved and to advise the Deputy directly.

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

570. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of recruiting an extra 500 hospital consultants; and the average estimate for support staff required per consultant. [30937/19]

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

Nursing Staff Recruitment

571. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of recruiting an additional 4,000 nursing staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30938/19]

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

General Practitioner Contracts

572. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of increasing the general practitioner rural practice allowance to €25,000. [30940/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to a service matter, I have arranged for it to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

National Maternity Strategy

573. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of implementing the national maternity strategy. [30941/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The National Women & Infants Health Programme in the HSE is leading on the implementation of the National Maternity Strategy. As such, the Programme has developed a detailed Implementation Plan which will see the National Maternity Strategy implemented on a phased basis over the lifetime of the Strategy. The Implementation Plan is presented under the Strategy's four strategic priorities and details how each of the 77 actions will be implemented. The funding requirement for the Strategy will vary from year to year and the Implementation Plan will inform the annual estimates process.

As the Deputy's specific query relates to the implementation of the Strategy and the associated cost, I have asked the HSE to reply to the Deputy directly.

Question No. 574 answered with Question No. 566.

Mental Health Services Staff

575. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of completing the recruitment required for the full implementation of A Vision for Change. [30943/19]

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.

Drugs Payment Scheme

576. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of reducing the drug payment threshold to €100. [30944/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The estimated full year cost of reducing the Drugs Payment Scheme monthly threshold to €100 is €25.2 million.

Speech and Language Therapy Staff

577. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of recruiting an additional 200 speech and language therapists. [30945/19]

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

Occupational Therapy Staff

578. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of recruiting an additional 200 occupational therapists. [30946/19]

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

Physiotherapy Provision

579. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of recruiting an additional 200 physiotherapists. [30947/19]

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

Dental Services Staff

580. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost

of recruiting an additional 50 dental surgeons. [30948/19]

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

Ambulance Service Data

581. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated capital cost of providing an additional emergency ambulance; and the estimated full year cost of additional personnel required for its staffing. [30949/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Disability Services Data

582. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost full year cost of providing an additional 1.5 million personal assistant hours for persons with disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30950/19]

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.

Home Care Packages Data

583. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of providing an additional 200 intensive home care packages for persons with dementia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30951/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Nationally, the HSE is providing approximately €7.9 million for Dementia-Specific Intensive Homecare Packages this year to 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.

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 persons with dementia, will be considered as

part of the national Estimates and budgetary process and National Service Planning.

With regard to the full year cost of providing an additional 200 intensive homecare packages, as this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy.

Hospital Beds Data

584. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of providing an additional 100 critical care beds. [30952/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of health and personal social care services, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

Disability Services Data

585. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of providing an additional 150 inpatient rehabilitation beds. [30953/19]

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

586. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an emergency appointment will be arranged for a person (details supplied). [30955/19]

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.

Project Ireland 2040 Implementation

587. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health if expenditure estimates for capital projects under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies match projected cost requirements in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30967/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Project Ireland 2040 and the National Development Plan are long-term plans which will provide the capital funding to develop infrastructure, equipment and additional service capacity for the public health sector over the next decade. The National Development Plan provides €10.9 billion, representing an increase of 165% in capital funding over the previous decade. The capital funding for Health in the National Development Plan will provide the capital investment for a solid, ambitious plan to improve our health services and modernise how we deliver services through the implementation of Sláintecare.

Detailed policy analysis to underpin this very significant health capital investment is required to guide service and operational specifications for the new facilities and equipment. We must also ensure that we carefully plan the use of this capital funding to meet the populations health needs and achieve value for money.

Many of the health capital projects in Project 2040 at very early stages of development and it is important to recognise that all capital development proposals, must progress through detailed appraisal, planning, design, procurement and delivery of the project before a firm timeline or funding requirement can be established.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

588. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if information (details supplied) regarding public hospital waiting lists will be provided. [30973/19]

589. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if information (details supplied) regarding public hospital waiting lists for surgery will be provided. [30974/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 588 and 589 together.

South Infirmiry Victoria University Hospital Outpatient

Row Labels	0-3 Months	3-6 Months	6-9 Months	9-12 Months	12-15 Months	15-18 Months	18-21 Months	21-24 Months	24-36 Months	36-48 Months	48+ Months	Grand Total
Dermatology	1516	569	541	455	272	191	110		13			3667
Endocrinology	128	87	98	67	75		21					476
General Surgery	643	149	85	61	46	53	56	26				1119
Maxillo-Facial	172	57	69		41							339
Orthopaedics	1358	707	680	672	449	394	389	384	936	324	80	6373
Otolaryngology (ENT)	1505	687	707	585	619	557	495	406	954	26		6541
Pain Relief	422	284	294	291	210	180	230	201	433	195	33	2773
Plastic Surgery	340	175	198	210	131	109	140	149	375	114	21	1962

Row Labels	0-3 Months	3-6 Months	6-9 Months	9-12 Months	12-15 Months	15-18 Months	18-21 Months	21-24 Months	24-36 Months	36-48 Months	48+ Months	Grand Total
Rheumatology	184	85	18									287
Small Volume Specialties												11
												23548

*Small volume specialties include: Oncology & Ophthalmology

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

590. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting fewer than 13 weeks following a referral for routine colonoscopy or OGD at the end of June 2019 or latest date available; and the number waiting more than 13 weeks. [30984/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): A national programme was established in mid-2016 to coordinate several activities to improve endoscopy services. The Endoscopy Programme is housed within the Acute Operations Division of the HSE and the programme is overseen by the National Endoscopy Steering Group. The programme team consists of a Clinical Lead, Training Lead, Nurse Lead and Programme Manager. The team are supported by the National Endoscopy Working Group.

The aim of the programme is to improve the delivery of endoscopy services across all Hospital Groups.

In relation to the specific question raised, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy.

Nursing Education

591. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of postgraduate education programmes being provided for nurses and midwives. [30985/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this information is maintained by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) I have referred the Deputy's question to the NMBI for attention and direct reply.

Nursing Staff Data

592. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of nurses and midwives with authority to prescribe medicines. [30986/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this information is maintained by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) I have referred the Deputy's question to the NMBI for attention and direct reply.

Nursing Staff Data

593. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of nurses and midwives with authority to prescribe ionising radiation x-ray. [30987/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Given that this is an operational matter, it is appropriate that it should be dealt with by the HSE. I have referred the Deputy's question to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

Nursing Education

594. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of six national foundation education programmes for nurses in critical care, surgical pre-assessment, acute medicine unscheduled care, frailty, emergency care and anaesthetic recovery room nursing [30988/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Given that this is an operational matter, it is appropriate that it should be dealt with by the HSE. I have referred the Deputy's question to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

Nursing Education

595. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the development of a national framework and establishment of an online resource to support and guide professional development planning for all nurses and midwives. [30989/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Given that this is an operational matter, it is appropriate that it should be dealt with by the HSE. I have referred the Deputy's question to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

Nursing Education

596. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the expansion of education provision by centres of nursing and midwifery. [30990/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Given that this is an operational matter, it is appropriate that it should be dealt with by the HSE. I have referred the Deputy's question to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

Nursing Education

597. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the establishment of a nursing postgraduate entry programme. [30991/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The establishment of this course is a matter for the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI). I have asked the NMBI to provide you with an update in relation to this.

Community Intervention Teams

598. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of community intervention teams in each community healthcare organisation as of 30 June 2019 or latest date

available; the number of staff whole-time equivalent in each on that date; and the corresponding data for the same dates in 2017 and 2018, in tabular form. [30992/19]

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.

Community Intervention Teams

599. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of referrals for treatment to each community intervention team in the first and second quarter of 2019, in tabular form. [30993/19]

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.

Palliative Care Services Provision

600. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients who received specialist palliative care treatment in their normal place of residence in each month to date in 2019. [30994/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The provision of specialist palliative care in a person's normal place of residence is an important part of palliative care. The 2001 Report of the National Advisory Committee on Palliative Care states that in order to achieve the best quality palliative care for patients and families, a comprehensive specialist palliative care service should be available in all care settings and should support the patient wherever they may be: at home, in hospital, in residential care, day centres, outpatient units or in hospices.

In addition to the 214 specialist palliative care beds provided in 10 hospices, all HSE areas have Community Specialist Palliative Home Care Teams. Specialist palliative care is also provided in 38 acute hospitals, through approximately 150 palliative care support beds in over 60 locations, and through designated home care packages.

With regard to the specific question on the number of patients receiving specialist palliative care in their normal place of residence in each month to date in 2019, as this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospitals Data

601. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of operations and procedures cancelled and postponed in each public hospital to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30995/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Maintaining scheduled care access for all patients is a key priority for hospitals. I fully acknowledge the distress and inconvenience for patients and their families when elective procedures are cancelled, particularly for clinically urgent procedures.

While every effort is made to avoid cancellation or postponement of planned procedures, the HSE advise that planned procedures and operations can be postponed or cancelled for a variety of reasons including capacity issues due to increased scheduled and unscheduled care demand, medical reasons, and patient choice.

In relation to the specific question raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to reply to the Deputy directly.

Hospitals Data

602. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of operations and procedures cancelled and postponed in each voluntary hospital to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30996/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Maintaining scheduled care access for all patients is a key priority for hospitals. I fully acknowledge the distress and inconvenience for patients and their families when elective procedures are cancelled, particularly for clinically urgent procedures.

While every effort is made to avoid cancellation or postponement of planned procedures, the HSE advise that planned procedures and operations can be postponed or cancelled for a variety of reasons including capacity issues due to increased scheduled and unscheduled care demand, medical reasons, and patient choice.

In relation to the specific question raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to reply to the Deputy directly.

Hospitals Data

603. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of procedures the HSE has procured from private and independent hospitals to date in 2019; the amount spent by the HSE on the procedures in private and independent hospitals to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30997/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

National Treatment Purchase Fund Data

604. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of procedures procured by the National Treatment Purchase Fund in each year since its restoration in 2017; and the type and specialties of procedures in tabular form. [30998/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving waiting times for hospital procedures is a key commitment in the Programme for Government and in 2017 €20 million was allocated to the NTPF to provide treatment for patients. Budget 2018 announced a total 2018 allocation of €55m which more than doubled it's 2017 total allocation. Budget 2019 announced that the Government has further increased investment in tackling waiting lists, with funding to the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) increasing from €55 million in 2018 to €75 million in 2019.

The joint Department of Health/HSE/National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March and 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. The plan places a strong focus on ten high-volume Inpatient/Day Case procedures. When combined with HSE activity, it is projected that the NTPF will be in a position to offer treatment to all clinically suitable patients waiting more than 6 months for one of these high-volume procedures.

In addition, the NTPF will arrange 8,000 procedures across an expanded range of over 65 other procedures in 2019.

In relation to the particular question raised by the Deputy, the attached tables provide details of the number of procedures procured by the NTPF since 2017.

The NTPF has provided the following additional information:

With regard to Inpatient / Day case (IP / DC), the following procedures are provided in Private Hospitals, funded through the NTPF:

Adenoidectomy

Angiogram

Arthroscopy of Ankle DC

Arthroscopy of Ankle IP

Arthroscopy of Shoulder DC

Arthroscopy of Shoulder IP

Arthroscopy of knee DC

Arthroscopy of shoulder, diagnostic with or without synovial biopsy

Arthroscopy of shoulder, surgical, with removal of loose body or foreign body, synovectomy debridement

Bilateral hernia repair

Cardioversion

Carpal Tunnel

Cataracts

Cervical Discectomy IP

Circumcision DC Adults

Circumcision IP Adults

Circumcision DC Paeds

Circumcision IP Paeds

Colonoscopy

Correction of Protruding ears (Bilateral)

Cystoscopy Day case

Endoscopy / Gastroscopy

Excision Lesion General

Excision Lesion Plastics

Excision of hydrocele, bilateral

Excision of hydrocele, unilateral

Grommets

Hip Replacement

Hysteroscopy with dilatation and curettage (diagnostic or therapeutic)

Interruption of sapheno-femoral junction varicose veins

Knee Replacement

Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy daycase and inpatient

Laparoscopy with/without D&C and with/without biopsy

Lumbar Discectomy IP

Myringoplasty

Myringotomy bilateral and Grommets Paeds DC

Myringotomy bilateral paeds DC

Nasal / Sinus Endoscopy DC

Nasal / Sinus Endoscopy IP

Proctoscopy / Sigmoidoscopy DC

Repair of incisional hernia

Repair of umbilical hernia

Resection Ingrown Toenail DC

Rhinoplasty DC

Removal of Pin Screw Wire DC

Removal of Pin Screw Wire IP

Removal of Plate Rod Nail DC

Removal of Plate Rod Nail IP

Septoplasty DC

Septoplasty IP

Septorhinoplasty - ENT

Septorhinoplasty - Plastics

Strabismus procedure involving 1 or 2 muscles, one eye

Surgical removal of unspecified number of teeth requiring removal of bone - to be performed by a maxillofacial surgeon

Tonsils Adult

Tonsils Paeds

Transurethral resection of prostate [TURP]

Tympanoplasty IP Adult

Tympanoplasty DC Adult

Tympanoplasty IP Paeds

Tympanoplasty DC Paeds

Ureteroscop

Urethroscopy, diagnostic, with or without biopsy

Varicose Veins

The above is not an exhaustive list but covers most of the current procedures. There are also a broader range of procedures that are provided through public hospitals.

In addition the NTPF has tendered for the following procedures:

Excision of chalazions, papillomas, dermoids or other cysts or lesions, one or both eyelids, involving skin, lid margin, tarsus and or palpebral conjunctiva

Excision of pterygium

Excision of pterygium and conjunctival graft

Reconstruction of eyelid

Syringing and / or probing of lacrimal passages, unilateral or bilateral

Hallux valgus, bilateral

Hallux valgus, unilateral

Reconstruction of eyelid

Excision of epididymal cyst, bilateral

Excision of epididymal cyst, unilateral

Orchidectomy, bilateral

Orchidectomy, unilateral

Orchidopexy for undescended testis, bilateral, with or without inguinal hernia repair

Orchidopexy for undescended testis, unilateral, with or without inguinal hernia repair

Repair of Varicocele

Vasectomy, bilateral

Cardiac electrophysiological study with radiofrequency ablation

Anorectal examination

Excision of anal skin tag

Haemorrhoidectomy, external, multiple

Cauterisation of ectropion

Cauterisation of entropion

Dacryocystorhinostomy [DCR]

Repair of epigastric hernia

Fundoplasty, laparoscopic approach

Orchidopexy for undescended testis, bilateral, with or without inguinal hernia repair

Orchidopexy for undescended testis, unilateral, with or without inguinal hernia repair

The NTPF will take a targeted approach in 2019 and further procedures will be tendered for, depending on inter alia what procedures there are long waiters for and their suitability for outsourcing next year. In addition the NTPF will continue many of the procedures listed above next year and also continue to fund insourcing of long waiting patients within the Public hospitals.

NTPF Funded Treatments 2017 to 2019

Procedures	Actual Treated 2017	Actual Treated 2018	Actual Treated YTD May 2019
Cataracts	2,983	6,707	2,787
Joints	231	1,432	533
Veins	236	1,124	232
Angiograms	390	1,142	377
Tonsillectomies	535	1,142	393
Cystoscopies	550	2,418	688
Lesions	157	724	439
Other IPDC	835	3,224	1,676
G.I. Scopes	700	3,221	1,164
Totals	6,617	21,134	8,289

Patient Data

605. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of public patients removed from outpatient lists in to date in 2019 as a result of a validation exercise and not as a result of having an appointment with a consultant for each public and voluntary hospital in tabular form. [30999/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Validation is the process whereby hospital administration contacts patients on waiting lists at pre-planned intervals during the year to ensure that patients are ready, willing, suitable and available to attend a hospital appointment or wish to be removed from the list. The validation of waiting lists can help provide clean, accurate, up to date waiting list data which reflects the true demand for hospital services.

For a number of years validation was conducted at individual hospital level in Ireland but this function was centralised by the Minister through the establishment of a National Centralised Validation Unit (NCVU) in the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) in September 2018.

Following engagement with public hospitals, the NCVU commenced issuing waiting list validation correspondence on the 2nd November 2018. The core aim of the Validation Unit is to write to all patients waiting more than 6 months for hospital operations and procedures and all patients waiting more than 9 months for an outpatient procedure. The Unit's target is to validate 220,000 patients nationally on Inpatient, Day Case and Outpatient waiting lists.

The NTPF has advised that as of the 30th June 2019, a total of 62 hospitals nationally had been validated by the NCVU, 28 for Inpatient, Day Case waiting lists, and 34 for Outpatient waiting lists. The outstanding hospitals have engaged with the NTPF and have been allocated a time slot for validation in the next 3-6 months.

In relation to the particular question raised by the Deputy, the NTPF advises that based on the Outpatient Validation exercise from 1st of January until the 5th of July, a total of 17,601 patients have been removed from the national Outpatient waiting list. The following table provides a breakdown of the validation figures by hospital.

Name of Hospital & Group:	No. of patients removed due to validation from 1st January to 5th July 2019:
	IEHG
Mater Misericordiae Hospital	92
St Vincent's Hospital	866
Midland Regional Hospital Mullingar	452
St Luke's General Hospital Kilkenny	109
Wexford General Hospital	41
Our Lady's Hospital Navan	592
St Columcille's Hospital	594
St Michael's Hospital	104
Cappagh Orthopaedic Hospital	158
Royal Victoria Eye & Ear Hospital	683
Total:	3691
	RCSI
Beaumont Hospital	0
Connolly Hospital	0
Our Lady's of Lourdes Drogheda	0
Louth County Hospital	0
Cavan & Monaghan Hospitals	0
The Rotunda Maternity Hospital	743
Total:	743
	DMHG
St James Hospital	2520

Questions - Written Answers

Name of Hospital & Group:	No. of patients removed due to validation from 1st January to 5th July 2019:
	IEHG
Tallaght Hospital (AMNCH)	535
Midland Regional Tullamore Hospital	2209
Naas General Hospital	295
Midland Regional Portlaoise Hospital	39
Total:	5598
	ULHG
University Hospital Limerick	1011
Mid-Western Regional Hospital, Ennis	55
Nenagh Hospital	12
Croom Hospital	468
St John's Hospital	49
Total:	1595
	SSWG
Cork University Hospital	2116
University Hospital Waterford	176
University Hospital Kerry	1068
Mercy University Hospital	526
South Tipperary General Hospital	0
South Infirmery Victoria Hospital	275
Bantry General Hospital	0
Mallow General Hospital	97
Total:	4258
	Saolta Hospital Group
University Hospital Galway	0
Sligo University Hospital	0
Letterkenny University Hospital/	660
Mayo University Hospital	576
Portiuncula Hospital	305
Roscommon University Hospital	175
Total:	1716
	Children's Hospital Group
Crumlin Children's Hospital	0
Temple Street Children's Hospital	0
Tallaght Children's Hospital	0
Total:	0
Grand Total:	17601

Hospitals Data

606. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of outpatient appointments the HSE has procured from private and independent hospitals to date in 2019; the amount spent by the HSE on the appointments in private and independent hospitals to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31000/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

607. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be expedited for a person (details supplied). [31004/19]

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

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

National Children's Hospital Expenditure

608. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the payments made to date under the main contract in connection with the construction of the national children's hospital; the estimated amount expected to be paid in 2019 and for each subsequent year until the anticipated completion of the project in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31005/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The breakdown of capital expenditure on the new children's hospital project from 2013 to 2018 is as follows:

2013	€1.70m
2014	€6.93m
2015	€20.77m
2016	€30.64m
2017	€67.75m
2018	€107.85m

In terms of the financing of the children's hospital project for 2019, €250m is currently profiled for the new Children's Hospital project in 2019.

The Summer Economic Statement, published recently, provides an expenditure reserve of up to €200m in 2020 to accommodate funding requirements for the new Children's Hospital and the National Broadband Plan. My Department will engage with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the HSE in planning funding for the new Children's Hospital

project beyond 2019.

Healthcare Infrastructure Provision

609. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health the status of the development of a new mental health unit at Naas General Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31008/19]

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.

Healthcare Infrastructure Provision

610. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health the status of plans and time-lines for the provision of a new endoscopy unit, day ward and associated works at Naas General Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31009/19]

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.

Organ Donation

611. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health the status of plans to introduce an opt-in system of organ donation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31010/19]

665. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the status of plans to implement a national opt-out organ donation policy; his views on whether this needs to be implemented as a matter of urgency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31169/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 611 and 665 together.

The Government approved the publication of the General Scheme of a Human Tissue (Transplantation, Post-Mortem, Anatomical Examination and Public Display) Bill on the 01 May 2019. The General Scheme includes provisions for a soft opt-out system of organ donation.

Under the proposed soft opt-out system, consent will be deemed unless the person has, while alive, registered their wish not to become an organ donor after death. The next-of-kin of a person who has registered their wish not to become an organ donor after death will not be approached in relation to organ donation. Where a person has not registered to opt-out of organ donation, the next-of-kin will be consulted prior to removing any organ. If the next-of-kin objects to the organ donation, the donation will not proceed.

My Department is working with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel on the drafting of the Bill. The General Scheme has been referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health for pre-legislative scrutiny, and it is anticipated that this process will commence in September.

Medical Card Data

612. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the projection on the number of medical cards to be provided in 2019; and the likely full year costs or savings in 2019 of a variation from projection. [31013/19]

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.

Disability Services Data

613. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the percentage occupancy rate in public residential care units for the most recent calendar month available and for the previous eleven months in tabular form. [31014/19]

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 Deputy's office have confirmed the question relates to residential care units for disability services and services for older people. 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 Waiting Lists

614. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of community healthcare organisations which have established waiting lists for home care on a standardised basis. [31015/19]

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 Education

615. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of serious reportable events being notified within 24 hours to a designated officer. [31016/19]

616. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of mandatory investigations commenced within 48 hours of the event occurring. [31017/19]

617. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of mandatory investigations completed within four months of notification of events occurring. [31018/19]

618. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of report-

able events to date in 2019 reported within 30 days of occurrence to the designated officer. [31019/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 615 to 618, inclusive, together.

As these are service matters and the data is collated by the HSE, the questions have been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to Deputy Stephen Donnelly. This reply was taken as a composite with 31016/19, 31017/19, 31018/19 and 31019/19.

The Department of Health takes the management of patient safety very seriously. In November 2015, the Government approved a major programme of patient safety reforms which included the establishment of a National Patient Safety Office (NPSO) in the Department of Health. The NPSO was established in December 2016 to oversee a programme of patient safety measures. The programme of patient safety centres on initiatives such as the establishment of a national patient advocacy service, the introduction of a patient safety surveillance system, the measurement of patient experience and extending the clinical effectiveness agenda.

In line with international best practice, the Department has been driving a progressive legislative framework to build an open and just culture for patient safety which balances the need for an open and honest reporting culture that facilitates a learning environment, and quality healthcare with accountability for both individuals and organisations. Disclosure and reporting are opportunities to learn, to improve, to address errors that have happened and to apply the lessons to make the service safer for the next patient and the patient after that. The programme of legislation being progressed includes the Patient Safety Bill, which will provide for the mandatory reporting of serious reportable events, and a Patient Safety Licensing Bill, which will introduce a regulatory regime for all hospitals as well as certain designated high-risk activities.

In addition, on 25 October 2017, I launched the National Standards on the Conduct of Reviews of Patient Safety Incidents. These standards, developed jointly by HIQA and the Mental Health Commission, set out a new approach to the way health providers respond to, review and investigate incidents in order to determine as quickly as possible what may have transpired, and why, to ensure that they can immediately implement any improvements necessary to prevent a re-occurrence.

Finally, in 2018 the Health Service Executive (HSE) launched its new Incident Management Framework and in June 2019 launched their interim revision of the Open Disclosure policy: “Communicating with Patients Following Patient Safety Incidents” replacing the HSE Open Disclosure Policy 2013. The Department will shortly establish a new Independent Patient Safety Council. I have recently appointed the Chair of the Council. The first task of the Council will be to undertake a detailed review of the existing policies on Open Disclosure across the whole healthcare landscape. The Independent Patient Safety Council will include strong patient and public representation and international patient safety expertise.

Cross-Border Health Initiatives

619. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if a refund under the cross border initiative will be expedited for a person (details supplied). [31025/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is an operational matter I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy.

HSE Agency Staff Expenditure

620. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the spend on agency staff for mental health services in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the original estimate for such expenditure in each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31031/19]

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 Staff

621. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of mental health whole-time equivalents required to be recruited for the full implementation of A Vision for Change in view of demographic changes; and the teams and specialties in which the additional staff are required by CHO area in tabular form. [31032/19]

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 Staff

622. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of psychiatric nurses that graduated in 2018; the number of these hired by the HSE on full-time contracts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31033/19]

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 Expenditure

623. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the amount expended on mental health in 2018 as a total amount and percentage of the overall health budget. [31034/19]

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 Staff

624. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of approved consultant psychiatric posts by speciality; the number of these posts filled on a temporary basis; the number of these posts filled by doctors not on the specialist register; the number of posts unfilled, vacant or unmatched; the location of the unfilled, vacant or unmatched posts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31035/19]

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

625. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the status of the allocation of the posts from the 2018 €55 million funding for mental health; the number of posts the allocation supports; the number of posts filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31036/19]

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 Staff

626. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of whole-time equivalent posts filled within mental health as of 30 June 2019; the number of whole-time equivalent posts filled in mental health as of 30 June 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31037/19]

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

627. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of section 39 providers that hold agreements for providing mental health services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31038/19]

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 Staff

628. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of approved psychiatric nursing posts by speciality as per A Vision for Change recommendations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31039/19]

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 Staff

629. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of approved psychi-

atric nursing posts by speciality; the number of posts filled on a temporary basis; the number of posts currently unfilled, vacant or unmatched; the location of the unfilled, vacant or unmatched posts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31040/19]

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

Mental Health Services Staff

630. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of psychiatric nurses entitled to retire as of 8 July 2019; the number of psychiatric nurses entitled to retire within the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31041/19]

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

Mental Health Services Data

631. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of mental health inpatient beds here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31042/19]

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

632. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the total number of involuntary admissions in 2018; the percentage of the involuntary admissions following a family member's referral; the percentage of the involuntary admissions following a member of An Garda Síochána's referral; the percentage of the involuntary admissions following a doctor's referral; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31043/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The information the Deputy is seeking is set out in the Mental Health Commission's Annual Report for 2018 which was published last month and is available on the Commission's website.

In terms of admission orders in 2018, the Commission report that there were 2,435 such admissions, 1,825 of which were from the community with 610 being regrades of voluntary patients already in approved centres.

The breakdown of applicant status for the 1,825 admission orders from the community as reported by the Commission is as follows:

Spouse, civil partner, relative	38%
Authorised Officer	14%
Garda	22%
Other person	22%

The Commission commented that the number of applications by family members are down 6% on 2017 and they have welcomed this decrease. The 'Other person' category above is quite broad and would include, for example, a doctor in an Emergency Department.

Medicinal Products Expenditure

633. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the amount expended by the HSE on psychotropic drugs in 2018. [31044/19]

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 Expenditure

634. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the amount expended by the HSE on talk therapies in 2018. [31045/19]

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

635. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional staff appointed to the CAMHS service in each CHO to date in 2019; the net increase in staff numbers resulting from such recruitment in each CHO to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31046/19]

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

636. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of children admitted to adult mental health units to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31047/19]

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

637. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of children admitted

to adult health units in 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31048/19]

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

638. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of children on CAMHS waiting lists by age and gender in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31049/19]

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

Hospitals Data

639. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of self-harm presentations to Temple Street Children's University Hospital in 2006 and 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31050/19]

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

640. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the total number of staff working in CAMHS as of 8 July 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31051/19]

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 Assessments Waiting Times

641. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of children awaiting a primary care psychology appointment on 30 June 2019; the number of such children waiting over 3 months, 1, 2 and over 3 years respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31052/19]

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.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Staff

642. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the staffing levels of CAMHS in the south County Wexford area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31053/19]

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 Reports

643. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the status of each of the recommendations of the national youth mental health task force; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31054/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The information requested is set out in the table.

Recommendations	Status
<p>Consultation and Advocacy</p> <p>1.1 - Pathfinder should take a lead in formalising mechanisms to ensure that the voices of young people are fully considered in the development and implementation of legislation, policy and services for youth. The Pathfinder team should develop mandatory protocols which will work to safeguard young people against potential changes in policy that could negatively impact on youth mental health</p> <p>1.2 - Policies involving young people should be published in simple, straightforward language that young people can understand</p> <p>1.3 - A process of youth consultation should be carried out when designing mental health and other support services and facilities for young people</p> <p>1.4 - An independent National Youth Mental Health Advocacy and Information Service should be established. Consultation should be informed by children and young people and should include the HSE, which is developing a tender for a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) youth advocacy pilot.</p>	<p>Work has been advanced to establish a Youth Mental Health Pathfinder Team. There has been considerable communication and work performed in addressing outstanding governance, staffing and funding issues. Activities are not yet complete in fully developing and rolling out a Pathfinder unit, but work is on-going. At the end of May Minister Daly had a constructive meeting with Minister Donohoe and his officials. They are very supportive of the proposal, subject to resolving the outstanding matters. I hope to make substantial progress on the matter in the coming months. Policies involving young people are issued to the young people's forum in DCYA for review prior to publication. This is to be a part of the Pathfinder project once agreed. A pilot adult inpatient advocacy service is being rolled out in St Patrick's Hospital and the HSE will use the learning's from this pilot to determine how best to establish a young advocacy service. Work has been completed to determine the merits of establishing the advocacy service as</p> <p>(i) a separate structure independent of the HSE, (ii) a structure within the Child Ombudsman or indeed (iii) a new NGO agency. A draft business plan has been drafted and data from the HSE pilot will provide a template for how best to proceed in an Irish context.</p>

<p>Awareness and Training</p> <p>2.1 - A series of sustained and evidence based awareness campaigns should be developed, specifically targeted at children and young people, to improve mental health, emotional literacy, build resilience, and aid the development of coping mechanisms</p> <p>2.2 - Sustained, quality-assured and evidenced-based training programmes should be funded to provide support to individuals in the public, voluntary and community sectors who have contact with young people so that those trained might be in a better position to promote positive mental health</p>	<p>The HSE have been examining International awareness initiatives that might be applicable in this jurisdiction. Little Things Mental Health Campaign for 2nd level students:HSE Mental Health has been running the Little Things Campaign since 2014 to promote protection and improvement of mental health for the whole population. The campaign focuses on 9 protective factors that can help build resilience and improve mental health and wellbeing. There were 87,000 followers of Little things on social media in 2017. There were 3.2m visits to yourmentalhealth.ie between 2014 and 2017.In 2017 work commenced on adapting the Little Things Campaign to tailor the messaging and make it more relevant to young people, who are also listed within Connecting for Life as a priority group. Using research conducted by online youth mental health service, ReachOut.com, which highlighted key areas of stress for young people the HSE identified 6 issues to include in the new campaign; Exams, Sleep, Digital devices and Bottling up your feelings, Relationships and Image. Imagery and messaging has been developed for 4 of the key areas and will be made available as poster packs to schools, youth and sports clubs around the country. The messaging has been developed to inform young people about the things they can do to reduce stress and anxiety. The campaign will be promoted on Radio, Social Media and through Digital ads targeting young people through relevant channels. We will be signposting to yourmentalhealth.ie for more information on the topics and will also promote the Childline text and phone option for any young person that might need immediate support. Content on all 6 issues, developed in partnership with SpunOut will also be hosted on ymh.ie.HSE/USI ReCharge Mental Health Campaign for 3rd Level Students:HSE Mental Health is also funding a new Mental Health awareness campaign with USI to target third level education students. This campaign is due to be launched on the 12th of November in University College Cork. The HSE funding has been used to create a new campaign logo and tagline, three new posters to address the effects that Alcohol, Sleep and Exams can have on mental health and ways to help manage any stress related to those issues. A new leaflet with more information on protective factors and ways to seek help will also be produced as well as content on both USI.ie and yourmentalhealth.ie. USI is the national representative body for 374,000 students in 3rd level education and also receive funding from the HSE to provide training courses in SafeTALK, ASISTMental Health First AidMental Health First Aid training for young people HSE Mental Health funds Mental Health First Aid to deliver courses to various target groups. Participants learn the signs and symptoms of mental health problems and what sort of help has been shown by research to be effective. The training has been shown to improve attitudes towards people with mental health difficulties, reduce stigma, improve knowledge, and improve people's confidence in providing help and likelihood to advise people to seek professional help. Over 2000 individuals and professionals have been trained in 2018 and the training will continue in 2019.Perinatal TrainingThe HSEs Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Services Model of Care was launched on 30.11.2017. Its implementation is now being directed and overseen by the Clinical Lead and Programme Manager. Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Teams are being recruited for the maternity hospital/service hub in each of the six Hospital Groups. Two of the teams are now operational. As part of this implementation a mental health midwife is also being recruited for each of the maternity hospitals/units with two for the four larger services, those with over 8,000 deliveries per year. Apart from the perinatal psychiatrists heading up each specialist hub team who are directly trained in the speciality, all other staff will require training in perinatal mental health. The National Implementation and Oversight Group is in the process of drafting a training document and in the meantime all newly recruited staff are being provided with the appropriate induction and training.</p>
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Questions - Written Answers

<p>National Telephone Line</p> <p>3.1 - The Taskforce recommends increased investment in age-appropriate, scalable digital youth mental health supports in conjunction with existing providers to ensure all young people ages 0-25 have access to an active listening service and dynamic signposting tool.</p>	<p>HSE Mental Health has sought to advance the establishment and operation of a single and stand-alone National Mental Health Service Telephone Contact Facility to effectively manage mental health service related queries emerging from the community. This service will operate on a 24/7 basis and will encompass</p> <p>(i) the provision of information about, and direction of callers to, the most appropriate national and local pathway(s) to care specific to the query raised, and</p> <p>(ii) where possible the direct transfer of callers to the most appropriate existing helpline partners and/or services as required. Resource allocation has been agreed between HSE Mental Health and the National Ambulance Service (NAS) have recruited new NAS call takers. Training of call takers has commenced and will last for 14 weeks. An Expression of Interest is being sought for a suitably qualified mental health specialist to join the clinical hub of the NAS. At present, a go live date of Q3 2019 is envisioned.</p>
<p>E-Mental Health Strategy</p> <p>4.1 - Families, guardians and carers should be supported in parenting children and young people through the provision of universal, quality-assured and evidence-based parenting information and support programmes.</p> <p>4.2 - Evidence-based information, interventions and signposting tools about mental health should be included into routine perinatal care services.</p>	<p>The HSE launched 'yourmentalhealth.ie' last year. This website provides advice, information and support services for mental health and wellbeing. Crisis textline The HSE is exploring how to best deliver an active listening service (Live Chat, Instant Messaging & SMS) HSE Mental Health has engaged with leading US-based provider of instant text messaging support services Crisis Text Line with a view to establishing their service in Ireland. The board of Crisis Text Line has approved the application to extend service licensing arrangements to Ireland. HSE is working in close collaboration with an existing service partner, SpunOut.ie/Community Creations, to act as the host/incubator organisation for the service on a pilot basis with contractual and service level arrangement negotiations now complete. The risk assessment of the service has been undertaken by SpunOut.ie/Community Creations. A project manager has been employed and the project plan is being developed and will be complete by mid-February 2019. Telepsychiatry Pilots Following a decision of the Project Steering Committee in January 2019, two telepsychiatry pilots are now being undertaken. These pilots encompass the following:</p> <p>(1) Remote consults to address CAMHS waiting lists.</p> <p>(2) Remote consults on national adolescent addiction and substance abuse service. It is also envisaged that a third pilot may be undertaken to assist reducing remote access and creating additional capacity and remote team consultations.</p>
<p>Schools And Youth Mental Health</p> <p>5.1 - The Department of Education and Skills should support teaching professionals in schools and centres for education with the knowledge and skills to understand their role in supporting young people with mental health issues and how to access information about services and supports available to them.</p> <p>5.2 - Principals and teachers should be supported to implement the wellbeing junior cycle curriculum.</p>	<p>The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023 was launched by the Minister for Education and Skills in July 2018. The policy statement provides an overarching structure encompassing existing, ongoing and developing work in the area of wellbeing. It builds on the good work already happening in schools to ensure that best practice in whole-school wellbeing promotion is embedded across the system. The policy outlines a multicomponent, whole school preventative approach to the promotion of wellbeing with interventions at both universal and targeted levels. This policy requires that a Wellbeing Promotion Process is developed and implemented, through the use of the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process, in all schools by 2023. The policy includes a set of Statements of Effective Practice in relation to wellbeing promotion within the school system. The statements will support schools in reviewing their current provision in four key areas of wellbeing promotion, culture, curriculum, policy and partnership and in setting goals for improvement. In order to support schools in the implementation of this Wellbeing Policy it is planned to develop and rollout a comprehensive programme of professional development, commencing in 2019. This will include facilitating the engagement of schools in the school self-evaluation for wellbeing promotion process, which will build professional capacity in schools. It also includes the provision of a comprehensive and easily-accessible set of resources to address school-identified wellbeing promotion needs. The roll out will be aligned with the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme and the Schools for Health Programme delivered through the HSE, Health The Department of Education and Skills has introduced a new Wellbeing programme for schools which forms part of the new Framework for Junior Cycle. It was introduced to first year students from September 2017. Guidelines on Wellbeing in Junior Cycle have been developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and are available at www.junior-cycle.ie. Schools will use the guidelines in formulating their individual Wellbeing programmes from September. There will be 400 hours of timetabled engagement for the Wellbeing area of learning over the 3 years of Junior Cycle.</p>

<p>Third level supports</p> <p>6.1 - The current provision of counselling and mental health supports in higher level institutions should be maintained and enhanced 6.2 - The Higher Education Authority and the Department of Education and Skills should develop appropriate indicators to assess student experience in higher education in the system performance framework for higher education 6.3 - Prioritise the implementation of recommendations contained in “Mental Health Matters”</p>	
<p>Community Supports</p> <p>7.1 - The Task Force recommends that local government work with relevant agencies, youth groups and community groups to provide safe, ‘youth friendly’ spaces, sporting and cultural facilities that are conducive to promoting good mental health. These should include the provision of pleasant spaces and facilities for young people to access qualified health and mental health care in the community. Evidence-based, quality-assured training in youth mental health should be available to all individuals working with young people in the community</p>	<p>The provision of Youth Friendly Spaces in community settings is a high priority for local government. Working with youth groups and community groups, service providers have been asked to try to include youth friendly spaces so that mental health can be supported. The thrust of Government policy has been towards enhancing mental health support in the community since ‘A Vision For Change’ was adopted in 2006. This policy will be continued when the refreshed policy is published later this year.</p>
<p>Accessibility and Alignment</p> <p>8.1 - Pathfinder should carry out a detailed assessment of the services and supports currently available in relation to youth mental health, in order to identify gaps in service provision and to scope what improvements could be achieved through greater coordination 8.2 - The HSE should improve provision of mental health supports to young people at the primary care level to reduce the pressure on the tertiary referral services and improve waiting times 8.3 - The HSE should establish a National Lead for Youth Mental Health and a Lead for Youth Mental Health in each Community Health Organisation (CHO) to co-ordinate the provision of services and address gaps in service provision, including out of hours services. The CHO Leads will liaise with relevant agencies to develop appropriate communication protocols, standardised assessment processes and coordination of service provision. This joint working will bring together expert stakeholders to identify and address potential blocks to service provision and seek to reduce current wait times nationally with the introduction of other more appropriate interventions in primary care.</p>	<p>DCYA and the Department of Health established a Working Group in 2018 to scope connectivity in the area of youth mental health. The group is made up of senior officials from both Departments with representatives from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency and the Health Service Executive. The key objective of the working group is to examine psychological and mental health services for children and young people with the aim of agreeing a clearer continuum of provision and strengthening alignment between providers. Tusla and the HSE have in place both a Memorandum of Understanding and a Joint Protocol for inter-agency collaboration among the two organisations. Discussions are ongoing between the two organisations to ensure collaboration is effective and sustained. A key initiative that will inform the further advancement of the work of the group is the Youth Mental Health Pathfinder Project, and it is important that the Working Group align with this initiative. Centralising the work in this way will provide a clear overview of existing provision and proposed plans from across the relevant departments and agencies so as to identify gaps in provision, areas of alignment and areas for further development. Part of the recommendation refers to recruitment of HSE leads but the job specifications for full time staff are hard to define. At a recent meeting with HSE, Task Force representatives and NGO sector it was agreed to wait for the establishment of Pathfinder team to work on specific job specifications for the recommended posts.</p>
<p>Consent Issues</p> <p>9.1 - Legislation should be published to give effect to the recommendations of the Expert Group on the Review of the Mental Health Act, 2001 with regard to children, including reforming the consent provisions, to allow young people under 18 direct access to mental health services</p>	<p>There are on-going discussions and legislative work in the Department of Health regarding amending the legislation to allow children under 16 access mental health services without the need to have parental consent. Draft Heads of Bill were sent to the Mental Health Commission for their input on 02/07/19. It is expected that the Commission will need approximately six months to review the heads.</p>
<p>Improving Knowledge</p> <p>10.1 - A funded strategic national research programme on youth mental health will be developed 10.2 - International sources of funding (for example from European Union or philanthropic organisations) should be leveraged to enhance this research strategy on youth mental health research</p>	<p>There have been discussion with the HRB on how best to approach these recommendations. There will be a need for new additional funding and this will need to be tied in with the creation of the Pathfinder Team who will have responsibility to create structures for administering grants and creating criteria for issuing research funding. PRIMERA (Promoting Research and Innovation in Mental Health Services for Families) programme of research, funded by the HSE, is investigating how best to deliver mental health services and interventions to families where a parent has a diagnosed mental illness. Recent years have seen growing recognition of the importance of parental mental health and the need for more integrated and effective service responses to parents with mental illness and their children (Wilson et al., 2010; HSE, 2015). This research aims to: 1. To identify mental health services in Ireland that currently deliver, or are interested in developing and delivering family-focused intervention(s) for families where a parent has a diagnosed mental health problem (and their children aged 0-18years). 2. To subsequently investigate in more detail the implementation and effectiveness of selected interventions in order to inform a ‘think family’ care delivery agenda in Ireland (and internationally).</p>

Suicide Incidence

644. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of children under 18 years of age who died by suicide in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31055/19]

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 Data

645. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of children who died while in the care of the HSE in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31056/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

HSE Reports

646. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health if monthly financial reports on the costs and revenue incurred during the month are generated by the HSE; if these reports are shared with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform; if these reports are published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31064/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As part of the monthly performance cycle, my Department holds the HSE to account for its expenditure and for the delivery of the services set out in the National Service Plan. Performance in respect of service delivery and finance is monitored monthly which include draft financial reports on the costs and revenue incurred, which is also shared with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

We do not publish draft monthly reports between the Department and the HSE in the performance of their relative functions, as this would be inappropriate, and impact on both organisations ability to function effectively. However these are collated and published on a quarterly basis, which can be found on the HSE's website.

Health Services Expenditure

647. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the costs incurred to date in his Department and the HSE as outlined in the fiscal monitor by functional area; the amount incurred on wages in each area; the same figure for June in each of the years 2016 to 2018; if a full year breakdown will be provided for each of the years 2016 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31065/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The costs to date in 2019 for the Department and the HSE per the June Fiscal Monitor are attached.

The amount incurred in wages in the Department is set out in subhead A01 in the table.

11 July 2019

The amount incurred on wages in the month of June for the previous years are as follows:

2016: €2.432 million

2017: €2.789 million

2018: €2.298 million

A full year breakdown for years 2016 - 2018 is attached.

2019 Position to end of June		
Vote 38 DOH	at end	Actual
Return	Jun-19	€000
A01		14,691
A02		273
A03		1,145
A04		126
A05		958
A06		497
A07		272
Sub-total Admin Subheads		17,962
B01		17,434
B02		388
B03		2,860
C00		2,289
D00		3,839
E01		28,858
E02		2,734
E03		10,000
E04		1,638
F01		238
F02		0
F03		2,109
F04		202
G00		712
H		514
Sub-total other Subheads excluding HSE		73,815
I00		235,620
J00		5,577,056
K01		1,879
K02		501
K03		375
K04		166,801
K05		0

Questions - Written Answers

2019 Position to end of June		
Vote 38 DOH	at end	Actual
Return	Jun-19	€000
L01		1,534,505
L02		482,922
M04		63,500
Sub-total HSE non capital Subheads		8,063,159
Gross non capital		8,154,936
A-in-A		86,256
Net total		8,068,680
Capital		
A5		43
K5		0
M1		1,799
M2		244,861
M3		0
M4		32,825
Total Capital		279,528
A-in-A		5,000
Net total		274,528
Grand Total		8,343,208

Vote 38 DOH		31/12/2018	31/12/2017	31/12/2016
Return		€000	€000	€000
A01		30,083	26,133	23,562
A02		487	427	375
A03		1,646	1,046	881
A04		418	353	343
A05		1,932	2,031	1,269
A06		1,472	440	411
A07		1,409	1,341	705
	Sub-total Admin Subheads	37,447	31,771	27,546
B01		38,286	37,093	34,763
B02		4,995	5,000	3,286
B03		6,102	5,673	5,806
C00		2,313	2,324	2,635
D00		11,496	6,256	15,494
E01		58,241	53,016	52,200
E02		5,335	5,351	5,236
E03		55,022	22,600	5,100

Vote 38 DOH		31/12/2018	31/12/2017	31/12/2016
E04		525	153	0
F01		457	381	406
F02		0	0	0
F03		16,873	15,299	18,400
F04		2,424	2,379	3,000
G00		1,340	1,162	1,948
	Sub-total other Subheads excluding HSE	203,409	156,687	148,274
H		108,676	108,570	99,030
I1		1,655,738	1,523,537	1,435,278
I2		1,480,201	1,362,203	1,282,842
I3		2,295,824	2,114,444	1,991,745
I4		2,548,533	2,342,474	2,207,720
I5		2,728,457	2,532,125	2,398,827
J1		0	2,700	4,255
J2		0	0	650
J3		871	785	1,747
J4		72,015	30,010	70,000
J5		318,690	283,221	228,911
J6		2,450	883	1,276
K1		2,938,147	2,809,033	2,761,633
K2		967,463	942,522	921,656
L4		103,700	103,700	108,188
	Sub-total HSE non capital Sub-heads	15,220,765	14,156,207	13,513,758
A-in-A		452,348	459,376	460,408
Capital				
A5		668	129	473
J6		169	0	0
L1		11,729	13,608	11,169
L2		438,471	382,380	351,220
L3		2,539	2,539	2,539
L4		59,592	54,995	52,241
Total Capital		513,170	453,651	417,642
A-in-A		0	0	0

Capital Expenditure Programme

648. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the number of capital projects being undertaken by his Department; the final agreed tender price; the estimated cost of each capital project in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31077/19]

649. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the capital projects completed since 2010; the final agreed tender price for each project; the actual cost of each project; if the actual cost exceeded the tender price; the reason therefor in each case in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31093/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 648 and 649 together.

My Department does not undertake capital projects. 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.

Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists

650. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of children and adolescents in Cork city and county on a waiting list for orthodontic assessment and orthodontic treatment, respectively; the length of time they have been waiting; the number of consultants providing such services in the locations, including vacancies; the steps being taken to reduce the waiting lists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31100/19]

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

Maternity Services Provision

651. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of a 20 week anomaly scan for all expectant mothers at the Midlands Regional Hospital, Mullingar. [31138/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Hospital Equipment

652. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the hospitals which had a TRASNA telemedicine stroke machine installed; if the machine is operational; the uses in each case for the machine; if the machine in each case is used for the treatment of suspected stroke; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31139/19]

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 Reimbursement

653. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 203 of 19 June 2019, the payments (details supplied) for the months December 2018 to May 2019, inclusive, for the medical card, drugs payment and long-term illness schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31140/19]

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.

Cross-Border Health Services Provision

654. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if a refund through the cross-border scheme will be issued to a person (details supplied). [31141/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is an operational matter I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Status

655. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31143/19]

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

Hospitals Building Programme

656. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health the status of a redevelopment project for St. Vincent's Hospital, Athy, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31144/19]

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.

HSE Expenditure

657. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the steps taken by the HSE to control the costs of late payment fees to suppliers to the health service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31145/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Vaccination Programme

658. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the measures in place to screen immunocompromised infants in advance of the commencement of the administration of live vaccines under the State vaccination programme in line with HSE national immunisation advisory committee guidelines as revised in February 2019; the number of infants who fall into this category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31155/19]

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.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

659. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health when additional personnel will be appointed in respect of the provision of services (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31156/19]

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

Medical Card Applications

660. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will have a decision on the person's application for a medical card. [31158/19]

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

Home Help Service Data

661. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons awaiting home support hours in counties Cavan and Monaghan; the average waiting time between approval of home support and such support being provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31162/19]

662. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health when additional resources will be provide to the HSE to reduce the delays in providing home support in areas such as counties Cavan and Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31163/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 661 and 662 together.

As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

National Treatment Purchase Fund Data

663. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the cost and duration of partnerships between the NTPF and private hospitals; the number of operations transferred from the NTPF to private hospitals under the partnership; the breakdown specific to each hospital in terms of cost, partnership duration and number of operations performed under it by year; the plans for follow-up appointments and treatment if necessary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31165/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The information requested by the Deputy is currently being collated by officials in my Department and will be provided to the Deputy

directly as soon as it becomes available.

Hospital Waiting Lists

664. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31168/19]

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.

Question No. 665 answered with Question No. 611.

Hospital Waiting Lists

666. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be scheduled for a person (details supplied). [31174/19]

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

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

Hospital Appointments Status

667. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be expedited for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31177/19]

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.

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

Home Help Service Provision

668. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health if a matter will be addressed in regard to a person (details supplied). [31189/19]

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

Hospital Appointments Status

669. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be expedited for a person (details supplied). [31199/19]

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.

Autism Support Services

670. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health if a grant or other funding is available for parents of children with autism who seek to avail of early intervention services privately. [31222/19]

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.

Mental Health Services Provision

671. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the details of the telehealth pilot sites for mental health services. [31240/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Both the Department of Health and the HSE are committed to progressing e-mental health initiatives. The HSE is currently running a number of pilot schemes within the fields of tele-counselling and tele-psychiatry.

The HSE, working in close collaboration with Turn2Me.org, is currently undertaking two six-month national pilot projects exploring the potential to develop the use of online tele-counselling. All counselling sessions are conducted on a secure encrypted cloud-based platform, and can be conducted through video, Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) telephone calls, or through instant text messaging.

- Pilot 1 commenced in November 2018 and is being trialled with South Wicklow area-based service users. The pilot has progressed to the stage where GPs are issuing their patients with access details.

- Pilot 2 is currently in progress in the Galway/Mayo region (CHO2). In Galway, patients on the waiting list are being written to by CAMHS teams, to be offered the opportunity to avail of free online counselling.

Additionally, four tele-psychiatry pilots are now being undertaken by the HSE. These pilots are conducting remote psychiatric consultations to address a variety of different needs and demands.

- Pilot 1 will address the needs of people on CAMHS waiting lists in the Wexford/Waterford region (CHO 5).

- Pilot 2 will focus on the demand for specialist adolescent addiction and substance abuse service.

- Pilot 3 will address adult mental health service demands within the Galway/Mayo region (CHO 2).

- Pilot 4 will engage with the demand for services for children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities in Kerry/Cork region (CHO 4).

In conclusion, I am satisfied with the HSE's work in piloting different types of e-mental health treatments and can assure the Deputy of my own commitment to the further development of e-mental health initiatives.

Hospital Appointments Status

672. **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.

[31242/19]

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

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

Hospital Appointments Status

673. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31243/19]

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

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

Health Reports

674. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health when it is planned to carry out further evaluations to determine the reason for the identified variation on recent findings regarding mortality rates in the case of acute myocardial infarction. [31249/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The National Healthcare Quality Reporting System (NHQRS), published 8th July 2019, aims to give information on the quality of the health service in Ireland and it is part of this Government's commitment to quality healthcare and patient safety.

The 2019 NHQRS reported information on mortality rates for acute myocardial infarctions (AMIs). It identified that there was a 30% reduction in mortality rates for AMIs over the past

decade. It also showed that Ireland performs better than internationally reported averages in this area (OECD shows an age-sex standardised rate of 7.8 deaths per 100 admissions as compared to Ireland at 6.4 deaths per 100 admissions). The report also notes that there exists some variation in these rates between hospitals.

The reporting of performance and outcome indicators is designed to enable the health service to improve the quality of care provided to patients. Indicators are presented to allow for comparisons between regions, nationally, internationally and over time. When examining a data report, it is usual to see some variation between regions or between previous years. While it is universally acknowledged that variation in data can sometimes be attributed to differences in recording practices, the use of different definitions or even chance, the data and variation is intended to be used by service providers and policy makers to inform our strategies to improve healthcare.

The Acute Coronary Syndrome (ACS) Clinical Programme of the Health Service Executive (HSE) is a national clinical programme for acute coronary syndromes, including acute myocardial infarction. The programme has over a number of years been involved in a major programme of work to save lives by identify variation and standardising care across the country.

In addition, the National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services commenced in my Department in January 2018 and is ongoing and seeks to achieve optimal patient outcomes at population level with particular 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. It will be a comprehensive national plan based on a recognised methodological approach to service planning that is inclusive, consultative, robust and data driven.

Hospital Appointments Status

675. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31257/19]

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

Departmental Communications

676. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health the oversight of his Department of directives, circulars, advice or requirements issued since 2016; if surveys have been carried out of compliance with these communications to date; the surveys carried out; the results of the surveys; the compliance rate; the actions taken by his Department following these results; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31327/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Department of Health does not have a compliance Unit. In fulfilling the Department's role and function Units within the Department carry out governance and performance oversight to ensure accountable and high quality services.

The Department has an Internal Audit Unit that supports, develops and reviews the internal control environment and corporate governance procedures across all areas of activity for which the Accounting Officer has responsibility.

If the Deputy is seeking particular information then I might suggest he make contact with my office and I will endeavour to provide a response on the matter.

Climate Change Policy

677. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health the recurring weekly meetings attended by either him or the Secretary General of his Department in 2019 at which climate change and or preparations within his Department to enact a climate plan has been an agenda item; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31343/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Climate change has been a meeting agenda item both in discussions I have held with the Department's Management Board and at the Management Board itself.

My Department officials are currently conducting work in relation both to climate change adaptation and to climate change mitigation.

A joint Department-HSE team has been established which is developing a five-year health sector adaptation plan. The team has consulted widely with relevant stakeholders and will also engage in public consultation shortly on the draft adaptation plan. The plan will be completed by September.

In response to a recommendation of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Climate Action in their report "Climate Change: A Cross-Party Consensus Action" (2019), Department officials have recently completed a review of the Health risks of Climate Change and the Health benefits of Climate Action.

Climate mitigation activities are also underway in my Department, notably in relation to reestablishing targets for energy reduction in our new premises at Miesian Plaza, early completion of the decommissioning of Hawkins House, the elimination last year of the use and purchase of bottled water and single-use plastic cups, and other relevant mitigation initiatives.

Mental Health Services Provision

678. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a full medical report will be made available in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31367/19]

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

679. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will have an early appointment to address their psychiatric health issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31379/19]

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

680. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if he will address the fact that the post of consultant orthodontist has been vacant within CHO8 for some time; the length of time the post has been vacant; the increased efforts being made to fill the post; the waiting times as a result of this vacancy in CHO8 in comparison with other areas of the health service in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31413/19]

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.

Healthcare Infrastructure Provision

681. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health when the building to house the MRI scanner for the Regional Hospital, Mullingar will commence (details supplied). [31445/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

Hospital Appointments Status

682. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called for surgery in Cappagh Hospital. [31446/19]

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

683. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be scheduled for an ASD assessment for a child (details supplied). [31447/19]

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

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

684. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the reason an alternative date for surgery has not been scheduled for a person (details supplied). [31448/19]

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

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

Hospital Appointments Status

685. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be expedited for a person (details supplied). [31449/19]

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

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

Home Help Service Data

686. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent in each CHO area of the HSE on private providers of home help services; if private providers are used only after HSE workers in the same area are given their full hours of employment including weekends; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31458/19]

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

Hospital Appointments Status

687. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be scheduled for a person (details supplied). [31460/19]

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.

Commissions of Investigation

688. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health the reason the Farrelly commission is not considering loss of wages as eligible for payment as per the Commission of Investigation Act 2004 regarding key witnesses that have contributed their time and resources to the commission; and the remedy open to persons to achieve a more equitable or different outcome. [31461/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Commission of Investigation (Certain matters relative to a disability service in the South East and related matters) was established by the Government under the Commissions of Investigation Act 2004 (No. 23 of 2004) to investigate the role of relevant public authorities in relation to the care of “Grace” (pseudonym) and other individuals in a former foster home in the South East.

The Commission’s Sole Member is Marjorie Farrelly, S.C.

The Commission is independent in undertaking its functions. I am not in a position to comment on its ongoing work. This includes determinations on applications for the recovery of costs.

Sections 23 and 24 of the Commissions of Investigation Act 2004 provide for guidelines concerning the recovery of legal costs necessarily incurred by witnesses (section 23) and requests for the recovery of legal costs necessarily incurred and certain other expenses (section 24). These guidelines and the payment of witnesses' expenses and other costs are included within the Farrelly Commission's rules and procedures (section 13 to 17 and appendix 2). Section 15 of the Act provides for the power of the Commission to establish or adopt rules and procedures. The Commission is obliged to provide copies of its rules and procedures to persons likely to be affected by them.

Brexit Supports

689. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the resources that will be made available to farmers in the event of a no-deal Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31358/19]

729. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the resources, financial and otherwise that will be made available to fishermen and farmers in the event of a no-deal Brexit on 31 October 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31364/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I have introduced a number of supports to assist the agrifood sector in preparing to address the challenges posed by Brexit. These include:- the €300 million Brexit Loan Scheme for Brexit-impacted SMEs and mid-cap businesses. The funding arrangements ensure that at least 40% of the fund is available to food businesses. Up to 14 June 2019, 585 applications have been approved. The total number of loans progressed to sanction at bank level is 141, with a total value of €30.6m, of which 29, with a value of €8.2m, relate to food businesses;

- a market prioritisation exercise undertaken by Bord Bia to identify priority markets across all food and drinks categories;

- tailored supports and analysis are being provided to food companies through Bord Bia's Brexit Barometer;

- an intensified series of trade missions to develop and grow new markets;

- the recently launched DBEI/DAFM "Future Growth Loan Scheme" will bring up to €300 million of long-term strategic investment loans available to eligible Irish businesses, including farmers and the agrifood & seafood sectors. The fund is leveraged by exchequer funding of €62 million, of which 40%, or some €25 million, has been provided by my Department. Businesses have been able to apply for loan eligibility through the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) since 17th April 2019.

I also have had ongoing discussions with Commissioner Hogan regarding the potential impact of a disorderly Brexit. The Commission have already made €50m available to Irish beef farmers as a response to market pressures, and this can be matched by national funding. I expect to be rolling out a support scheme with this funding in the very near future. I have also stressed the need for the Commission to be ready to deploy a further range of measures to mitigate the potential impacts on the agrifood and fisheries sector. Avoiding a no-deal Brexit continues to be the Government's overriding policy priority.

And, of course, our practical preparations for all potential scenarios, including a no-deal Brexit, continue to be progressed and refined through the whole-of-Government coordination

structures that have been in place for some time.

Brexit Supports

690. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will address a matter regarding funding for the agriculture sector (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30488/19]

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 agrifood 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.

Animal Slaughtering Standards

691. **Deputy Michael Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if all equine slaughter carried out for the human food chain is carried out in accordance with European legislation; if the Food Safety Authority of Ireland is satisfied that this is the case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30489/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Equine slaughter plants whose meat is destined for human consumption must meet the requirements set out in detailed EU regulations relating to food safety and animal health and welfare. Primary responsibility for compliance with these regulatory requirements rests, in the first instance, with the food business operators. There are currently two such equine slaughtering plants in operation in

Ireland and slaughter activities at both plants are supervised by my Department.

The slaughter process and the handling of animals going to slaughter takes place under strictly supervised conditions. My Department has a permanent presence in each of the slaughter plants under its supervision and Department staff, with the assistance of temporary veterinary inspectors engaged on a contract basis, carry out regular checks as part of official regulatory controls. In addition, each slaughter establishment has a qualified animal welfare officer who oversees the welfare of the animals at the time of slaughter.

Food Safety Standards Regulation

692. **Deputy Michael Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if it is the food business operator or staff under his remit that have the duty of care to ensure that only the highest quality equine meat enters the human food chain: if he or the food business operator has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the safety and quality of equine meat entering the human food chain; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30490/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Regulation (EC) No. 178 of 2002, which sets out the general principles and requirements of EU food law, stipulates among other things, that food business operators at all stages of production, processing and distribution within the businesses under their control must ensure that foods satisfy the requirements of food law and that these requirements are met. With regard to traceability, the regulations require that the operator must have systems in place to be able to identify any person from whom they have been supplied with a food. They must also have a system in place to identify the businesses to which their product has been supplied.

For their import from non-EU countries, food products of animal origin, such as horsemeat, are required to meet the relevant requirements of EU food law that are operated in third countries or regions of third countries or conditions recognised by the EU to be at least equivalent.

The Regulations relating to the import of meat from third countries are set at EU level. The basic requirements for imports of meat are set out in Regulation (EC) No 853/2004. The third country of dispatch must be on an approved list for that product and the individual establishment from which the product is dispatched must also be on an approved list. These lists are published on the EU Commission's website. There is also a requirement that imports of meat are only allowed from countries with an approved residue monitoring plan.

The EU's Directorate General (DG) for Health and Food Safety (previously known as the Food and Veterinary Office or FVO) carries out assessments of third countries wishing to export these products to the EU and submits for Commission approval, those where the responsible authorities can provide appropriate guarantees as regards compliance or equivalence with Community feed and food law and animal health rules. Third countries and their establishments that are approved to export are audited and inspected by the EU's Health and Food safety DG with regard to these guarantees and reports of the findings of inspections are published on its website.

All products of animal origin for human consumption imported into the EU from third countries must be inspected at an approved Border Inspection Post (BIP). The range of checks to which products may be subjected include documentary, identity (traceability) and physical examinations to ensure that they comply with relevant EU and national legislation. Imports must be accompanied by health certification provided by the competent authorities of the country of origin. Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2016/1832 of 17 October 2016, relating

to changes in health certification requirements came into effect from 31 March 2017 and applies to the import of horsemeat. It imposes inter alia a minimum six-month residency requirement for the import into the EU of meat from horses from third countries. The non-EU country must also meet specified criteria with regard to the monitoring of administered substances and residues. The EU's Health and Food Safety DG also approves third-country meat processing establishments wishing to export to the EU and audits Member States' import controls for products from third countries.

When all import controls have been satisfied, compliant consignments may then be imported and placed on the single market, where they are subject to the EU's Food Hygiene Regulations in the same way as other compliant food products.

Cyber Security Protocols

693. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if it has had a cybersecurity breach in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30579/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department has invested considerable resources to protect the information that it needs to support the wide range of activities that it carries out and has experienced and trained staff dedicated to the prevention/detection of and the response to any cybersecurity threats.

My Department's computer systems are independently certified to meet the ISO 27001:2013 Information Security Standard. There have been no cybersecurity breaches in the last 12 months.

GLAS Payments

694. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a hen harrier payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30622/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 2 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016 and has received payments in respect of 2016, 2017 and the 2018 Advance. This participant is claiming for the Hen Harrier action under GLAS.

GLAS officials are currently working to complete updates to the GLAS contract. Once the required updates are finalised and this application clears the pre-payment validations, the 2018 balancing payment will be processed. GLAS payments are continuing to issue weekly.

Nitrates Usage

695. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will address a matter regarding the nitrates derogation review (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30643/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Ireland's nitrates derogation provides farmers an opportunity to farm at higher stocking rates, above 170 kg livestock manure nitrogen/ ha, subject to additional conditions designed to protect the environ-

ment. The derogation is an important facility for more than 7,000 farmers. Derogation farmers make up 6% of bovine farmers, 11% of the land area but have 20% of the bovine livestock herd. There has been a significant expansion in land area covered by the derogation of almost 35% since 2014.

In addition, a further 5,000 farmers with 13% of the national bovine herd, farm above the 170 kg livestock manure nitrogen/ha limit but export slurry to comply with the limit rather than applying for a derogation.

Recent EPA reports have highlighted deterioration in water quality and increasing green house gas and ammonia emissions. There are also significant issues around the decline of EU protected habitats in Ireland. However, we know that there opportunities to reduce the impact of these farms on the environment.

In light of the increasing land area being farmed under derogation and the environmental pressures outlined, it was considered prudent and important to the longer term retention of this important facility to review the conditions of the Nitrates derogation. Ireland's current derogation concludes in 2021, and failing to address the environmental pressures above, would negatively impact on any negotiations to renew this important facility. As part of this review, a public consultation was held and 75 submissions were received.

The Nitrates expert group which is composed of officials from the EPA, Teagasc, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and my Department is currently considering these submissions. My colleague, Minister Murphy and I expect to receive the groups recommendations shortly.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

696. Deputy Danny Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if supports for greater use of protected urea, lime, slurry additives and soil aeration will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30678/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The All-of-Government Plan to tackle climate breakdown identifies a series of actions for the agriculture, forestry and land-use sector that will contribute to our transition to a low carbon economy and society across abatement measures, carbon sequestration measures and displacement of fossil fuels.

These actions in this all-of-government plan are informed by the recent Teagasc Marginal Cost Abatement Curve report (MACC) - An Analysis of Abatement Potential of Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) in Irish Agriculture 2021-2030. The Teagasc MACC curve provides an identifiable suite of actions for delivery including measures on the use of lime, protected urea and slurry additives identified as having potential for GHG abatement.

Protected urea or altered fertiliser formulation offers a very large abatement measure based on the replacement of Calcium Ammonium Nitrate fertiliser which would result in Nitrous Oxide emission reductions.

The application of lime as a soil conditioner and specifically to neutralise soil acidity and raise pH to an agronomic optimum level has many benefits in terms of crop production and soil nutrient availability and has potential to reduce chemical nitrogen and increase nitrogen use efficiency.

The acidification of manures and slurries using compounds such as alum, ferric chloride or polyaluminium chloride has been shown to sequester phosphorus, reduce ammonia emissions on landspreading and reduce methane and ammonia during storage. These slurry additives showed potential to significantly reduce ammonia and methane emissions over the winter slurry storage period.

The Teagasc MACC curve did not identify soil aeration as a measure with large carbon abatement potential and therefore is not included in the Climate Action Plan. However, we continue to keep potential opportunities under review and one of actions of the climate action plan is to further review and update the Teagasc MACC to reflect any advancements since its publication in 2018.

Additionally, my Department supports research and innovation in these particular areas with ongoing research projects such as “Mitigating Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Emissions by improved pH management of soils (MAGGE PH)”, to ensure there is a continuous pipeline of new opportunities for GHG abatement to consider.

My department will promote and encourage all actions that will assist in reaching our GHG targets by 2030. Forty percent of the future CAP (2021-2027) budget will be directed at climate and environmental measures. However, this will not be enough in itself and market based incentives and regulation will also be necessary.

Ireland has an opportunity to become a global leader in actions on climate change. If we succeed in our ambition in this area, we will create a progressive and sustainable agricultural sector into the future.

Renewable Energy Generation

697. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to provide farmers with supports for anaerobic digestion and on-farm renewables; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30679/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Indigenous renewable energy plays a vital role in our domestic fuel mix and will become even more important in the context of reducing our reliance on imported fuels and in meeting our challenging renewable energy targets for 2020 and 2030 and decarbonising our energy systems by 2050.

My Department is committed to working closely with the Department for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, which is the lead Department in this area, to ensure that the supply of domestic fuels available in the forest and agriculture sectors are mobilised to support renewable energy generation from a range of bioenergy technologies including Anaerobic Digestion. My Department is aware of the need to encourage the utilisation of farm manure as an alternative source of energy and fully recognises the wider environmental benefits of using agricultural residues in the production of biogas / biomethane and, in particular, the potential for a significant role in the heat and transport sectors. However, the cost efficiency of this technology remains challenging, due to the low energy content and seasonality of farm manure.

The Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH) aims to bridge this economic gap and will support farms and businesses to adopt renewable heating systems, including biogas heating systems. The SSRH has been developed to financially support the adoption of renewable heating systems by agricultural, commercial, industrial, district heating operators and other non-domestic heat users not covered by the EU Emissions Trading System. Under Project Ireland 2040, the National Development Plan sets out an allocation of €300 million for the rollout of

the SSRH for the period up to 2027.

My colleague Richard Bruton, Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment recently opened the second phase of the SSRH, an operational support for biomass boilers and anaerobic digestion heating systems for applications. Details of this scheme including the tariffs that apply are available on the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland's website at the following link: <https://www.seai.ie/sustainable-solutions/support-scheme-renewable/>

In addition, my Department's Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes (TAMS) supports capital investment in a number of target areas which will promote, among other things, sustainability (e.g. low emissions slurry spreading equipment, farm nutrient storage, and renewable energy and energy efficiency). I recently made €10 million available for energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies, following a comprehensive review of TAMS designed to increase its focus on sustainability. Eligible investments include extension of support for Solar PV Installation to all sectors and support for LED Lighting as the only form of lighting to be grant aided. In addition, other energy efficiency measures such as biomass boilers and water heating continue to be eligible investment items under TAMS.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

698. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to provide full recognition of the carbon sinks from forests, permanent pastures and hedgerows; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30680/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Soil Organic Carbon can play a significant role in the land use sector in mitigating greenhouse gases and ensuring the environmental integrity of the access to Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) credits provided in the EU regulations agreed in June 2018. At a national level, the Government's Climate Action Plan contains 14 actions relating to Irish agricultural adoption carbon abatement opportunities. There are a further 12 actions promoting diversification of land use (part of gradual transition), such as afforestation. Four additional actions look at the better management of Peatlands and soils.

Our forest estate has a very important role to play in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). Through the Effort Sharing Regulation (Regulation 2018/842), recognising that there is limited abatement potential in the agriculture sector, land use including forests and grasslands have the potential to contribute an additional 26.8 million tonnes of increased removals or emissions reduction over the period 2021-2030. The Government's Climate Action Plan specifically associates the mobilisation of these CO₂ removals as part of the contribution from agriculture and land use towards Ireland's 2030 targets. In addition, the current afforestation programme has been reviewed to enhance participation rates, while also informing land use policy to increase the benefits for climate, the environment, as well as rural communities. Since the late 1980s, nearly €3 billion has been invested in forestry, and ongoing suitable forest management will continue to contribute 21 MtCO₂eq over the period 2021 to 2030.

Research by Teagasc and the EPA has highlighted that grasslands play a key role in the provision and regulation of important ecosystem services. From a climate change perspective, grassland soils have the ability to sequester atmospheric CO₂, potentially contributing to climate change mitigation. Better management of grassland includes activities such as increased time to reseed, increase in legumes, less frequent use of heavy machinery and long-term pasture management plans.

Furthermore, hedgerows are estimated to cover 3.9% or 660,000 km of the Irish landscape. The recently published reports by The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action, as well as the All-of-Government Climate Action Plan to tackle climate breakdown both recognise the contribution of hedgerows to climate adaptation as well as to carbon sequestration and storage.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has made and will continue to make an increasingly significant contribution to the environmental sustainability of the Irish agriculture.

Forty percent of the future CAP (2021-2027) budget will be directed at climate and environmental measures which will likely include payments which promote biodiversity, water quality and carbon storage.

Organic Farming

699. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of promoting greater use of organic manures on farms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30682/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The use of organic manures is important in supplying key nutrients for our cropping and grass based systems of production. Farmers are required to adhere to best practice as set out by the Nitrates Regulation (SI 605/2016) and the Nitrates Explanatory Handbook for Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Water Regulations 2018. The implementation of these are through the Nitrates Action Programme (NAP), and farmers are obliged to comply with the NAP with regard to spreading organic manure i.e. Slurry/Organic Manures can be a very cost effective resource to maintain and increase soil fertility levels. The department promote the use of organic manures as efficiently as possible to ensure maximum nutrient recovery.

Innovation and the development of technology have further enhanced the use of organic manures within our systems of production. Low-emission slurry spreading (LESS) techniques has become increasingly popular. LESS was included as a measure within the Green, Low-Carbon, Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS) in 2015 and, as a measure for derogation farmers in 2017. It has received significant support under the Targetted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS). Over 2,000 farmers have been approved to purchase machinery. In relation to payments, over 850 applicants have already been paid over €10m under the Low Emission Slurry Spreading Scheme. In addition, a further 495 young farmers have invested in this equipment bringing the total spend under TAMS II on Low Emission Slurry Spreading to date to €15.2m.

LESS can provide either through the use of a trailing shoe, dribble bar or injector system some significant benefits to the environment and improve the nutrient use efficiency of our organic manures. The benefits are as follows;

- can reduce the ammonia emissions up to 97% of those emitted with a splash plate
- LESS application process will increase the Nitrogen value by approximately three units per 1,000 gallons of slurry
- Improved flexibility with application as a result of reduced contamination of herbage, leading to a quicker return to grazing.
- The opportunity to apply slurry onto swards with larger grass covers.
- The odours released during and after application are also usually reduced when using a

trailing shoe or band spreader method compared with a splash plate.

Living Wage

700. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the estimated cost of implementing a living wage €12.30 for all employees directly employed and or in agencies under his remit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30763/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Based on the introduction of a minimal threshold hourly rate of €12.30, the estimated additional annual payroll cost for staff employed by my Department would be approximately €783,500. It should be noted that this figure does not include the costs associated with the employment of temporary Clerical Officers.

The parallel information in respect of State Bodies under the aegis of this Department is a matter for the bodies themselves. The information requested has been forwarded to them for direct reply to the Deputy.

Farm Inspections

701. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps taken to date to fulfil commitments under the programme for a partnership Government on farm inspections and penalties; the measures ongoing or planned; if evidence outlining the impact of such changes will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30841/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department has two commitments under the Programme for Partnership Government in relation to farm inspections and penalties.

The first relates to the simplification measures for the inspection regime and the implementation of the proposed ‘yellow card system’.

As part of the annual inspection programme required under the EU regulations governing the Direct Payments Schemes and various Rural Development measures, my Department implements the option to complete land eligibility inspections by means of Remote Sensing using up-to-date satellite imagery, with some 85% of the requirement being completed by this means in 2018. My Department, in consultation with farm organisations, avails of the option of ‘stacking’ of inspections, whereby cases that are selected for inspection under the Basic Payment Scheme can also count towards the inspection requirements under Greening, ANC, etc. This practice endeavours to minimise the number of ‘gates crossed’ as much as possible by also ‘stacking’ Animal Identification and Registration (IDR) inspections on land eligibility inspections and combining Animal IDR inspections with Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) and/or Sheep Welfare Scheme (SWS) inspections, where feasible.

In order to meet the regulatory requirements for the 2018 inspections programme across the various schemes and inspection types, over 26,000 inspections were required. When the options of Remote Sensing inspections and ‘stacking’ of inspections were applied, this resulted in the actual number of holdings subject to a ‘ground’ inspection being circa. 8,500.

In relation to the ‘Yellow Card’ system for penalties, this relates to land eligibility checks, covering both administrative checks and inspections, and applies to those cases where a determined over-declaration in area is greater than 3% or 2 hectares but does not exceed 10%. For

such cases, the penalty will be further reduced by 50%, subject to specific additional criteria. This provision applies to the Basic Payment Scheme, the Young Farmers Scheme and the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme only. My Department implemented this provision in 2016 and, in the period 2016 to 2018, some 2,000 applicants under the Basic Payment Scheme benefitted from this provision.

My Department also applies the provision under the regulations governing the Cross Compliance regime where a breach is deemed to be minor in nature and remedial action is taken within a specified period, no monetary sanction will apply.

The second commitment relates to the holding of information meetings with farmers. In 2018 and 2019 to date, my Department held a series (15) of information evenings, in collaboration with Teagasc, at various locations throughout the country. These meetings covered an overview of the inspection process and common reasons for penalties. Farmers were also afforded the opportunity to discuss their own individual issues with Department and Teagasc personnel on a one-to-one basis. Inspection staff also attended a number of farmer meetings in collaboration with some of the farming organisation. Furthermore, information on the reasons for penalties was presented to farmers at the 2018 National Ploughing Championship. It is intended to hold a further series of info meetings in late 2019/early 2020.

Departmental Data

702. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the different income streams directly paid by persons to his Department or agencies under his remit, such as motor tax; the number of persons making annual payments; the value of same; the number of payments made through staged or increment payments; the value of same; the additional income generated as a result of payments being made on an incremental basis; if incremental payments are not available, the reason for same; the corresponding figures for 1999 and 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30846/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is not readily available. I will arrange for the information to be compiled and will forward it to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Capital Expenditure Programme

703. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the capital projects which have been delayed under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; when these projects will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30875/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department has not had any capital projects delayed under Project Ireland 2040.

Project Ireland 2040

704. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the capital projects which have commenced under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30911/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the attached table

[https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-07-11_pq704-11-07-19_en.doc] Capital Projects Commenced Under Project Ireland 2040

Capital Expenditure Programme

705. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if expenditure estimates for capital projects under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies match projected cost requirements in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30957/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is available at the following link:

[https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-07-11_pq705-11-07-19_en.doc] Estimated Expenditure of Capital Projects under Project Ireland 2040

Sheep Welfare Scheme

706. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a sheep welfare payment on appeal will be awarded to a person (details supplied). [31023/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An application was received under the 2017 Sheep Welfare scheme from the person named on 20 January 2017 and he has been paid in full for 2017. Under the terms and conditions of the scheme, applicants who wished to continue in the scheme for 2018 were required to complete and return a Sheep Welfare Scheme continuance sheet prior to a closing date of 2nd February 2018. In this case, no continuation sheet was received in respect of the 2018 scheme year.

The person named contacted the Department on 15 January 2019 seeking a review of his case. He was advised to provide proof of postage for the Sheep Welfare continuance sheet in order to clarify the position.

Following this correspondence, the person named informed officials that he did not have proof of postage in this case. Accordingly, he was advised of his right to have this case further reviewed by the independent Agricultural Appeals Office. Following this review by the Appeals Office, the Department's decision with respect to the individual's participation in the 2018 Scheme was upheld and the person named was informed that no payment would issue in respect of the 2018 Sheep Welfare Scheme.

However, the Agriculture Appeals Office have determined that where the herdowner can provide proof that the actions under the 2018 Sheep Welfare Scheme were carried out, the person named can continue in the Sheep Welfare Scheme for the next two years. Department officials have requested the necessary documentation from the person named and, upon receipt of same, the applicant will be included for participation in the 2019 Scheme.

Capital Expenditure Programme

11 July 2019

707. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of capital projects being undertaken by his Department; the final agreed tender price; the estimated cost of each capital project in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31067/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is available at the following link:

[Capital Projects Undertaken by Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine].

Capital Expenditure Programme

708. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the capital projects completed since 2010; the final agreed tender price for each project; the actual cost of each project; if the actual cost exceeded the tender price; the reason therefor in each case in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31083/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): It is not possible to provide a comprehensive response to the Deputy in the required timeframe. I will arrange for a reply to be forwarded directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Bord Iascaigh Mhara

709. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an overview will be provided of the China Seafood Council initiative of Bord Iascaigh Mhara; and the 2019 funding allocation for the programme. [31127/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The China Council was established by Bord Iascaigh Mhara in order to adopt a more structured and cohesive approach to the Chinese market by Irish companies. The Council facilitates the formation of collectives, whereby companies come together to form a group/collective to pool resources and lower market development costs. The council provides a forum for the members to promote the Irish shellfish producing industry and to address common export opportunities and challenges in the Chinese market, which can be of mutual benefit to all the members operating in the Chinese market.

BIM, as the facilitator of the Council, has undertaken a number of EMFF-funded projects to support the work of the Council. For example, projects have been undertaken to evaluate the supply chain and understand the market opportunities for Irish Shellfish in the tier one cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen and a market analysis and culinary profile was undertaken for brown crab in tier one cities to establish a premium position for live and frozen brown crab.

At this time, BIM has not submitted any request to my Department for 2019 EMFF funding of any project connected to the China Council.

Fisheries Protection

710. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the 2017 and 2018 annual breakdown in tabular form in tonnage and financial terms of all species caught in the 0 to 6 mile zone. [31201/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Much of the information the Deputy has requested is contained within the documentation attaching to the consultation paper on the Review of Trawling within the Six Nautical Mile Zone. To inform the review and consideration of fishing access inside the 6 nautical mile zone, the Department requested that the Marine Institute and Bord Iascaigh Mhara conduct an analysis, from existing data sources, of the extent and impact (economic and biological) of trawling activity by vessels inside Ireland's 6nm zone, including inside the baselines (internal waters).

This documentation relating to this review is available on my Department's website at the following link -

<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/seafood/sea-fisheriespolicymanagementdivision/completed-publicconsultations/publicconsultationontrawlinginside6nauticalmiles/>

Agriculture Scheme Data

711. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the financial allocations on an annual basis under the 2014-2020 RDP for schemes (details supplied); the annual amount expended on the schemes in each year since established; the number of active participants in each scheme; and the number of approved applicants that subsequently withdrew from each scheme in tabular form. [31202/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

Table 1 – Allocations and Expenditure under certain RDP Schemes

	Knowledge Transfer Scheme €000	GLAS €000	Beef Data and Genomics Programme €000	TAMS II €000	Sheep Welfare Scheme €000	Hen Harrier Programme €000
Allocation 2015	0	20,000	35,000	0	0	0
Expenditure 2015	0	11,453	34,692	0	0	0
Allocation 2016	0	139,500	52,000	28,000	0	0
Expenditure 2016	0	102,615	61,800	3,971	0	0
Allocation 2017	22,821	228,500	49,000	49,832	17,000	2,940
Expenditure 2017	13,784	195,583	47,137	31,256	15,851	717,000
Allocation 2018	23,000	226,000	49,500	69,943	20,000	3,500
Expenditure 2018	21,665	231,978	47,451	66,751	17,650	1,154
Allocation 2019	25,000	203,000	46,500	70,000	18,000	3,115
Expenditure to June 2019	3,882	50,101	4,583	39,537	2,697	586

The 2020 allocations will be determined as part of the annual estimates process for 2020.

Table 2 – No. of participants and withdrawals

	Knowledge Transfer Scheme	GLAS	Beef Data and Genomics Programme	TAMS II	Sheep Welfare Scheme	Hen Harrier Programme
Number of active participants	18,525	48,715*	24,544	15,742	18,899	1,395
Number of applicants that have withdrawn	1,177	3,424	7,308**	534	1,239	1

* Data includes both withdrawn and rejected applications. Also, some double counting may occur as individuals who moved tranche could be recorded as both active in the latter tranche but withdrawn/rejected in the former tranche.

** Data includes participants excluded from the scheme because of issues relating to non-completion of training and Carbon Navigator requirements.

Beef Environmental Efficiency Scheme Pilot

712. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of applications to the beef environmental efficiency pilot scheme by the closing deadline by county in tabular form; the number of applications approved and not approved; and the number of approved applications in which payments have issued. [31205/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Beef Environmental Efficiency Pilot (BEEP) is a one year pilot to further increase economic and environmental efficiency in the suckler herd through better quality data on herd performance, supporting decision making on farm.

There are currently 19,131 participants in BEEP, a breakdown of which, by county, is provided in the following table.

County	No. of Applicants
CARLOW	269
CAVAN	923
CLARE	1,483
CORK	1,412
DONEGAL	912
DUBLIN	55
GALWAY	2,070
KERRY	965
KILDARE	217
KILKENNY	526
LAOIS	514
LEITRIM	645
LIMERICK	610
LONGFORD	574
LOUTH	182
MAYO	1,762

County	No. of Applicants
MEATH	454
MONAGHAN	648
OFFALY	477
ROSCOMMON	1,119
SLIGO	801
TIPPERARY	852
WATERFORD	292
WESTMEATH	591
WEXFORD	462
WICKLOW	316

Requirements of the Pilot include:

1. All Calves being submitted for weighing must be born between 01 July 2018 and 30 June 2019.
2. Unweaned Live Calf and Dam must be weighed on the applicant's holding on the same day.
3. Only scales registered and used in accordance with the requirements of Annex 1 of the Terms and Conditions of the Pilot may be employed for the purposes of this Pilot.
4. Weights must be submitted between 08 March 2019 and 01 November 2019 in accordance with Annex 1 of the Terms and Conditions of the Pilot.

On compliance with these requirements and the Terms and Conditions of the Pilot, applicants will be approved for payment.

Beef Environmental Efficiency Scheme Data

713. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of cows registered to the beef environmental efficiency pilot scheme, including all calves born up until 30 June 2019 that are eligible in tabular form. [31206/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is provided in the following table.

BEEP

No of Eligible Cows Registered	No. of Registered Herds	No. of calves born 01/07/18 – 30/06/19.*
447,770	18,695	431,073

* Herdowners have 27 days in which to register calves, so this number is likely to change slightly.

Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme

714. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of applications received under the targeted agricultural modernisation scheme

2 by county and tranche in tabular form; the number of approved applications by county; the number of payment claims logged by county; the number of payment claims approved for payment by county; the funds allocated to the scheme under the 2014-2020 RDP; the amount expended to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31207/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The budget for the TAMS II Scheme under the RDP 2014 - 2020 is €395m and expenditure to date is €154m. The value of the approvals in place that have not yet resulted in a payment is a further €122.5m. This figure does not include the value of approvals currently being issued under Tranche 13.

The details requested by the Deputy are in the following tables.

TAMS II Applications Received By County and Tranche

Tranche	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Totals
Carlow	34	20	22	19	27	16	59	36	64	36	27	50	68	73	0	551
Cavan	108	100	101	80	52	31	35	40	73	48	44	64	140	69	0	985
Clare	118	72	47	44	54	41	25	32	48	59	44	63	97	62	0	806
Cork	570	324	258	233	194	191	245	284	418	312	239	372	473	449	0	4,562
Donegal	89	69	163	126	110	61	83	76	135	85	55	96	201	114	0	1,463
Dublin	6	5	9	6	8	2	37	11	23	12	13	9	22	13	0	176
Galway	160	178	182	144	129	68	89	89	132	141	83	120	233	138	0	1,886
Kerry	258	188	110	105	106	80	99	97	131	100	83	142	220	140	0	1,859
Kildare	37	27	35	26	24	25	70	32	87	52	57	54	109	60	0	695
Kilkenny	144	148	110	68	67	43	102	104	118	88	75	107	113	136	0	1,423
Laois	68	62	42	44	62	29	78	48	74	62	53	64	84	88	0	858
Leitrim	40	35	42	30	25	14	14	11	30	12	13	20	57	30	0	373
Limerick	159	115	87	78	86	53	78	104	86	87	49	111	142	117	0	1,352
Longford	27	33	31	16	32	22	26	21	26	20	16	29	38	40	0	377
Louth	33	17	16	22	23	15	37	29	33	21	16	22	31	28	0	343
Mayo	71	53	105	81	106	54	51	50	87	67	53	81	105	67	0	1,031
Meath	86	56	71	50	57	38	109	49	69	59	51	64	112	67	0	938
Monaghan	133	99	52	51	53	26	31	52	56	49	56	39	148	64	1	910
Offaly	54	50	49	48	38	31	39	35	58	32	36	64	74	73	0	681
Roscommon	86	72	102	99	72	51	32	36	48	51	32	68	101	57	0	907
Sligo	41	38	28	25	26	18	14	18	38	28	15	21	34	25	1	370
Tipperary	297	192	129	128	118	77	166	144	211	131	124	155	231	197	0	2,300
Waterford	106	86	50	61	45	36	55	53	75	67	44	50	85	60	0	873
Westmeath	58	54	54	52	45	28	29	22	44	45	43	41	61	55	0	631
Wexford	127	96	74	91	68	46	174	113	160	124	110	147	172	118	1	1,621
Wicklow	43	23	32	35	29	18	43	40	53	40	27	37	58	39	1	518
Totals	2,953	2,212	2,001	1,762	1,656	1,114	1,820	1,626	2,377	1,828	1,458	2,090	3,209	2,379	4	28,489

TAMS II - Approvals By County

County	Numbers Approved
Carlow	383
Cavan	677
Clare	631
Cork	3,445
Donegal	1,032
Dublin	132
Galway	1,391
Kerry	1,365

Questions - Written Answers

County	Numbers Approved
Kildare	474
Kilkenny	1,046
Laois	650
Leitrim	232
Limerick	1,053
Longford	283
Louth	262
Mayo	735
Meath	684
Monaghan	621
Offaly	507
Roscommon	670
Sligo	270
Tipperary	1,776
Waterford	688
Westmeath	461
Wexford	1,243
Wicklow	374
Total	21,085

TAMS II - Payment Claims Received By County

County	Number of Claims Received
Carlow	210
Cavan	299
Clare	323
Cork	1767
Donegal	425
Dublin	71
Galway	662
Kerry	626
Kildare	240
Kilkenny	630
Laois	341
Leitrim	109
Limerick	519
Longford	116
Louth	134
Mayo	331
Meath	339
Monaghan	286
Offaly	253
Roscommon	320
Sligo	124

County	Number of Claims Received
Tipperary	978
Waterford	372
Westmeath	210
Wexford	663
Wicklow	179
Total	10,527

TAMS II - Payment Claims Approved By County

County	Numbers of Claims Approved
Carlow	193
Cavan	275
Clare	307
Cork	1,622
Donegal	384
Dublin	64
Galway	628
Kerry	575
Kildare	229
Kilkenny	573
Laois	327
Leitrim	96
Limerick	486
Longford	105
Louth	122
Mayo	298
Meath	321
Monaghan	261
Offaly	248
Roscommon	301
Sligo	111
Tipperary	941
Waterford	344
Westmeath	196
Wexford	613
Wicklow	167
Total	9,787

Trade Agreements

715. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a final completed sustainability impact assessment of the Mercosur trade agreement will be completed by the European Commission; if only an inception report has been completed to date; and if five stages remain to be completed before the final sustainability impact assessment report is completed. [31210/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Inception Report for the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement Sustainability Impact Assessment has been completed. This assessment provides an overview of the proposed framework for conducting the sustainability assessment analysis and methodologies to be employed, including the consultations activities, for the study.

The Inception Report also only provides the preliminary analysis for the tasks to be expanded upon throughout the implementation of the project, namely, the quantitative and qualitative methodologies for the economic analysis; social analysis; environmental analysis, human rights analysis; and the sectoral analysis.

The final report, is expected to include recommendations to maximise the benefits of the agreement while ensuring the competitiveness of enterprises and preventing or minimising potential negative impacts.

Sheepmeat Sector

716. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on prices farmers are receiving from factories for lamb; and his further views on suggestions that imported lamb is being used to undermine prices to local factory suppliers. [31211/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As the Deputy will be aware, as Minister for Agriculture, I have no role in determining the prices for sheep meat or any other commodity, nor can I directly intervene in the determination of prices. Equally, it is not my role to comment on commercial decisions take by private entities in an open market.

My Department provides the following supports to the sheep sector.

I introduced the Sheep Welfare Scheme in December 2016 in order to provide support for sheep farmers in improving welfare standards in the national sheep flock. Participating farmers are paid €10 per eligible ewe, and to date some €36m has issued to farmers in respect of the first two years of the Scheme.

In addition to supports which are available for sheep farmers under the Rural Development Programme, including GLAS, ANCs and Knowledge Transfer Groups, sheep farmers also benefit from the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and Greening payments under CAP Pillar I.

I have also made available financial support to sheep farmers for compliance with new sheep EID rules of €100 per farmer.

The pursuit and development of new markets for Irish agri-food exports is a constant and central component of the strategic development of the industry, as evidenced by its placement at the centre of Food Wise 2025, the industry's strategy for development. Food Wise 2025 prioritises the potential for growth in new and emerging markets, particularly in Asia, Africa, the Americas and the Gulf region.

In May, during the China Trade mission, I met with the Vice Minister of General Administration of Customs in China (GACC) and his officials. Sheepmeat access was a key topic discussed at this meeting. I received confirmation that GACC is processing Ireland's sheepmeat application and a commitment that officials from GACC will visit Ireland on a sheepmeat audit.

In June, on the Japanese trade mission, I met both my counterpart, the Japanese Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), and with the Vice Minister for Health, Labour and

Welfare (MHLW). These Ministerial meetings followed detailed technical meetings involving senior officials from both Ministries. At the conclusion of these meetings, I was delighted to announce that we had reached agreement in principle on market access for Irish sheepmeat. Details will be finalised by an exchange of letters between my Department and the relevant Japanese officials

I am strongly of the view that the current range of supports available to farmers, together with ensuring market access to as many markets as possible are appropriate supports for the continued development of the sector.

I will continue to argue for as strong a CAP budget as possible, post-2020. In particular, I am committed to ensuring that sheep farmers continue to receive strong support in the next CAP. My view is that such payments should support and encourage farmers to make the best decisions possible to improve the economic and environmental efficiency, of their farming system.

Basic Payment Scheme Data

717. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers who will receive 2017 basic payment scheme refunds under the financial discipline rule by county; and the value of these refunds by county. [31212/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In the context of the annual budgetary procedure of the European Union, the financial discipline mechanism which is implemented by the Member States involves a monetary deduction (1.4% for the 2018 reduction) from some direct payments thereby creating a financial Crisis Reserve for the European Union.

The crisis reserve is intended to provide additional support for the agricultural sector in the case of major crises affecting agricultural production or distribution. In the event that the Crisis Reserve is not activated in the financial year, or it is not fully utilised, the balance not used is refunded to farmers in the subsequent financial year.

The number of farmers and the amount paid to date per county for those cases that have received a financial discipline reimbursement with respect to deductions made the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme year in accordance with EU regulations is provided below.

Additional cases may become eligible for a reimbursement as ongoing processing of cases take place. Any such cases will be paid when the next reimbursement with regards to the 2017 scheme year takes place.

County	No. of Farmers	Total Financial Discipline Reimbursement as of 09/07/19
CARLOW	1,377	€270,789
CAVAN	3,697	€354,261
CLARE	4,957	€488,800
CORK	10,845	€1,760,633

County	No. of Farmers	Total Financial Discipline Reimbursement as of 09/07/19
DONEGAL	5,902	€579,264
DUBLIN	490	€98,525
GALWAY	8,686	€816,378
KERRY	6,068	€700,249
KILDARE	1,667	€360,171
KILKENNY	2,908	€591,159
LAOIS	2,429	€429,352
LEITRIM	2,427	€186,616
LIMERICK	4,092	€550,719
LONGFORD	1,835	€194,835
LOUTH	1,170	€217,734
MAYO	8,087	€657,552
MEATH	2,845	€534,821
MONAGHAN	2,984	€275,307
OFFALY	2,472	€392,524
ROSCOMMON	4,435	€401,590
SLIGO	2,784	€231,085
TIPPERARY	5,874	€1,081,593
WATERFORD	2,011	€428,297
WESTMEATH	2,433	€360,484
WEXFORD	3,378	€672,874
WICKLOW	1,768	€328,118
Totals	97,621	€12,963,730

Bovine Disease Controls

718. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on increased farmers' costs from a programme (details supplied). [31213/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Following Government approval in May 2018, I established a TB Stakeholder Forum in September 2018 tasking it with bringing forward proposals consistent with the objective of eradicating bovine TB by 2030. The Terms of Reference for the Forum outlined that its deliberations should be in line with the principles from the National Farmed Animal Health Strategy:

- Working in Partnership;
- Acknowledging Roles and Responsibilities;
- Prevention is Better than Cure; and
- Reflecting Costs and Benefits

It is estimated that the total annual net cost of the TB Programme is over €90 million a year of which €45 million is provided by the Exchequer, €35 million from farmers and €10 million from the EU. EU co-funding for the TB Programme peaked at €12.7 million in 2014 but has been falling steadily since then. The EU has capped its contribution at €8.3 million for 2019

marking a 35% reduction in 5 years. All indications suggest further significant cuts are likely requiring this shortfall in funding to be met by the State and farmers. With this in mind and reflecting the Costs and Benefits principle from the National Farmed Animal Health Strategy, I understand the Forum is proposing an independent review into the Costs and Benefits of the TB Programme to inform its future financing.

It is important to note the existing levels of support provided to Irish farmers when they experience a TB restriction. For every reactor (animal identified as infected with TB) taken from a farm, the herdowner is compensated for the open market value of that animal as if it was otherwise healthy. This is referred to as the On Farm Market Valuation Scheme. The cost of this Scheme increased from €10.5 million in 2017 to €14.3 million (+36%) in 2018. Separately, Ireland operates a number of supplementary compensation schemes which are not replicated in other countries that have a bovine TB Programme. These schemes (Hardship Grant, Income Supplement and Depopulation Grant) are designed to assist farmers with additional costs and consequential losses associated with a TB restriction. Following increases in rates and changes to eligibility for these schemes in 2015, the cost of these schemes has increased by €1.7 million (80%) relative to 2015 when disease metrics have remained broadly stable over that period.

Currently, approximately 4,000 farm families per annum suffer the hardship and stress associated with a TB outbreak and associated restrictions. Trends to date in 2019 suggest a similar number of farm families will be afflicted with a TB breakdown this year, marking the fifth consecutive year of stagnation in TB herd incidence.

Clearly, eradicating the disease as quickly as possible will result in significant savings for all affected stakeholders and a reduction in associated stress for herdowners. As outlined above, the direct savings to farmers if the disease were eliminated is estimated at approximately €35 million per annum, and that is before any market or other impacts are factored in. I am committed to supporting measures which can support this objective.

I understand that the TB Stakeholder Forum's most recent meeting was on June 25th and I expect that the Chairman will send me an Interim Report shortly. I look forward to considering its contents with a view to subsequently launching a TB 2030 Strategy.

TAMS Data

719. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the tranche 13 applications to the TAMS scheme by county; and the number of applications approved and not approved to date. [31214/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The total number of applications received under Tranche 13 of the TAMS II Scheme was 3,209. This was significantly higher than the average number of applications for previous tranches which is 1,800.

As a result, all cases were ranked on the basis of the marking system provided for under each measure and the lowest ranked 20% (just under 700 cases) were rolled over for consideration under Tranche 14 of the scheme.

Approvals have commenced to the cases selected and are continuing to issue on an ongoing basis as the examination of individual applications is finalised. The following table sets out the applications received by county and the approvals that have issued as of today's date.

County	Total Applications in Tranche 13	Total Approved to date in Tranche 13
Carlow	68	19
Cavan	140	32
Clare	97	42
Cork	473	182
Donegal	201	39
Dublin	22	9
Galway	233	68
Kerry	220	90
Kildare	109	35
Kilkenny	113	12
Laois	84	42
Leitrim	57	3
Limerick	142	70
Longford	38	21
Louth	31	17
Mayo	105	16
Meath	112	26
Monaghan	148	18
Offaly	74	47
Roscommon	101	24
Sligo	34	5
Tipperary	231	117
Waterford	85	34
Westmeath	61	22
Wexford	172	62
Wicklow	58	18
Total	3,209	1,070

Bovine Disease Controls

720. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position Ireland will take with respect to the new EU animal health law Delegated Act to impose 30 day pre-movement testing for TB on all herds that are more than six months tested; if he has consulted with farm organisations on this; and the likely increased costs that this regulation will cause. [31215/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): New bovine TB rules are in the Delegated Act (DA) on Part II of Regulation (EU) 2016/429 on surveillance, eradication programmes and free status of animal diseases. The original proposals from the EU Commission were quite severe and would have had a significant negative impact on Irish farmers. The original draft proposals included:

- 12 month minimum TB restriction period
- Prohibition on any inward/outward movement in restricted herds

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- Derestriction only to occur following two clear tests 6 months apart
- Compulsory 30-day pre/post movement test in all cases

Over the past year, my officials have engaged intensively with Commission counterparts and experts from other Member States on this issue. Ireland was successful in achieving considerable changes to the draft TB regulations to the benefit of Irish farmers in negotiations on all points but one.

The current draft text retains the 30 day pre/post movement test requirement unless the herd and animal have been tested in the last 6 months. My officials proposed the introduction of risk-based pre/post movement testing, supported by peer-reviewed scientific research undertaken in Ireland. Our analysis shows that this approach would be more effective than across-the-board pre/post movement testing. Ireland has approximately 2.2 million movements (counting farm-to-farm and farm-to-mart-to-farm each as one movement for these purposes) per year. The new rule would mean that these would have to either take place within six months of the herd test, or the herdowner (buyer or seller) would have to have a pre/post movement test carried out.

However, there has been very limited support from other Member States for this position.

My officials have engaged with farm organisations in respect of the new EU Animal Health Law and are happy to consult further on this issue.

Trade Agreements

721. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the national allocations for Mercosur countries arising from the increased beef access of 99,000 tonnes from the Mercosur deal into the EU. [31216/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): It is unclear at this point what the national allocations of the Beef TRQ among the four Mercosur countries will be. However, it is our current understanding that the TRQ is likely to be administered on a first-come, first-served basis. This means that there will be no specific allocation for the four individual Mercosur countries in the final agreement and that it will be up to those countries to make arrangements to manage it appropriately.

Trade Agreements

722. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the Mercosur deal will result in the levy under the Hilton quota being reduced to zero from 20% on beef imports into the EU; and the allocations for Mercosur countries under the quota in addition to prime beef cuts. [31217/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The ‘Hilton’ beef quota is the informal name of the tariff quota for the European Union, regulated by Commission Regulation (EU) No 593/2013, which provides for the opening and administration of tariff quotas for high-quality fresh, chilled and frozen beef and for frozen buffalo meat. The Hilton Quota beef enjoys a duty preference vis-à-vis the European Union Most Favoured Nation import regime.

The quota has been in operation since 2009, with an initial allocation of 65,250 tonnes of

high quality fresh, chilled and frozen beef, and 2,250 tonnes of buffalo. As of 2012, the quota consists of 66,826 tonnes of high-quality fresh, chilled and frozen beef, and 2,450 tonnes of buffalo. The suppliers are Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Canada/USA, Australia and New Zealand.

The country breakdown for the Mercosur countries under the Hilton quota is as follows:

Argentina - 29,700 tonnes

Brazil - 10,000 tonnes

Paraguay - 1,000 tonnes

Uruguay - 6,376 tonnes

The headline political agreement between the EU and Mercosur countries proposes that once the agreement comes into force, it will see the elimination of the in-quota tariff rate, which is currently set at 20%.

Greyhound Industry

723. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if public funding to the greyhound industry will be suspended in view of the revelations contained in a programme (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31231/19]

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.

Under Section 12 of the Horse and Greyhound Racing Act, 2001 (No.20 of 2001), the horse and greyhound racing industries receive financial support from the State through the Horse and Greyhound Racing Fund (the Fund). Monies are paid out of the fund in the ratio of 80% to Horse Racing Ireland and 20% to Bord na gCon as specified in Section 12 (6) of the Act. State funding provided through the Fund is pivotal to the survival of the horse and greyhound racing industries.

According to the 2017 Power Report, the greyhound industry provides and supports considerable employment both directly and indirectly across the Irish economy. It is estimated that in 2016, the industry supported 5,058 full-time and part-time jobs in the economy. In addition, there are 7,313 active greyhound owners. The total number of people deriving economic benefit from the sector is estimated at 12,371. It is an industry that is ingrained in the social and cultural networks of rural Ireland.

It is worth noting that the Greyhound Sector has undergone a series of reforms in recent times and the Greyhound Racing Act 2019 was signed by the President on 28 May 2019. This legislation strengthens the legal basis for the industry, with a view to fortifying the integrity of the greyhound racing sector and improving provision for greyhound traceability. To this end, I welcome the fact that Bord na gCon will continue to invest significant resources into regulation and greyhound welfare and intends to devote more resources to welfare, re-homing and traceability.

There is no doubt that the recent RTE Programme has undermined the public's confidence

in the sector and Bord na gCon is committed to strengthening its role in the areas of traceability, welfare and enforcement. I am very concerned that steps must immediately be taken to address the issues raised in the programme. However, the suspension of funds would have immediate consequences for employment in the sector and could have unintended consequences for the welfare of dogs used for racing and coursing.

Beef Exports

724. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the timeline for the opening of the South Korean market for beef exports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31246/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The process of gaining access for Irish beef to the South Korean market has been ongoing for a number of years. Ireland is currently at step five in an eight step process for beef market access. The next step is transmission of our beef file to the National Assembly for their deliberative process.

During my recent trade mission visit to South Korea, high level technical and ministerial meetings took place between my Department and both the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) and the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety (MFDS). These meetings were focused on providing and clarifying additional information sought by the Ministries. My Department continues to liaise and cooperate with MAFRA and MFDS, developing strong, collaborative relationships with these key authorities over market access.

I hope provision of this information will allow transmission of the beef access file to the National Assembly soon. However, as the Deputy will appreciate, the timing of access to the Korean beef market remains ultimately the decision for the Korean authorities.

Beef Exports

725. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the quantity of beef products exported to the United States of America in each of the years 2016 to 2018; the expected export level for 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31247/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My officials continue to work towards opening and enhancing access to as many markets as possible. This is a key part of our response to the challenges and uncertainty posed by Brexit, and in line with the market development theme of the Food Wise 2025 strategy.

Ireland was the first EU Member State to secure market access to the US in January 2015, following the lifting of its 15 year ban on beef exports from the EU due to BSE in March 2014. Following this, Ireland was the first EU country to export beef to the US. Subsequently, in July 2016, my Department received approval to send BIFG (Beef Intended for Grinding) to the US.

Export data for beef products exported to the United States of America in each of the years 2016 to 2018 are listed in the table - these figures have been sourced from Central Statistics Office (CSO) trade data.

Quantity of Beef Exported to United States

Year	Tonnes
2016	1,772
2017	1,571
2018	2,135

According to CSO trade statistics, Ireland exported approximately 1,322 tonnes to USA in the period January to April this year, exactly double the quantity exported in the same period in 2018. This represents a very positive start to the year and I hope that this growth trend will continue throughout 2019.

The role of my Department is to open up and maintain market access and where possible to remove barriers to trade; industry must then take advantage of these opportunities. The actual levels of exports will depend on a range of factors, including as global supply and demand dynamics, currency fluctuations and individual customer requirements.

Trade Agreements

726. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department carried out an ongoing economic assessment of a proposed Mercosur deal as the talks progressed over the past 12 months; the outcome of such assessments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31256/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): From the outset, Ireland consistently raised concerns about the very negative impact that an agreement would have on the EU's agriculture sector, and particularly the beef sector.

Ireland's concerns during the negotiations were substantiated by economic analysis conducted by, or on behalf of, the European Commission (2011 assessment undertaken by Copenhagen Economics, and 2016 Cumulative Impact study by the Commission's Joint Research Centre) and by comprehensive assessment in November 2017 by Teagasc, which included impact modelling of alternative TRQ volumes for beef.

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, in conjunction with my Department, also commissioned Copenhagen Economics in December 2017 to undertake a study of the economic impacts and opportunities of recent and prospective EU-Third Country Free Trade Agreements for Ireland.

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.

Departmental Communications

727. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the oversight of his Department of directives, circulars, advice or requirements issued since 2016; if surveys have been carried out of compliance with these communications to date; if so, the surveys carried out; the results of the surveys; the compliance rate; the actions taken by his Department further to these results; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31317/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is being compiled and will be sent out to him directly as soon as possible.

Climate Change Policy

728. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the recurring weekly meetings attended by either him or the Secretary General of his Department in 2019 at which climate change and-or preparations within his Department to enact a climate plan has been an agenda item; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31333/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department has played an active role in the whole-of-Government dialogue which led to the recent publication of the Climate Action Plan to Tackle Climate Breakdown. This document represents a collaborative approach that sets out the vision and pathway to achieve reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and meet our 2030 EU targets. The contribution from the agriculture sector to this national ambition is significant.

My Department was also required to prepare three plans under the National Adaptation Framework for the agriculture, forest and seafood sectors and this Adaption Programme was launched in late June.

Officials from my Department have been working intensively with colleagues across a number of other Government Departments and agencies over the last number of years in the preparation of these plans and both the Secretary General of the Department and I have been kept fully informed of progress during this time. This would have involved detailed briefings and presentations as well as regular discussion on the Climate Change issue at the weekly Management Board meeting chaired by the Secretary General.

Question No. 729 answered with Question No. 689.

Veterinary Inspection Service Administration

730. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the relocation of laboratories under the aegis of his Department; and the timeframe for completion of the relocation. [31416/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department commissioned a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) of options that were proposed by a Working Group in 2016 for the future development of the Regional Veterinary Laboratories (RVLs). The team conducting the CBA included internationally-recognised, independent experts in economic analysis and animal disease surveillance. My Department has been presented with the CBA report and senior officials are currently considering the recommendations. Due consideration is also being given to feedback we received following consultation on two separate occasions with our stakeholders - following publication of the 2016 Working Group report and during the CBA process.

A proposal on how best to redevelop the RVLs over the next few years will be informed by both of those consultative processes and by the findings of the CBA. The focus of my Department is now on securing and improving the service to the sector at best value to the tax payer and on securing the necessary capital funding for investment.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

731. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of payments outstanding under the various schemes his Department operates in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31417/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the table at the link.

[https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-07-11_pq731-11-07-19_en.doc] Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine - Payments outstanding under various schemes

National Broadband Plan Implementation

732. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a company (details supplied) or related companies within the group will be permitted to sell products and-or services outside the intervention area; if he has tested this to ensure compliance with state aid rules; if he or existing operators have engaged with each other on the issue in view of the fact that it creates a State backed competitor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30494/19]

763. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a company (details supplied) will be able to build broadband infrastructure in non-intervention areas; if this is in breach of state aid rules; the protections in place that prevent state aid rules being broken; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31066/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 732 and 763 together.

The NBP State intervention is a gap funded model. While National Broadband Ireland (NBI) will be a commercial operator, its primary function will be to deliver the obligations set out in the NBP Contract. NBI cannot use the State aided network or subsidy in breach of State aid law.

In addition to this function, NBI is also under a general obligation under the contract to comply with State Aid, meaning NBI is required to ensure it does not use any assets subsidised by the State in a manner that would breach State Aid law.

There are also reporting and monitoring obligations across the NBI contract, such as accounting separation and open book accounting. This is to ensure there is full transparency regarding proper use of the subsidy year on year.

Cyber Security Protocols

733. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he is satisfied with the staffing deployment in the cybersecurity unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30520/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) is located within my Department, and is the primary cyber security authority in the State. The Centre has a number of roles, and is

responsible for acting as a conduit for information to constituents, including operators of Critical National Infrastructure, Government Departments and Agencies. The Centre also provides expert advice and analysis on cyber security issues and is involved in coordinating the response to significant incidents. The Centre also acts as a central contact point in the event of a government or nation-wide cyber security incident affecting the State, and has a number of formal roles in the protection of Critical National Infrastructure, including those under the EU Network and Information Security Directive.

The NCSC is composed of highly skilled, specialist technical civilian staff, with skillsets in areas such as computer science, software engineering, malware analysis, information technology forensics, cryptography, software development, and cyber security compliance, as well as general cyber security skills. In terms of resources, additional funding has been secured for a substantial enlargement of the NCSC both in terms of personnel and additional technology in order to address the responsibilities placed upon the State by the Network and Information Security Directive which was transposed last year. The annual allocation of the National Cyber Security Centre in 2019 is now €4,000,000, and staffing levels have increased significantly in recent years. My Department is also finalising a new National Cyber Security Strategy, which will set out the measures that Government will take to meet future challenges in cyber security, both in terms of Government and critical national infrastructure.

Cyber Security Protocols

734. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if it has had a cybersecurity breach in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30582/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Department applies the relevant cyber security protocols in its network, applications, data, operations, disaster recovery, business continuity and staff awareness through our Shared Service agreement with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The National Cyber Security Centre is part of my Department and has responsibility for the implementation of the Network and Information Security (NIS) Directive. My Department works closely with the NCSC on the department's own internal network security and implements its recommendations as appropriate.

The Department experienced a breach in 2018 involving ransomware, which was identified, isolated and removed.

Inland Fisheries Ireland

735. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if Inland Fisheries Ireland will conduct instream projects in 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30602/19]

736. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the breakdown of the 32 expressions of interest received by Inland Fisheries Ireland under the 2019 salmon conservation fund between angling groups, stakeholders projects and IFI projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30603/19]

737. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if Inland Fisheries Ireland will carry out pre-fishery enhancement surveys in 2020 with a view to carrying out its own instream enhancement programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30604/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Canney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 735 to 737, inclusive, together.

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) has confirmed its intention to operate a programme of fisheries development including instream projects in 2020, subject to justified need and available resources. It is IFI's policy to engage in pre-fishery enhancement surveys to enable it to support its interventions and monitor effectiveness thereafter.

I am advised that IFI launched its 2019 funding call in April 2019. In the first instance, applicants were invited to submit Expressions of Interest (EOI) across three funding schemes – the NSAD Capital Grants Scheme 2019, the Salmon and Sea Trout Rehabilitation, Conservation and Protection Fund and the Midlands Fisheries Fund. The final closing date for submission of funding applications was 1 July, however, the EOI process remains open.

Following review of submissions, IFI have advised that 28 of the 32 EOI's are categorised as aligning to the Salmon and Sea Trout scheme. Of these 11 are third party applications and 17 are IFI submissions.

All applications will now proceed through the evaluation process and those successful will be announced following approval by the Board of IFI.

In response to a number of questions on these matters by the Deputy, and given her interest in fisheries development, I have offered her a briefing from IFI.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

738. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the steps taken towards negotiating a contract with the preferred bidder for the national broadband plan following confirmation of the decision relating to the preferred bidder; the role of his Department in the contract negotiations; the role of external advisers; the timeline for the completion of the negotiations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30611/19]

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.

I recently brought a recommendation to the Government to confer preferred bidder status on Granahan McCourt, the remaining bidder in the NBP procurement process, and the Government agreed to this at its meeting on 7 May.

The Government decision means that it is intended to award the State intervention contract to National Broadband Ireland, subject to contract close, including the finalisation of financial and legal documents.

National Broadband Ireland will be supported by a number of experienced subcontractors

and is currently tasked with finalising negotiations on contracts with approximately 40 subcontracts to assist in the delivery of the NBP. It is anticipated that a subset of approximately 15 to 20 of these subcontracts will be required prior to contract close to support deployment. The state aid notification relating to the NBP will also be submitted to the European Commission.

A period of final due diligence on all elements of the contract is part of the normal conclusion of a procurement process. The Department's specialist team, supported by expert advisors in legal, procurement, commercial, technical and financial areas, are working to close the contract at an early date.

Electric Vehicles

739. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the installation of home chargers for electric vehicles. [30636/19]

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 Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland 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.

Under the Climate Action Plan, we will develop an overarching charging infrastructure strategy with a target to be set for the supply of infrastructure to stay ahead of demand.

National Broadband Plan

740. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the full name and make-up of the entity listed as the bidder and-or consortium in section A General Information, 4.1 Bidder information on page 13 of the national broadband plan pre-qualification questionnaire; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30650/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The full name of the Lead Bidder as set out in the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire is Granahan McCourt Dublin (Ireland) Limited.

In addition to the Lead Bidder, the Granahan McCourt bid includes a number of other Bidder Members.

Bidder Member is defined in the Project Information Memorandum and includes:

- the Bidder
- members of the Consortium and shareholders (if different); and
- entities that were relied upon by another Bidder Member in its Pre-Qualification Questionnaire Response, to demonstrate its economic and financial standing, or its technical and professional capability.

An entity can therefore be a Bidder Member without having a proposed ownership or equity role (for example, there are key subcontractors that are also Bidder members).

The Granahan McCourt Bidder Members are set out as follows:

- Granahan McCourt Dublin (Ireland) Limited as lead bidder and provider of equity
- Tetrad Corporation and McCourt Global LLC as entities whose resources were relied upon in the PQQ Response
- Enet as a key subcontractor
- Kelly Group as a key subcontractor (Kelly Comms with reliance on resources of Kelly Communications Group Limited and Kelly Integrated Limited)
- Actavo (Ireland) Limited as a key subcontractor
- KN Networks (Ire) Limited as a key subcontractor.

Better Energy Homes Scheme Administration

741. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the average time SEAI better energy warmer homes scheme applicants have to wait before a contractor is allocated to carry out works under the grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30699/19]

742. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if there is a variation in waiting times for SEAI better energy warmer homes scheme applicants from county to county; if so, the reason for the variation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30700/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 741 and 742 together.

The Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme is administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) on behalf of my Department. The scheme provides free energy efficiency upgrades to the homes of people living in or at risk of energy poverty.

Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme applications are assessed as they are received by SEAI, regardless of county. Following the receipt of valid applications, SEAI arranges for surveys of the homes to be completed. SEAI generally carry out technical surveys of homes in the order in which the applications are received. However, to ensure greater efficiency in their delivery, sometimes it is necessary to wait for a group of applications before visiting an area.

Once surveyed, SEAI allocate these homes to one of the contractors on their panel, again taking account of the date of the application. SEAI ensure to the greatest extent possible that all applications have a similar waiting time.

Since the expansion of the scheme in 2018 to include ‘deeper’ measures such as external wall insulation and internal wall insulation, demand for the scheme is very high leading to longer waiting times for all applicants. Currently it can take between 9 and 12 months from the date a homeowner applies to the date a contractor is assigned to their home to carry out the works.

Brexit Issues

743. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the way in which a no-deal Brexit may impact on mobile phone charges on the island of Ireland; if he has had discussions with the relevant operators in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30736/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Department has engaged with industry specifically on the issue of mobile roaming between Ireland and the UK, and in particular on the island of Ireland, in the context of Brexit. The three main mobile operators in Ireland, Vodafone, Three and Eir, which represent over 88% of mobile subscriptions in Ireland, have indicated to the Department that there will be no changes to the current roaming arrangements for their customers as a consequence of Brexit. The Department continues to engage with industry on this issue on an ongoing basis. This is fully consistent with the Government's Updated Brexit Contingency Action Plan, published on 9 July. All operators must make customers aware of any roaming charges they could incur, if and when, they use mobile devices outside of the EU.

ComReg (<http://www.comreg.ie>), the independent telecoms regulator, will continue to ensure that all providers meet relevant obligations in areas such as roaming alerts. ComReg also has information for customers in relation to roaming on their website: (<https://www.comreg.ie/consumer-information/roaming>), including tips on how to avoid inadvertent roaming.

Living Wage

744. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated cost of implementing a living wage €12.30 for all employees directly employed and or in agencies under his remit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30766/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department currently has 26 staff members who earn less than €12.30 gross per hour. The additional cost to my Department of implementing a wage of €12.30 per hour would be approximately €87,885 per annum inclusive of employers pay related social insurance (PRSI).

The information requested in relation to the agencies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for each agency. The Department will request the relevant bodies to reply directly to the Deputy with the information requested in respect of their organisations.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

745. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the roll-out of the national broadband plan in south County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30820/19]

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 NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector. In 2012, less than 700,000, or 30% of Irish premises had access to high speed broadband. Today, 75% of the 2.4 million premises in Ireland can access high speed broadband.

Since December 2015, the number of premises with access to high-speed broadband in South Kildare has increased by 5,665, a 22% increase. There are approximately 39,140 premises in total in South Kildare, of which 31,103 (79%) have access to high speed broadband. A further 307 premises (1%) will be served by eir under that company's ongoing rural deployment.

The remaining 7,730 (20%) homes, schools, farms and businesses in South Kildare will receive access to a high speed broadband service under the Government's State 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. Following rigorous evaluation by my Department, 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 at its meeting on 7 May.

The Government decision on 7 May 2019 means that it is intended to award the State Intervention contract to National Broadband Ireland, subject to contract close, including the 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. A deployment plan will be made available by the Bidder once the contract is signed.

In the first year of 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.

The Bidder is aiming to pass 133,000 premises by the end of the second year, with 70-100,000 passed each year thereafter until roll out is completed.

Electric Vehicles

746. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the capital support to local authorities for the development of on-street public charges will be introduced; when it will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30834/19]

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 Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland to develop this scheme which is expected to be in place later this year. This scheme will also provide a route to charging for electric vehicle owners who rely on on-street parking as their primary means of parking near their homes.

Waste Management

747. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the public consultation on waste policy will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30835/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): It is intended to commence a consultation on Ireland's current waste policy, A Resource Opportunity, in September 2019, with a view to publishing an updated policy during 2020.

Better Energy Homes Scheme Data

748. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the reason the allocation of homes for retrofitting to community-based organisations under the SEAI better energy warmer homes scheme has now ceased; if this is as a result of reaching the allocated budget; if so, the measures he plans to take to ensure that skilled staff are not made redundant or CBOs forced to close down; his views on whether such actions would have a detrimental impact on building capacity within the sector to achieve the Project Ireland 2040 objective of 45,000 domestic retrofits per annum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30837/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Better Energy Warmer Homes (BEWH) Scheme provides free energy efficiency upgrades to the homes of people living in or at risk of energy poverty. The scheme is administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) on behalf of my Department. In June 2018 the range of energy efficiency measures available under the BEWH Scheme was expanded to include 'deeper' measures. Under the expanded scheme, in certain circumstances, external or internal wall insulation, central heating and replacement windows, can be provided where a technical assessment (by SEAI contractors) considers them necessary. These additional measures brought the level of retrofit into alignment with that envisaged by the National Development Plan, but changed the relative attractiveness of availing of other 'shallower' interventions. Managing the enhanced package of measures has required careful monitoring and programme management by SEAI within available resources and I am pleased to tell the Deputy that the SEAI will be in communication with the CBOs and contractors in relation to further allocations in the coming days .

The BEWH Scheme is delivered through a panel of contractors, appointed through a competitive tendering process. Since the introduction of 'deeper' measures some CBO's that are only contracted to carry out 'shallow' measures under the BEWH Scheme, have seen their allocation volumes reduce. While the expansion of the scheme has been positive for the energy poor homeowners involved and for building capacity in the supply chain in general, it has had some negative impacts for contractors that are unable to deliver deeper works.

SEAI will be renewing its contract with BEWH contractors in 2020, which will require all contractors to be able to deliver all measures, deeper and shallow. SEAI is encouraging all CBOs to apply for this contract and has been working with CBOs over the past year supporting them in upskilling and gaining experience to help ensure they can compete for the 2020 contract and that their organisations remain viable.

Building capacity in the sector is a top priority. However it is critical that we build capacity sustainably, ensuring that all contractors delivering these ever increasingly complex retrofit

projects are adequately skilled and resourced. The new Climate Action Plan includes a number of measures which will build the supply chain for energy efficiency retrofits required to meet our 2030 targets including support for the development of necessary skills across the education and training system.

Offshore Exploration Licences

749. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the details or copies of all annual reports since 2010 sent to his Department by holders of a lease undertaking in respect of their efforts to establish commerciality of the relevant discovery. [30839/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Canney): Article 47 of the Licensing Terms for Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration, Development and Production provides for the confidentiality periods that apply in respect of returns and data furnished under the provisions of a petroleum authorisation. Two lease undertakings have been granted since 2010. The confidentiality periods applying to returns and data furnished to my Department in respect of these lease undertakings has not expired, as such I am not in a position to supply the information sought by the Deputy.

Exploration Licences

750. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 179 of 20 June 2019, if the application for a lease undertaken for a licence (details supplied) has been with his Department since October 2012; and the reason for the delay in deciding on this application. [30840/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Canney): Applications received for a petroleum authorisation must demonstrate that the work programme proposed in their application will progress understanding of the petroleum prospectivity of the Irish Offshore and that the applicant has the financial and technical capability to undertake the proposed work programme. In that regard the consideration of applications is a complex process, which as in the case of some applications such as the application referenced by the Deputy can take some time to bring to conclusion.

Departmental Data

751. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the different income streams directly paid by persons to his Department or agencies under his remit, such as motor tax; the number of persons making annual payments; the value of same; the number of payments made through staged or increment payments; the value of same; the additional income generated as a result of payments being made on an incremental basis; if incremental payments are not available, the reason for same; the corresponding figures for 1999 and 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30849/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Under the Broadcasting Act, 2009, An Post is the designated agent, acting on my behalf, for the collection of the Television Licence fee. The number of annual payments and staged/incremental payments, including the value of each, is set out below in relation to 2018

and 2009. No additional income is generated through these incremental payments.

	Number of licences from annual payments	Value	Number of licences from staged/incremental payments (Direct Debits)	Value of Direct Debits
2018	885,385	€141,661,600	153,601	€23,021,800
2009	1,015,073	€162,410,023	44,828	€5,939,517

Information in relation to 1999 is not available as my Department was not responsible for the management of the licence fee at that time.

In addition the Geological Survey of Ireland received €13,085.34 in sales of maps and reports in 2018. The corresponding figure for 2009 was €60,381. These figures cover sales to individuals and others. It is not possible to provide a breakdown of the sales only to individuals.

Energy Policy

752. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of each of the actions outlined in the strategy to combat energy poverty 2016-2019; and if a progress report will be published before the strategy comes to an end later in 2019. [30867/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Strategy to Combat Energy Poverty sets out a number of actions to be taken between 2016 and 2019 to alleviate the burden of energy poverty on the most vulnerable in society. The strategy focuses on high impact actions which aim to make a real difference to the lives of those in energy poverty. Examples of the good progress made under the strategy include:

- €26.3m funding for the Warmth and Wellbeing Scheme which targets those suffering from chronic health conditions. To date, this funding has supported over 1,100 energy efficiency upgrades.

- The eligibility criteria for the Warmer Homes Scheme was expanded to capture more people suffering deprivation. Deeper measures are also now provided under the scheme. A total of €99.2m has been provided for this scheme between 2016 and 2019 supporting over 20,500 energy efficiency upgrades during that period.

- €82.3m in funding has been provided to the Better Energy Community Scheme which has supported innovative, community-led initiatives, some of which have helped to address energy poverty.

- The Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) has ensured that competitive energy markets are working for all consumers, including those in, or at risk of, energy poverty.

The recently published Climate Action Plan also commits to reviewing ways to improve energy poverty schemes to target those most in need and to examine options to further increase funding for those schemes.

A review of the implementation of the Strategy to Combat Energy Poverty will be com-

pleted when it comes to an end later this year.

Project Ireland 2040

753. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the capital projects which have been delayed under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; when these projects will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30878/19]

754. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the capital projects which have commenced under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30914/19]

755. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if expenditure estimates for capital projects under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies match projected cost requirements in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30960/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 753 to 755, inclusive, together.

Project Ireland 2040 provides Exchequer funding of €7.6 billion, together with investment of €13.7 billion by commercial State bodies under National Strategic Outcome 8 - Transition to a Low-Carbon and Climate-Resilient Society. A copy of Project Ireland 2040 is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/580a9d-project-2040-documents/>

During the period of the Plan, key capital investments to be progressed with grant support from my Department include:

Energy efficiency upgrades in the residential, commercial and public sectors Support Scheme for Renewable Heat Electric Vehicle Incentives Energy research funding Boiler replacement

The vast majority of capital funding provided to my Department under Project Ireland 2040, comprises grant funding for the ongoing sustainable energy, and energy research programmes administered by SEAI on behalf of my Department.

The National Development Plan as part of Project Ireland 2040 also provides for the roll-out of the National Broadband Plan State intervention, the contract for which is currently being finalised.

The €500m Climate Action Fund is one of four funds established under the National Development Plan 2018-2027. The Fund will support the delivery of innovative projects from the public and private sectors to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Under the first call for applications, seven projects were approved and the validation process on these projects is currently underway. The successful projects will be provided with up to €77 million in support and will leverage a total investment of €300 million.

The information requested in relation to the agencies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for each agency. The Department will request the relevant bodies to reply directly to the Deputy with the information requested in respect of their organisations.

Ministerial Responsibilities

756. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the responsibilities delegated to the Minister of State in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30978/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Sean Canney TD was appointed Minister of State for Rural Affairs and Natural Resources on 16 October 2018. The statutory functions delegated to the Minister of State in my Department are outlined in S.I. No. 472/2018 - Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Delegation of Ministerial Functions) Order 2018 which was approved by Government on 13th November 2018. A copy has been attached for information.

North-South Interconnector

757. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he or the Minister of State in his Department has responsibility for the proposed North-South interconnector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30979/19]

758. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if EirGrid needed ministerial approval to commence the procurement process for the proposed North-South interconnector; if so, when approval issued; the conditions attached to such approval; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30980/19]

768. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if EirGrid or ESB Networks has awarded the contract for design, test and supply of pylons and all related materials for the proposed North-South interconnector for both the section of the line here and in Northern Ireland; if so, when this contract was awarded; the basis on which this use of taxpayers' moneys can be justified when the project has not received full planning approval; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that ministerial statements were made in Dáil Éireann that no critical contracts would be awarded prior to full approval of the project in Northern Ireland; his views on the fact that design, test and supply are absolutely critical components of a procurement process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31190/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 757, 758 and 768 together.

EirGrid is the designated Transmission System Operator and its role includes the operation, maintenance and development of the electricity transmission network in Ireland. The construction of the North South Interconnector, and all related procurement activities, is an operational matter for EirGrid and ESB Networks and one in which I or the Minister of State have no function.

EirGrid therefore did not require Ministerial approval to commence the procurement process for the North South Interconnector.

I am advised that due to the very long lead times that can arise in relation to projects of this nature and the benefits of a single joint procurement process to be undertaken and managed by ESB Networks, EirGrid sought approval from the regulators in Ireland and Northern Ireland to commence procurement. Following this approval, in September 2017 ESB Networks commenced a number of procurement processes in relation to the project.

In June 2019 ESB Networks awarded a framework contract for the design, test and supply of steelwork in relation to the project. However under this framework there will be no supply of materials until the planning process in Northern Ireland is complete.

Illegal Dumping

759. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the progress or outcome of the tier 2 site investigation into an illegal dump (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31001/19]

760. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the cost to date of funding under the landfill remediation program for a site (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if the funding has conditions attached to it. [31002/19]

761. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will instruct or advise the EPA to conduct further investigations into a site (details supplied) including water and soil testing to ascertain if there is toxic leakage into the surrounding water courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31003/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 759 to 761, inclusive together.

The role of my Department is to provide a comprehensive legislative and policy framework through which waste enforcement authorities operate. Under section 60(3) of the Waste Management Act 1996, as Minister I am precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to the performance by the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) or a local authority, in particular circumstances, of a statutory function vested in it.

Notwithstanding this fact, I am aware of waste management issues in relation to this site and the response to these issues by Donegal County Council.

The Local Authority has had extensive involvement with various statutory stakeholders, landowners and other parties in relation to these matters. The Council continues to work with the EPA and the Waste Management Planning Authorities in order to determine any risk to the environment and to identify remedial measures that may need to be put in place at this location.

To support this, my Department has allocated €80,000 under the 2019 Landfill Remediation Programme with respect to this site. A total of €8,000 was allocated to complete the Tier 1 risk assessment in 2017.

The Tier 2 risk assessment is on-going and a tendering process for the site investigation works and associated laboratory analysis is nearing completion. Following appointment of contractors, the site works and laboratory analysis are expected to be completed within 3 months and the final report is expected to be completed a month later.

Climate Change Adaptation Plans

762. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the details of each action point from the climate action plan 2019; the predicted cost of implementing each; if the cost of each is included in the national development plan 2018-2021; if so, the part of the plan that covers the cost; the departmental capital envelope under which each action point is assigned in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on

the matter. [31062/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I published the Government's Climate Action Plan on 17 June. The plan sets out, for the first time, how Ireland can reach its 2030 targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and also put Ireland on the right trajectory towards net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. We have a great window of opportunity to reverse the current trend in emissions and secure a healthy more resilient future for the country. It means changing the way we heat our homes, the way we travel and the way we power the country. The step-up in ambition in each of the sectors covered by the plan will require investment across the entire economy. Overall, through the mix of technologies and measures identified, the plan sets out the pathway that represents the least-cost burden to the economy as a whole.

A significant portion of the technologies and measures set out in the plan will result also in net lifetime cost savings to the economy as a whole.

In terms of costs to the Exchequer and other public funding, the plan will be funded through Project Ireland 2040 which provides €30 billion for low carbon and sustainable mobility investments in the period to 2027.

Many of the actions in the plan do not require public funding. The actions contained in this plan fall broadly into four categories:

- public funding provided in the annual estimates process and in Project Ireland 2040
- measures such as setting a long-term trajectory for the carbon tax, in order to change long-term behaviour and decisions to encourage investment in more sustainable choices
- new regulations to end certain practices (e.g. phasing out oil and gas boilers in homes or introducing low emission zones in cities)
- actions to promote public and community engagement and participation in reducing our emissions

Under the Climate Action Plan, a system of carbon budgets is being developed. This will have a significant impact on the way in which the system of government works, with each relevant Minister being responsible for carbon emissions for their sector. Each Department will not just be required to stay within their fiscal budget, but also to stay within their carbon budget, which will be the total amount of emissions which their sector will be permitted to produce in a particular period. This new system of carbon budgets will be introduced into law by a new Climate Action (Amendment) Bill.

Each Government Department will have to determine the optimum approach to utilising the funding available to it to support the policies necessary to meet the targets proposed for each sector. The cost of delivering each target will depend on the mix of regulations, taxes, and subsidies which the Government may choose to deploy to achieve the target abatement range in each sector. The Climate Action Plan will be updated annually, which will allow us to take into account changing technologies and changing costs as we seek to meet 2030 and 2050 climate targets.

Public funding will be required to deliver some of the actions which have been set out. However, the plan proposes to introduce reforms so we maximise the impact of the funding which is available. This is particularly so in the case of retrofitting. The Plan identifies a range of measures that will be needed to deliver the retrofit target. A central commitment in that regard is the development of a new retrofitting delivery model, which will group retrofits together

to achieve economies of scale, leverage private finance, and ensure easy pay-back methods. The savings on electricity bills from using less energy can help fund this, while homes will be warmer and produce lower levels of emissions.

It should also be noted that there would also be a very significant cost to the Exchequer for not implementing any policies to achieve compliance with our 2030 targets, which would also lock Ireland into a high carbon trajectory that would be unsustainable in the long-run.

Question No. 763 answered with Question No. 732.

Capital Expenditure Programme

764. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of capital projects being undertaken by his Department; the final agreed tender price; the estimated cost of each capital project in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31070/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): There are currently three capital projects underway in my Department and the information requested by the Deputy in relation to these projects is shown in the following table.

Project	Project Dates	Estimated cost of project	Final agreed tender price	Notes
National Postcode System (Eir-codes)	2013 – 2023	€38m	€33.5m	The estimated cost of this project includes the contract amount for the Eircodes licence holder (€33.5m), support services (€2.5m) and administrative costs (€2m).
Tellus, National Airborne Geophysical & Ground Geochemical Mapping Programme	2014 – 2028	€60m	€60m	This project is being managed directly by the Department's Geological Survey.
INFOMAR, National Marine Mapping Programme[Phase 2]	2016 – 2026	€40m	€20m	This project is being jointly managed by the Department's Geological Survey and the Marine Institute. The estimated cost includes grant funding of €20m to be provided to the Marine Institute.

In May the Government approved the appointment of a Preferred Bidder for the National Broadband Plan. The procurement process has determined that the maximum cost to the State of this project will be €2.1bn (excluding VAT of €355m and contingency of €480m).

Capital Expenditure Programme

765. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the capital projects completed since 2010; the final agreed tender price for each project; the actual cost of each project; if the actual cost exceeded the tender price; the reason therefore in each case in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31086/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information requested by the Deputy regarding capital projects completed by my Department since 2010 is set out in the following table.

11 July 2019

Project	Project Dates	Estimated Project Cost	Final agreed tender price	Actual Project Cost	Notes
INFOMAR, National Marine Mapping Programme [Phase 1]	2006 - 2016	€40m	€27m	€35.7m	This project was jointly managed by the Department's Geological Survey and the Marine Institute. The estimated and actual costs include grant funding of €13m provided to the Marine Institute.
National Broadband Scheme	2008 – 2014	€79.8m	€79.8m	€79.5m	
100 Mbps Schools Broadband	Pilot: 2009-2011 National Roll-out: 2012-2014	€14m	-	€13.3m	This was a joint project with the Department of Education and Skills to roll-out 100 mbps broadband connectivity to all second level schools. The figures across represent this Department's contribution to the project.
Kelvin International Telecoms	2009 – 2010	€12m	-	€11.9m	This was a joint cross border project between the Department and the Northern Ireland Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. The estimated total project cost was €70m, which comprised €40m private investment and €30m public investment. The figures across represent this Department's contribution to the project.
Tuam Ducting	2010 – 2012	€1.2m	-	€1.08m	This project was managed by Galway County Council on behalf of the Department
Remediation works at Avoca Mine [Project Management & Advisory Services]	2013 – 2016	€3m	€3m	€3.7m	There were a number of changes to the works programme which resulted in additional costs. These changes were required due to the complexity of the site and delays caused by weather.

Broadcasting Legislation

766. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of changes to the Broadcasting Acts to support independent radio stations; the timeline for such changes being implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31157/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Broadcasting (Amendment) Bill contains a provision to allocate funding to the BAI from TV Licence receipts. This would provide up to a maximum of 50% of the annual cost of the BAI levy, in turn reducing the levy on broadcasters by up to 50%. The proposed amendment is currently at an advanced drafting stage. My Department continues to work closely with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel, with a view to having the Bill published in the coming weeks.

National Broadband Plan

767. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 571 of 2 July 2019, if the further information submitted by Eir in relation to the provision of broadband nationally has been analysed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31176/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Further to the Question No. 571 of 2 July 2019, I can confirm that my Department

and its NBP advisers are in the process of concluding their analysis of the information provided by eir and will revert to me shortly in that regard. I would note that my Department appeared before the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment on 3 July and comprehensively addressed question posed by Oireachtas members at that meeting in relation to the correspondence from eir to which the Deputy refers.

Question No. 768 answered with Question No. 757.

National Broadband Plan

769. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the timeline for the rollout of the national broadband plan nationwide; if his attention has been drawn to the ongoing concerns in many areas requesting the inadequate broadband telecommunications service available which causes difficulties for households, businesses and the provision of services; the timescale for the delivery of hi-speed broadband infrastructure to each county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31233/19]

770. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans in 2019 for the upgrade of broadband telecommunications infrastructure in counties Cavan and Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31234/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 769 and 770 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. 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 NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector. In 2012, less than 700,000, or 30% of Irish premises had access to high speed broadband. Today, 74% of the 2.4 million premises in Ireland can access high speed broadband.

With reference to the Deputy’s question on Cavan and Monaghan, there are approximately 42,143 premises in County Cavan. Since December 2015, the number of premises with access to high speed broadband in Cavan has increased by 6,557, a 16% increase. In total, the number of premises in Cavan with access to high speed broadband is now 24,777, or 59% of the total premises in the county. Approximately another 344 premises will be served by eir under that company’s ongoing rural deployment.

There are approximately 33,073 premises in County Monaghan. Since December 2015, the number of premises with access to high speed broadband in Monaghan increased by 2,748, a 6% increase. In total, the number of premises in Monaghan with access to high speed broadband is now 16,803, or 51% of the total premises in the county. Approximately another 512 premises will be served by eir under that company’s ongoing rural deployment.

The remaining 17,022 premises in Cavan and 15,758 premises in Monaghan will be connected under the Government’s National Broadband Plan State led intervention.

I recently brought a recommendation to the Government to confer preferred bidder status on Granahan McCourt, the remaining bidder in the NBP State intervention procurement process, and the Government agreed to this at its meeting on 7 May.

The Government decision means that it is intended to award the State intervention contract to National Broadband Ireland, subject to contract close, including the finalisation of financial and legal documents. A period of final due diligence on all elements of the contract is part of the normal conclusion of a procurement process.

National Broadband Ireland will be supported by a number of experienced subcontractors and is currently tasked with finalising negotiations on contracts with approximately 40 subcontractors to assist in the delivery of the NBP. It is anticipated that a subset of approximately 15 to 20 of these subcontracts will be required prior to contract close to support deployment. The state aid notification relating to the NBP will also be submitted to the European Commission.

It is anticipated these elements will require a number of months, with contract close expected later this year and deployment commencing shortly after that.

The Bidder has indicated that the NBP State intervention will take an estimated 7 years from the beginning of deployment. A deployment plan will be made available by the Bidder once the contract is signed.

In the first year of 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.

The Bidder is aiming to pass 133,000 premises by the end of the second year, with 70-100,000 passed each year thereafter until roll out is completed.

Mobile Telephony Services

771. Deputy Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to introduce a universal service obligation on mobile telephony providers in relation to the need to provide adequate and up-to-date mobile telephone coverage nationwide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31235/19]

772. Deputy Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to the inadequate mobile telephone coverage in many parts of counties Cavan and Monaghan; if he, or the communications regulator will engage with mobile telecoms providers to ensure that customers in these counties are provided with improved coverage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31236/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 771 and 772 together. I propose to take Questions Nos. 771 and 772 together.

The EU and national regulatory framework for telecommunications allows for the application of a Universal Service Obligation (USO) in respect of fixed voice services. The existing framework for telecommunications relates solely to voice telephony and Functional Internet Access (28.8 kilobits per second). There is no provision in European or national regulation for a USO in relation to mobile voice services.

The Directive Establishing a European Electronic Communications Code (Directive (EU) 2018/1972), which will come into force following transposition in late 2020, aims to incentivise and encourage increased investment in high speed broadband networks, and contains a provi-

sion that would allow Member States to apply a USO for adequate speed broadband, in specific circumstances, where such networks are available.

Mobile operators are, however, rolling out 3G and 4G networks across Ireland following ComReg's 2012 Multiband Spectrum auction, with at least one operator now having over 90% population coverage of 4G services.

Furthermore, the EU Commission's Digital Single Market Strategy highlights the importance of the 694-790MHz (700MHz) spectrum band for ensuring the provision of broadband services in rural areas. The band is particularly attractive for wireless broadband services, allowing higher speeds and greater coverage over long distances. An EU level Decision has been adopted in order to co-ordinate release of the band in all Member States by 30 June 2020. This proposal will allow mobile broadband services to use this part of the spectrum band, which will provide enhanced mobile services. My Department and ComReg have been working to ensure the necessary measures are taken to facilitate a clearance of the spectrum to meet the 2020 timeline for clearing broadcasting services from the band. In addition, ComReg published a preliminary consultation in June 2018 on a proposed award of spectrum rights of use covering multi-band spectrum, to include the 700 MHz band. On 18 June 2019, ComReg issued a response to consultation and further consultation on the proposed multi-band and spectrum award for the 700 MHz, 2.1 GHz, 2.3 GHz and 2.6 GHz bands.

In terms of ongoing efforts to improve mobile telephony coverage nationally, the Programme for Government specifically included a commitment to a Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce. The Taskforce worked with key stakeholders to produce a report in December 2016, available on my Department's website, containing 40 actions to alleviate some of the coverage deficits across the country. An Implementation Group is overseeing the implementation of the actions and comprises all key stakeholders responsible for delivery. The Implementation Group meets on a quarterly basis and publishes quarterly progress reports on the implementation status of actions.

Now in its third year of operation, the Taskforce has addressed over 60 actions and continues to focus on issues that are negatively impacting upon the rollout of essential telecommunications infrastructure in rural areas. The outcome of discussions at the second Annual National Stakeholder Forum held in October 2018 informed preparation of the 2018 Annual Review Report, which was published on 21 February 2019 together with the 2019 Work Programme. Over 30 new actions are contained in the 2019 Work Programme for delivery this year.

Various measures are underway under the aegis of the Taskforce which will address mobile coverage deficits, particularly in rural areas such as counties Cavan and Monaghan.

- My Department and the Department of Rural and Community Development have worked to achieve a greater consensus around site selection for telecoms infrastructure and therefore improve mobile phone coverage.

- A focus group was established to provide guidance with respect to categories of location where high quality reliable mobile coverage should be made available as a priority. The report of the focus group was published on my Department's website on 31 August 2018. It is anticipated that the output of the focus group should influence the actions of the mobile network operators in their work to reduce mobile phone blackspots. It will also inform future policy in my Department with regards to priorities for mobile phone services.

- A working group has been established with the remit of investigating the feasibility of developing standardised policy for accessing and utilising State and publicly-owned assets for the deployment of telecommunications infrastructure.

- ComReg has published a composite national outdoor coverage map, which will, in tandem with its work on handset testing and activities to raise consumer awareness, allow people across Ireland to optimise the services available to them.

- ComReg has developed a licensing scheme which will enable households and businesses to use mobile phone repeaters to boost signals into their premises and bring immediate improvements in mobile coverage.

All of these initiatives should help enhance the quality of mobile phone and data services, particularly in areas currently experiencing a low level of service, including counties Cavan and Monaghan.

Electric Vehicles

773. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of electric vehicle charging points in counties Cavan and Monaghan; his plans to provide additional charging points in each county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31260/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Home charging is the primary method of charging for the majority of electric vehicles both internationally and in Ireland. Charging at home at night is the most cost-effective and eco-friendly way to charge an electric vehicle. Given the high proportion of homes with driveways and dedicated parking spaces, Ireland has greater capacity for home charging than many other countries. A Government grant of up to €600 is available, via the SEAI, to the purchasers of new and second-hand electric vehicles to support the installation of home chargers. There are currently over 650 standard public charge points and 78 fast chargers as a part of the ESB eCars network. A real-time map showing the charge points, including the status and availability of the charge points, is available on the ESB's website at www.esb.ie/ecars. Currently, there are 10 standard AC charge points (5 chargers) and one fast charger in Monaghan and 10 standard AC charge points (5 chargers) in County Cavan as part of the ESB eCars network.

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.

My Department, in conjunction with the SEAI, is also working on how best to support the provision of greater levels of on-street public charging.

Electric Vehicle Grants

774. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the value of grants provided by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland for the electric vehicle grant. [31294/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): There is a range of supports for the purchase of electric vehicles which includes an electric vehicle purchase grant of up to €5,000 which is administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland. Since the scheme was introduced in 2011, grants valued at over €33 million have been paid. Almost €11.6 million has been spent so far this year.

Climate Change Policy

775. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to increase Ireland's contribution to the green climate fund. [31295/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Ireland made a commitment at the Paris Climate Change Conference in 2015 to provide at least €175 million in public funding in support of climate action in developing countries between 2016 and 2020. This support will be provided primarily through bilateral assistance in respect of climate adaptation goals in developing countries, and will come from the Vote of Irish Aid, managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Ireland is well positioned to achieve its commitment to provide €175m for global climate over the period 2016-2020, having provided €117.1 million over 2016-17 and committed in *A Better World* to further scale up funding for climate action.

While no decisions have yet been taken in respect of contributions for 2019, any such decisions will take into account Ireland's commitments, referred to above, regarding further building up its support for the Green Climate Fund in the coming years.

Broadcasting Sector

776. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the work of the working group on future funding of public service broadcasting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31296/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): In light of the recommendations in the Report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications, Climate Action & Environment on the Future Funding of Public Service Broadcasting, a Working Group was set up on foot of a Government decision last year to examine options for the reform of TV licence collection. I intend to bring the Report of the Working Group to government shortly. Additional funding was secured for public service broadcasting in Budget 2019. TG4 will receive €36.2m Exchequer funding this year, comprising a combination of €34.2m current and €2m capital, which is an increase of €443,000 compared to 2018. Additional funding of €9.245m is being provided to RTE and the Broadcasting Fund, of which RTE will receive approximately €8.6m in 2019. The Broadcasting Fund, administered by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland and financed from 7% of net licence fee receipts, supports the Sound and Vision and Archiving Schemes and benefits the broadcasting sector as a whole.

National Broadband Plan

777. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated cost of not signing the contract for the national broadband plan to remunerate the preferred bidder; if he has received legal advice on the exposure of the State to legal action; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31297/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): In advance of contracts being signed with the Preferred Bidder, the Department is legally entitled to discontinue the procurement process at any time. In circumstances where there is an ongoing procurement process, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further. The Department has access to legal advice in relation to all aspects of the NBP procurement process.

National Broadband Plan

778. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has met with a person (details supplied); if the national broadband plan was discussed at those meetings; when the meetings took place; the context in which the plan was discussed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31298/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I have not met with the individual named in the Deputy's question

National Broadband Plan

779. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the requirements of the national broadband plan which are in place to avoid duplication of infrastructure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31300/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): In line with State Aid Guidelines, the solution proposed by the successful Bidder was based on the maximum reuse of existing infrastructure to the greatest extent possible to minimise costs and reduce potential environmental impacts. The final tender submitted by the bidder proposes the reuse of a combination of private infrastructure, such as eir's regulated infrastructure, and State owned infrastructure, such as the MANs and potentially the ESB, to deliver its solution. New infrastructure may be deployed where it is not possible to use existing infrastructure, or where no infrastructure exists and where it is more effective and cost efficient to use alternative solutions.

National Broadband Plan Expenditure

780. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount spent to date in 2019 within his Department on the promotion of the national broadband plan. [31301/19]

781. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if moneys have been set aside to attend the National Ploughing Championships in 2019 to promote the national broadband plan; and if so, the amount set aside. [31302/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 780 and 781.

My Department has incurred expenditure totalling €20,734 this year on public information materials relating to the NBP, for audio-visual, printing, design and copyright services.

My Department has a strong annual presence at the National Ploughing Championships from a number of its divisions and agencies and bodies under the aegis of the Department. This presence has included Inland Fisheries Ireland, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, the Environmental Protection Agency, ComReg, Eircodes, Geological Survey Ireland, Green Schools and the National Broadband Plan. A similar level of engagement is planned for 2019.

My Department's presence at the National Ploughing Championships enables citizens to meet representatives from our various agencies and divisions and discuss key initiatives that impact on their lives and livelihoods, such as soil and geological profiling of land, sustainability/climate action initiatives, energy efficiency grants, initiatives to enhance digital literacy in communities and connectivity. While it is intended that the Department, agencies and bodies under the aegis of the Department will again have a broad presence at this year's National Ploughing Championships, the associated cost has yet to be finalised.

Departmental Communications

782. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the oversight of his Department of directives, circulars, advice or requirements issued since 2016; if surveys have been carried out of compliance with these communications to date; the surveys carried out; the results of the surveys; the compliance rate; the actions taken by his Department following these results; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31320/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department does not issue circulars or associated documentation of the type referred to by the Deputy.

Climate Change Policy

783. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the recurring weekly meetings attended by either him or the Secretary General of his Department in 2019 at which climate change and or preparations within his Department to enact a climate plan has been an agenda item; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31336/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): In November 2018 I received a mandate from Government to prepare a climate plan which would make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change. The Government's Climate Action Plan 2019, published on 17 June, sets out for the first time, how Ireland can reach its 2030 targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and also put Ireland on the right trajectory towards net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Plan represents a significant step-up in ambition, with a target abatement range for each of the key sectors that contribute to Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions: Electricity; Enterprise; the Built Environment; Transport; Agriculture, Forestry and Land Use; Waste and the Circular Economy; and the Public Sector.

In preparing the Plan, I established eleven cross-Government teams which undertook analysis of areas of substantial mitigation potential with a view to proposing actions necessary to realise this potential, with specific timelines and steps to achieve each proposed action, and with clear lines of responsibility for delivery.

During the development of the Climate Action Plan, progress was considered at two meetings of the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure and at three meetings of the relevant Senior Officials Group. The Plan is a standing item at the monthly Ministerial Management Board meetings, is routinely discussed at my weekly meetings with the Secretary General of the Department and is discussed at my Department's Management Board meetings.

An internal Implementation Board has been established in my department, chaired by the Secretary General, which will oversee the delivery of the Plan insofar as the actions related to my Department and its agencies are concerned.

Better Energy Communities Programme

784. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will examine budgetary issues at SEAI organisations (details supplied). [31349/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am advised that the Community Based Organisation (CBO) referred to by the Deputy is contracted by the SEAI to deliver works under the Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme. This Scheme provides free energy efficiency upgrades to the homes of people living in or at risk of energy poverty. In June 2018 the range of energy efficiency measures available under the Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme was expanded to include 'deeper' measures. Under the expanded scheme, in certain circumstances, external or internal wall insulation, central heating and replacement windows, can be provided where a technical assessment (by SEAI contractors) considers them necessary. These additional measures brought the level of retrofit into alignment with that envisaged by the National Development Plan, but changed the relative attractiveness of availing of other 'shallower' interventions. Managing the enhanced package of measures has required careful monitoring and programme management by SEAI within available resources and I am pleased to tell the Deputy that the SEAI will be in communication with the CBOs and contractors in relation to further allocations in the coming days .

The Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme is delivered through a panel of contractors, appointed through a competitive tendering process. Since the introduction of 'deeper' measures some CBO's that are only contracted to carry out 'shallow' measures under the Scheme, have seen their allocation volumes reduce. While the expansion of the scheme has been positive for the energy poor homeowners involved and for building capacity in the supply chain in general, it has had some negative impacts for contractors that are unable to deliver deeper works.

SEAI will be renewing its contract with Better Energy Warmer Homes contractors in 2020, which will require all contractors to be able to deliver all measures, deeper and shallow. SEAI is encouraging all CBOs, including the organisation referred to by the Deputy, to apply for this contract and has been working with CBOs over the past year supporting them in upskilling and gaining experience to help ensure they can compete for the 2020 contract and that their organisations remain viable.

Building capacity in the sector is a top priority. However it is critical that we build capacity sustainably, ensuring that all contractors delivering these ever-increasingly complex retrofit

projects are adequately skilled and resourced. The new Climate Action Plan includes a number of measures which will build the supply chain for energy efficiency retrofits required to meet our 2030 targets including support for the development of necessary skills across the education and training system.

Bus Services

785. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the BusConnects plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30525/19]

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.

Rail Services Provision

786. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the Pelletstown train station; the timeline for construction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30527/19]

787. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the electrification of the Maynooth DART line; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30528/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 786 and 787 together.

As the Deputy is aware, as Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, including the DART Expansion Programme which includes consideration of the specific projects referred to by the Deputy.

Noting the NTA's responsibilities in the matter raised, 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 Funding

788. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the public funding allocation for cycling infrastructure for each local authority in each of the past ten years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30529/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Deputy will be

aware that infrastructure for active travel (i.e. cycling and walking) is funded through a number of different programmes.

These programmes include those directly administered by my Department, other programmes administered by the National Transport Authority, projects funded as part of the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund and the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund and also projects funded under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme as administered by the Department of Rural Community and Development. In addition local authorities can also avail of EU funding through Ireland's European Structural and Investment Programmes 2014 to 2020.

Data in relation to those programmes under my Department's remit is being collated and will be forwarded to the Deputy in line with revised Standing Orders; however, as can be seen from the above local authorities can also seek funding through a number of other programmes in relation to developing cycling infrastructure.

Cyber Security Protocols

789. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if it has had a cybersecurity breach in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30594/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department implements industry standard cyber security protocols to protect our data and that of the Irish citizens we engage with.

Cyber security is treated very seriously within my Department. It is tabled regularly at Management Board and appears on my Department's risk register. I am glad to be able to report that my Department has not had any known cyber security breaches in the past 12 months.

For obvious security reasons I cannot go into any specific details about the security arrangements in place, but my officials ensure as a priority that a best practice approach is maintained with regards cyber security, with external security experts engaged on a regular basis to test the security configuration and advise on any remediation that may be needed. In addition, cyber security is frequently reviewed by my Department's Internal Audit function.

Bus Éireann Services

790. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the circumstances regarding an application by Bus Éireann to the NTA to amend its licence for route 52 which it commenced operating in June 2018; if he has received correspondence in connection with the route since April 2018; if so, if he will publish the correspondence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30646/19]

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 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. Any correspondence or previous parliamentary questions received by my Department on this issue were referred to the NTA. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten

working days.

Bus Éireann Services

791. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department is paying a subsidy either directly or via the NTA to a transport operator on the 52 route; the amount being paid; the conditions attached to the payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30647/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, Bus Éireann operates 3 types of services - provincial city services, rural stage carriage services and intercity services. Bus Éireann receives Public Service Obligation (PSO) funding under contract with the National Transport Authority (NTA) for the provincial city and rural stage carriage services.

The no. 52 route is part of the company's Expressway intercity service. These are commercial services operated in competition with private operators on main trunk routes and are licensed by the NTA. By their very nature, commercial services cannot and do not receive any PSO funding from the Exchequer.

Public Transport Data

792. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount collected by Irish Rail, Dublin Bus and Luas from persons evading fares in the past two years to date; the number of fines issued by the revenue protection unit in Irish Rail, Dublin Bus and Luas in the past two years to date in 2019; the number of fines appealed; the number of successful appeals; the way in which the moneys collected from fines is used by Irish Rail; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30648/19]

793. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount collected by Irish Rail, Dublin Bus and Luas from persons fined for putting their feet on seats as per the posted notice inside public transport vehicles for the past five years to date; the number of fines issued for the same offence in the past two years to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30649/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 792 and 793 together.

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

Light Rail Projects

794. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the date and cost of each review and feasibility study done on the MetroLink and metro north proposals to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30717/19]

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

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transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area. In relation to the development of metro or light rail infrastructure it exercises its functions in co-operation with Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

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.

Bus Services

795. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the BusConnects project; if land has been purchased in respect of the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30718/19]

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.

Cycling Facilities Provision

796. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of kilometres of segregated cycle lanes delivered in each year since 2004, by county in tabular form. [30719/19]

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 to secure or provide cycling infrastructure in relation to cycling facilities and schemes to promote cycling.

Since 2013 each of the five major cities has developed and published cycle network plans and the NTA has worked with relevant local authorities in the development of those plans, which included audits of prior existing infrastructure and since publication provision of funding in relation to new infrastructure.

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.

Segregated cycle tracks were also funded by my Department as part of the Smarter Travel Areas programme 2012 to 2016 and a detailed *ex post* evaluation of that programme will be published in the coming weeks.

Separately, segregated infrastructure in the form of greenways, which are segregated from vehicular traffic but typically shared between both modes of active travel, have been funded by my Department, while my Department also funded the Active Travel Towns programme for

smaller towns. Data in relation to these programmes will be compiled by my Department and forwarded to the Deputy in line with revised Standing Orders.

The Deputy will also be aware that there are other schemes under which cycling infrastructure has been, or can be, developed which are not within my Department's remit.

Rail Network

797. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of funding allocated to the infrastructure manager multi-annual contract in each year since 2002. [30720/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, the IMMAC (Infrastructure Manager Multi-Annual Contract) provides the funding framework for the maintenance and renewal of our railway infrastructure and is a requirement under both EU and Irish legislation.

It is a contractual agreement between the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport and Iarnród Éireann, in its designated role as Infrastructure Manager of the railway and the first agreement was concluded in 2014.

The IMMAC is funded through two principal sources -

1. a direct Exchequer contribution, which is managed by my Department, and
2. access charges which must be paid by all railway undertakings that make use of the railway infrastructure in accordance with EU and Irish law.

The European Union (Regulation of Railways) Regulations 2015 stipulate that the Commission for Rail Regulation is the independent monitoring body responsible for monitoring the performance of the Infrastructure Manager in relation to its contractual obligations.

IMMAC expenditure levels, including the annual Exchequer contribution, in each year since its commencement in 2014 are provided as follows:

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total IMMAC Expenditure	€191.2m	€205.3m	€213.4m	€254.9m	€247.8m
Exchequer contribution	€140.5m	€144.2m	€134m	€158.8m	€160m

While a new IMMAC is currently being finalised to provide for the next multi-annual period to 2023, I can inform the Deputy that the increases I secured in Budget 2019 mean that the Exchequer contribution will increase this year to approximately €200 million with total expenditure forecast to be approximately €281million.

I can also inform the Deputy that the steady state funding requirement (as measured on an annualised basis) is now met for 2019 and that represents significant, and very welcome, progress in terms of the overall funding of the network.

As part of the finalisation of the new IMMAC 2019 to 2023, a review has been undertaken in relation to the last contractual period (2014 to 2018) and a report is being finalised. The report will provide an overview of all expenditure, outputs and outcomes over the contractual period, and it will be published.

Brexit Preparations

798. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the implications for cross-Border workers and students in the event of a no-deal Brexit; the steps taken to mitigate against the impact of this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30737/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): While I do not have responsibility for general employment or education matters, there are however a number of implications for cross-border travel by workers and students, such as motor insurance and the continuity of cross-border bus and rail services.

In the event of a no-deal Brexit, proof of insurance will be required for EU-registered vehicles entering the UK and for UK-registered vehicles entering the EU.

In the case of Irish registered vehicles travelling to Northern Ireland or Great Britain, the UK has indicated that these will require either a Green Card or other documentary proof of insurance cover for UK, including Northern Ireland. In the other direction, UK registered vehicles travelling to Ireland will require a Green Card as proof of insurance. Engagement with the insurance industry and the European Commission is continuing to identify any further actions in advance of 31 October 2019. Approximately 1 million Green Cards were issued by the Motor Insurance Bureau of Ireland to insurance firms and brokers in preparation for a no-deal Brexit on 29 March 2019.

In relation to cross border bus services a number of contingency measures are at play for the continuity of cross-border bus services in the event of a no-deal Brexit both at EU and National level to ensure continuity for scheduled bus services to and from the UK to 31 December 2019 and preparations are in hand for UK participation in international bus agreements that will then enable continued cross-border services.

On cross border rail, Irish Rail and Northern Ireland Railways are working together to ensure the Enterprise service will continue to run in a no-deal Brexit.

Living Wage

799. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of implementing a living wage of €12.30 for all employees directly employed and-or in agencies under his remit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30778/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Based on current staffing figures and pay levels, the additional annual salary cost to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, of implementing a living wage of €12.30 per hour is estimated to be of the order of €200,000. As the Deputy is aware, the living wage of €12.30 per hour is not a statutory entitlement. Policy in relation to the determination of salary rates for all public servants, including staff in the State agencies under the aegis of the Department, is a matter for the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Deputy’s question has been referred to the non-commercial agencies under its remit for direct reply in respect of the notional costs for each agency of implementing a living wage of €12.30 per hour.

Public Transport Provision

800. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 214 of 12 June 2019, when exactly route 167 will be extended. [30779/19]

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 I am not involved in its day-to-day operations.

The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) in conjunction with Bus Éireann and I have again forwarded your question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Departmental Data

801. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the different income streams directly paid by persons to his Department or agencies under his remit, such as motor tax; the number of persons making annual payments; the value of same; the number of payments made through staged or incremental payments; the value of same; the additional income generated as a result of payments being made on an incremental basis; if incremental payments are not available, the reason for same; the corresponding figures for 1999 and 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30861/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The information requested by the Deputy is currently being collated by my officials and a reply will be forwarded to the Deputy within 10 working days.

I have referred the question to the agencies for direct reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Project Ireland 2040 Implementation

802. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the capital projects which have been delayed under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; when these projects will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30887/19]

803. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the capital projects which have commenced under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30926/19]

805. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if expenditure estimates for capital projects under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies match projected cost requirements in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30972/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 802, 803 and 805 together.

As the Deputy is aware, Project Ireland 2040 provides indicative allocations over the next ten years for a range of transport related projects and programmes.

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 on the Project Ireland 2040 Tracker that is published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and available at the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6db7c4-investment-projects-and-programmes-tracker/>

Sports Capital Programme Administration

804. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the time-frame for the awarding of capital project grants under the 2019 sports capital programme. [30956/19]

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

Question No. 805 answered with Question No. 802.

Road Projects Status

806. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the planned M20 motorway between Cork and Limerick; the stage of the project; the next steps and associated timelines; when he envisages the project moving to planning, detailed design, tender and construction; when the motorway will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30982/19]

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 of individual national roads is a matter for TII, in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. TII also manage and distribute the capital national roads programme budget.

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

Ministerial Advisers Remuneration

807. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the contract arrangements for his new press adviser; if the person is on the principal officer pay scale; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31028/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I have appointed a temporary Advisor due to the absence of my Press Advisor for an extended period.

My temporary Press Advisor will be remunerated at the first point of the Principal Officer standard scale, in accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's 'Instruction to Personnel Officers – Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil' which provides guidelines for the appointment of Special Advisors.

The formal process associated with the appointment is currently underway.

Capital Expenditure Programme

808. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of capital projects being undertaken by his Department; the final agreed tender price; the estimated cost of each capital project in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31082/19]

809. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the capital projects completed since 2010; the final agreed tender price for each project; the actual cost of each project; if the actual cost exceeded the tender price; the reason therefor in each case in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31098/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 808 and 809 together.

Project Ireland 2040 provides indicative allocations over the next ten years for a range of public transport related projects and programmes.

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/>

Air Services Provision

810. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the decision to issue a permit to an airline (details supplied) to operate a service between Dublin and Madrid; his views on whether this new service could give rise to a potential unfair commercial advantage; and his further views on whether this route was already well serviced with 39 existing services weekly. [31171/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): 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, my 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.

Airlines Regulations

811. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of permits issued to airlines outside the State under the fifth freedom over the past five years. [31172/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Over the past five years my Department has authorised a number of non-EU airlines to operate fifth freedom passenger flights. These include:

- Addis Ababa - Dublin - Los Angeles with return (now ceased);
- Beijing - Edinburgh - Dublin with return; and
- Addis Abba - Madrid - Dublin with return.

Authorisation has also been granted for fifth freedom cargo flights, these include:

- Istanbul - Shannon - Chicago;
- Istanbul - Shannon - New York; and
- Istanbul - Shannon - Atlanta.

The European Single Aviation Market rules provide that EU airlines operating fifth freedom flights within Europe do not require authorisation from my Department.

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.

Rail Services Provision

812. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if consideration will be given to introducing a late night train service on the Sligo rail line to Mullingar and Longford. [31179/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. However, I am not involved in the day-to-day operations of public transport.

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

Driver Licences

813. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the extension of the right to apply for a driver licence to persons in direct provision centres. [31180/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This matter is still under consideration in consultation with my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality.

Insurance Costs

814. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the actions for which his Department has some or all responsibility under the cost of insurance working group. [31181/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Significant progress has been made on the various complex actions for which my Department has responsibility as regards motor insurance and road safety under the Cost of Insurance Working Group.

Recommendation 10 is broken down into two Actions 20 and 21 and it has been completed. These actions were in relation to the Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles entering regular discussions with Insurance Ireland to explore solutions for drivers in that sector.

Recommendation 28 is broken into Actions 62 and 63 and relate to establishing for the first time a fully functioning database, which would allow uninsured drivers to be identified. This also requires insurance companies to provide the driver licence number. While this may be done by request, it will be comprehensive only if there is a clear legal requirement to do so, as well as legally sound.

The key reasons why Phase 2 of the Motor Third Party Liability insurance database, as outlined in the Cost of Insurance Working Group Report in January 2017, will now be delivered

towards until the end of 2020 are as following:

The scope of the information to be covered has now been significantly expanded to cover details on all Private, Commercial and Fleet motor vehicle information - all within this time-frame;

Delivering the capability to capture and validate driver number details, without significantly burdening private individuals, will require

(I) an initial industry-wide start date for the collection of data for new policies and

(II) an extended period to allow for driver number details to be collected as existing drivers renew their policies over time.

Before insurance companies can start requiring customers to supply both their driver number details and those of their named drivers on the policy, further amendments to the Road Traffic Acts will need to be in place. While current proposals to enhance the regulation and enforcement of speed limits to improve both road safety and traffic management are the immediate priority, work is continuing on these further amendments in consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

Mechanisms will have to be developed and agreed between all insurers and DTTAS Shannon for them to gain access to the National Vehicle and Drive File to validate driver numbers within the wider framework governing access to and protection of data.

Insurance Ireland and all the insurance companies operating in Ireland, working together with DTTAS, An Garda Síochána, and the MIBI, through the MTPL Insurance Database Project Board, have now structured the delivery of Phase 2 of the MTPL project into four sub-phases, namely:

Delivery of all information currently covered by section 78(a) of the Road Traffic Act (2016) for both private and commercial vehicles, by end 2018.

Delivery of driver number capture and validation capability, by end of 2019.

Delivery of motor fleet information, by 2020.

Delivery of all driver numbers for all drivers (following the completion of the required renewal cycles), by 2021.

Recommendation 29 of the Cost of Insurance Working Group is to develop a protocol to provide that industry use the driver licence number to check driver details on the National Vehicle and Driver File (NVDF). Delivery of the capability to capture and validate driver number details will require both an initial industry-wide start date for the collection of data for new policies and an extended period to allow for driver number details to be collected on renewals. Before insurance companies can start requiring customers to supply both their driver number details and those of their named drivers on the policy, amendments to the Road Traffic Acts will need to be in place. Mechanisms will have to be developed and agreed between the DTTAS and all insurers in order for them to gain access to the NVDF to validate driver numbers.

Recommendation 30 has Action 66 to expedite the development of the Master Licence Record.

The Master Licence Record (MLR) is an internal Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) system which associates driver and vehicle records on the National Vehicle and Driver File (NVDF). The first phase of the project went live in October 2017. This phase

established the MLR and populated the system by matching details of vehicle owners against details of driving licence holders stored in the NVDF. Approximately 18% of active private vehicle owner records were successfully matched in this phase. An updated version of the MLR is provided to An Garda Síochána on a weekly basis.

The next phase of the MLR project will go live later this summer. With this latest release, the MLR now includes over 30% of active private vehicle owner records.

Future phases of the MLR are planned but will require further changes to primary and secondary legislation.

Recommendation 32 is broken down into Actions 69 and 70 and relates to requiring the insurance industry to promote compliance with road safety legislation. My Department, the Road Safety Authority and the insurance industry are in discussion regarding optimum social media and messaging to be used by the industry to target learner and novice drivers.

Bus Éireann Services

815. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of instances in which a privately hired bus was used to deliver a Bus Éireann service in each of the past four years in tabular form. [31182/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter for Bus Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Parking Regulations

816. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will consider extending disabled parking permits to persons with conditions such as autism as has been done in the United Kingdom. [31183/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Disabled Parking Permit (also known as the European Parking Card or Disabled Parking Badge) is available to people living in Ireland whose mobility is severely restricted, whether they are drivers or passengers, and also to those who are registered blind. In 2010 the Department conducted a review of the Disabled Parking Scheme, in consultation with various stakeholders and one of the issues examined was eligibility for the scheme. As a result of the review the scheme was revised so that permits are now given on the basis of mobility impairment rather than the diagnosis of a particular condition or illness. This is in line with the original intention of the scheme.

The possibility of extending the eligibility criteria for the scheme to include people with invisible disabilities such as autism has been raised on a number of occasions and the Department has consulted extensively with the joint issuing authorities of the scheme, the Disabled Drivers Association of Ireland (DDAI) and the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWC), on this matter. In light of this consultation there are currently no plans to change the criteria.

My Department is aware of the recent changes made to the disabled parking scheme in the United Kingdom. I would particularly emphasise to the Deputy however that issuing a large number of extra permits by extending the eligibility criteria would in fact put the existing scheme under significant additional pressure and compromise the availability of disabled parking spaces in general.

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Taxi Regulations

817. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on recent reporting that the NTA is preventing the introduction of a new ride-sharing rural taxi scheme that would be operated through an online platform. [31184/19]

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

Departmental Circulars

818. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the detail of each circular issued by his Department across all policy areas within its remit within the past ten years; the steps taken to monitor the implementation of the circulars; and the outcomes identified through this process. [31186/19]

819. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the findings of surveys of compliance his Department has conducted with circulars within the remit of same. [31187/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 818 and 819 together.

The information requested by the Deputy in respect of my Department is currently being collated by my officials and a reply will be forwarded to the Deputy within 10 working days.

Road Improvement Schemes

820. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if specific funding will be provided to Cavan County Council in 2020 towards the necessary upgrade of a national secondary route and essential safety measures on the road (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31237/19]

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 of individual national roads is a matter for TII, in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. TII also manage and distribute the capital national roads programme budget.

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.

Traffic Management

821. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if consideration has been given to introducing congestion pricing for private vehicles in part or all of the city centre of Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31250/19]

822. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the engagement he has had with stakeholders on introducing congestion pricing in part or all of the city centre of Dublin. [31251/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 821 and 822 together.

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.

Cutting congestion is an action which would contribute positively to the decarbonisation effort. Congestion also imposes significant costs on residents, commuters and businesses in urban areas. My Department is already seeking to address congestion and its negative impacts by encouraging modal shift away from private passenger cars towards public and active travel. To this end, a significant investment of €8.6 billion is being made to increase the capacity and attractiveness of sustainable mobility under the National Development Plan 2018-27 as part of *Project Ireland 2040*.

The potential roles of congestion pricing, low-emission zones and demand management were considered during the development of the *Climate Action Plan* and consequently, Action 81 calls for the development of a regulatory framework on low emission zones and parking pricing policies, the granting of local authorities with the power to restrict access to certain parts of a city or a town to zero-emission vehicles only, and the examination of the role of demand management measures in Irish cities, including low emission zones and parking pricing policies. My Department has lead responsibility for the implementation of this action. Later this year, and in collaboration with the local authorities and the NTA, we will commission a study to:

- Consider key management drivers in an Irish context (e.g. congestion, air quality, climate considerations);

- Review international best practices on measures such as urban congestion charging, low emission zones and parking pricing policies; and

- Recommend the most appropriate responses for Dublin/Cork/Galway/Limerick taking into account overall transport strategies in each case.

Stakeholder consultation will need to be undertaken as part of this Demand Management study. Implementation of required and most appropriate measures in each case will have regard to existing powers of local authorities, including those reserved to elected members. I will work closely with Minister Murphy and his Department if additional legislation or local authority functions are identified as providing pathways for addressing these problems.

Traffic Management

823. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the introduction of a ban on HGV vehicles from all or part of the city centre of Dublin during peak hours has been considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31252/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Road Traffic (Traffic and Parking) Regulations 1997 (S.I. 182 of 1997) give local authorities the power to apply restrictions to heavy goods vehicles from entering particular roads or areas. As it is a matter for each local authority to determine if, and where, such restrictions should apply within its own functional area, I as Minister currently have no direct role in restricting vehicular access to individual roads.

As the Deputy may be aware, however, action 81 of the Climate Action Plan calls for the relevant bodies to “develop a regulatory framework on low emission zones and parking policies, and provide local authorities with the power to restrict access to certain parts of a city or town to zero emission vehicles only”. In light of this, my Department will commission a demand management study later this year in order to consider the potential role of demand management measures in Irish cities which can be deployed to address economic congestion, air quality concerns and to reduce climate harmful emissions.

Implementation of the most appropriate measure, or measures, in each case will have regard to existing powers of local authorities, including those reserved to elected members, and my Department will work with Minister Murphy’s Department if additional legislation or functions are necessary.

Departmental Communications

824. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the oversight of his Department of directives, circulars, advice or requirements issued since 2016; if surveys have been carried out of compliance with these communications to date; the surveys carried out; the results of the surveys; the compliance rate; the actions taken by his Department following these results; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31332/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department is committed to continual reform, innovation and improvement and supports and implements a culture of accountability, efficiency and value for money.

It is committed to the highest standards of professionalism, leadership and rigour and is obliged to comply with every directive made in any Department of Finance and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform circular published on <https://circulars.gov.ie/>.

Climate Change Policy

825. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the recurring weekly meetings attended by either him or the Secretary General of his Department in 2019 at which climate change and or preparations within his Department to enact a climate plan has been an agenda item; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31348/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Regular meetings and interactions take place between my Department and the Department of Communications,

Climate Action and the Environment (DCCA) in relation to climate change. Naturally, these engagements were frequent during the recent preparation of the Climate Action Plan, and build on the regular scheduled meetings that are held on an on-going basis. For instance, my Department meets monthly with the transport energy area of DCCA to discuss cross-cutting policies and work streams regarding climate change particularly related to electric vehicles, alternative fuels and the biofuel obligation scheme.

Additionally, at official level the Low Emission Vehicle (LEV) Taskforce was established in 2016 to consider the range of measures and options available to Government to accelerate the take-up rate of alternatively fuelled vehicles in Ireland and so contribute to the national decarbonisation effort. This Taskforce is co-chaired by my Department and DCCA. To date there have been a total of 22 meetings of the LEV Taskforce Steering and Working Groups and a number of Stakeholder Consultation days.

The issue of climate change is regularly discussed at Senior Officials' Group meetings chaired by the Department of An Taoiseach and involving representation from all relevant Departments including my own. The Secretary General will also shortly take up a position on the cross-sectoral Climate Change Delivery Board which is being established to oversee the delivery of actions outlined in the Climate Action Plan.

Finally, the Deputy will be aware that the impact of climate change is frequently discussed at Cabinet Committee and Government meetings. Minister Bruton and I have had a number of engagements on the development of the Climate Action Plan. I keep abreast of sectorial and national developments and annually report to both Houses of the Oireachtas on how transport is contributing to the national decarbonisation effort as well as building resilience to climate change.

Road Projects Status

826. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of works on the N4. [31357/19]

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.

Brexit Issues

827. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the meetings he has had with shipping companies in the context of Brexit and preparing for all possible outcomes; his views on the potential need for increased capacity for direct shipping access to and from mainland Europe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31362/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Brexit has been identified as my Department's highest strategic risk and my Department along with other Government Departments and key Agencies, has been preparing for Brexit for three years. My

Department has been consulting extensively with the Maritime sector, including shipping, port and other key maritime stakeholders, regarding Brexit issues on an ongoing basis. These consultations have included a Transport and Logistics All Island Sectorial 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.

Eight meetings have been held specifically with shipping companies and shipping interests in January and February 2019 alone, and these discussions with shipping companies have been continued by my Department since then as well by the Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) who report to my Department.

The 2018 IMDO report on the Implications Of Brexit On The Use Of The Landbridge acknowledges that “for Ireland, maritime links represent a key means of ensuring its direct connectivity with mainland Europe, particularly in view of the uncertain evolution of trade flows passing over the United Kingdom ‘land bridge’. The viability of the ongoing use of the landbridge route to access the single market in a no deal Brexit scenario is a serious concern for Irish importers and exporters and the impact of any disruption to the landbridge cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty, particularly in a no-deal scenario.

The assessment of my Department and the IMDO, based on extensive and ongoing consultations with the shipping sector, is that sufficient capacity should be available on direct routes to continental ports following a ‘No Deal’ Brexit and should demand for further capacity arise, the shipping sector can respond quickly to meet such demands.

In the context of Brexit, there has already been a significant market response evidencing the capacity of market participants to respond to shifts in trade patterns resulting from Brexit. In 2018, CLdN launched MV Celine, the World’s largest RoRo vessel, and in 2019 launched the MV Laureline RoRo vessel, significantly increasing capacity on the Dublin–Rotterdam and Zeebrugge routes.

Irish Ferries’ investment of €150 million in its newest passenger and freight vessel, MV W.B. Yeats, provides year-round freight capacity between Ireland and France of 165 HGVs per sailing or 60,600 HGVs per annum. This additional capacity alone will be sufficient to cater for a substantial switch of UK landbridge traffic to direct links to EU ports, should such a demand arise. Also, in May 2018, Brittany Ferries’ launched a direct route from Cork to Santander in northern Spain, and a vessel of similar size to the W.B. Yeats is due to be delivered on the Irish Sea routes in 2020.

Furthermore, as announced this week, BG Freight Line is commencing a direct Waterford-Rotterdam weekly LoLo freight service, which will act as a deep-sea feeder through Rotterdam port and onwards to worldwide destinations for Irish importers and exporters.

If disruption is to arise, it would likely be most acute in the immediate period following a no-deal Brexit as a result of a short time lag between an increase in demand for direct connectivity to the Continent and a market response, as shipping companies assess the actual difficulties and implement a response. The clear view of my Department and the IMDO is that the optimal solution in response to increased demand for extra capacity to continental Europe in a ‘No-Deal’ Brexit scenario is for industry to respond to market changes in a timely manner.

Overall, this has been happening to date as I have set out above. A number of actions are being implemented by my Department and the IMDO to encourage this responsiveness. These will include a focussed awareness campaign by early September aimed at shipping companies, importers and exporters to create a dialogue between them to identify any new market demands

as early as possible.

Brexit Issues

828. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the meetings he has had with haulage companies in the context of Brexit and the potential for delays at Dover and Calais; his plans to assist the sector and avoid delays at ports particularly in the event of a no-deal Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31363/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department has maintained close contact with road haulage stakeholders including the Irish Road Haulage Association (IRHA), the Freight Transport Association of Ireland (FTAI), IBEC, the Irish Exporters Association and the British-Irish Chambers of Commerce in the context of Brexit and continues to work with the industry representative bodies in order to keep hauliers and business informed of developments, in keeping with our long-established practice.

Most recently, two meetings, instigated by my Department, were held in late May with representatives of the FTAI and the IRHA respectively, to discuss Brexit and the whole-of-Government and importantly industry preparations as we approach 31 October. The readiness of the haulage sector, the introduction of additional customs controls and SPS checks East/West, and the temporary EU contingency Regulation aimed at ensuring basic road freight connectivity between the EU and UK were discussed.

My Department hosted a Brexit Freight Forum with key road transport and maritime stakeholders including haulage industry representative bodies on 21 January 2019. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine were also in attendance and addressed the Forum. My Department also previously held a similar Brexit Freight Forum in March 2018.

In February and also in March, my Department was represented at the Irish Retail Grocery and Distribution Sector Roundtable hosted by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and engagement with this sector, including haulage industry representatives, is continuing.

In March, my Department issued a comprehensive Brexit Communications Notice to all licensed international road haulage operators outlining the position on a range of transport issues which would arise in the event of a no-deal Brexit. This notice is published on my Department's website and the information available online will continue to be updated to keep industry stakeholders informed of Brexit developments.

A very important development to note is that the EU has adopted Regulation (EU) 2019/501 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 March 2019, which will ensure the maintenance of basic road connectivity for road freight transport in the event of a no deal Brexit. This temporary measure, effective until 31 December 2019, allows UK hauliers to continue to access the EU on the basis that the UK gives reciprocal access to EU companies and operators. This Regulation is currently due to expire on 31 December and over the coming months, Ireland and other EU Member States will engage further with the Commission on this measure.

The Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) study into the implications of Brexit on the use of the landbridge, published in November 2018, estimated that approximately 150,000 Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) travel between Ireland and the continent via the landbridge each year. This would equate to a weekly average of approximately 2,880 HGVs moving between Ireland and the continent via the landbridge, although there can be peak times within each

week, and also on a seasonal basis. A cross-departmental Landbridge Project Group, chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, was established in October 2017 and has been working on measures aimed at ensuring the ongoing effective and efficient use of the land-bridge post-Brexit, including the key Dover-Calais route. My Department is represented on this Group and engagement with our EU partners to find solutions to minimise the potential disruption to Irish hauliers' access to and through the UK in the event of a no deal Brexit continues.

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, along with other Government Departments, has emphasised the importance of stakeholders taking all necessary steps within their control to prepare for Brexit, including undertaking contingency planning to minimise the impact of Brexit on their operations. I would encourage road haulage operators to refer to the European Commission's published Notices to Stakeholders in the field of road transport, the EU's basic road connectivity contingency Regulation, the Brexit section on my Department's website and *gov.ie/Brexit*.

Motor Insurance Data

829. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the database to identify uninsured drivers will be up and running; the reason for delay in setting up the database; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31433/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The key reasons why Phase 2 of the Motor Third Party Liability insurance database, as outlined in the Cost of Insurance Working Group Report in January 2017, will not now be fully delivered until the end of 2020 are the following:

- Delivery has now been significantly expanded to cover details on all Private, Commercial and Fleet motor vehicle information within this timeframe.

- Delivery of the capability to capture and validate driver number details will require both an initial industry-wide start date for the collection of data for new policies and an extended period to allow for driver number details to be collected on normal renewals.

- Before insurance companies can start requiring customers to supply both their driver number details and those of their named drivers on the policy, amendments to the Road Traffic Acts will need to be in place.

- Mechanisms will have to be developed and agreed between all insurers and DTTAS Shannon for them to gain access to the NVDF to validate driver numbers.

Insurance Ireland and all the insurance companies operating in Ireland, working together with DTTAS, An Garda Síochána, and the MIBI, through the MTPL Insurance Database Project Board, have now structured the delivery of Phase 2 of the MTPL project into four sub-phases, namely:

- Delivery of all information currently covered by section 78(a) of the Road Traffic Act (2016) for both private and commercial vehicles, by end 2018.

- Delivery of driver number capture and validation capability, by end of 2019.

- Delivery of motor fleet information, by 2020.

- Delivery of all driver numbers for all drivers (following the completion of the required renewal cycles), by 2021.

Driver Licence Data

830. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when recommendation 29 of the cost of insurance working group will be implemented; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31434/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Recommendation 29 of the Cost of Insurance Working Group is to develop a protocol to provide that industry use the driver licence number to check driver details on the National Vehicle and Driver File (NVDF).

Delivery of the capability to capture and validate driver number details will require both an initial industry-wide start date for the collection of data for new policies and an extended period to allow for driver number details to be collected on renewals. Before insurance companies can start requiring customers to supply both their driver number details and those of their named drivers on the policy, amendments to the Road Traffic Acts will need to be in place. Mechanisms will have to be developed and agreed between the DTTAS and all insurers in order for them to gain access to the NVDF to validate driver numbers.

Driver Licence Data

831. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the master licence record will be set up and running; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31435/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Master Licence Record (MLR) is an internal Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) system which associates driver and vehicle records on the National Vehicle and Driver File (NVDF).

The first phase of the project went live in October 2017. This phase established the MLR and populated the system by matching details of vehicle owners against details of driving licence holders stored in the NVDF. Approximately 18% of active private vehicle owner records were successfully matched in this phase. An updated version of the MLR is provided to An Garda Síochána on a weekly basis.

The next phase of the MLR project will go live later this summer. With this latest release, the MLR now includes over 30% of active private vehicle owner records.

Future phases of the MLR are planned but will require changes to primary and secondary legislation.

Wild Atlantic Way Project

832. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 941 of 15 January 2019, the invoices received by Fáilte Ireland for the overall cost of the cycle sportif project over and above the cost of €622,000 as reported on 19 February 2019; the amount paid to a company (details supplied) for the project; if invoices dating back to October 2018 remain unpaid; his views on correspondence dated 16 October 2018 issued by Fáilte Ireland which terminates the supply agreement pursuant to clause 14.2; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31459/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Bren-

dan 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.

With specific regard to certain issues relating to the Wild Atlantic Way cycle sportif group participative event, I am aware that these are now the subject of a legal exchange between Fáilte Ireland and the event organisers. It would therefore be inappropriate for me to make any comment on the matter.

I have asked Fáilte Ireland to reply directly to the Deputy in regard to the matters raised. Please contact my private office if you have not received a reply within ten working days.

Cyber Security Protocols

833. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the cybersecurity protocols under the remit of her Department; if it has had a cybersecurity breach in the past 12 months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30581/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Department of Health provides ICT services to my Department under the terms of a Service Level Agreement and enacts the following on our behalf.

It implements a multi-layered approach to cyber security and to protecting our ICT systems, data and infrastructure. This includes preventative controls like firewalls, anti-virus and end-point protection alongside an advanced network intrusion detection system. Software vulnerabilities are managed by maintaining up-to-date versions. Regular communications are issued to staff, reminding them of their obligations around cyber security and informing them of any emerging threats. In addition my Department continues to engage with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) based in the Department of Communications, Climate Action Environment and receives regular updates from the State's national/governmental Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT-IE). I am advised that there have been no cyber security breaches within the Department in the past 12 months.

Local Authority Funding

834. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding applied for and allocated to Tipperary County Council under the capital grant scheme for play and recreation for 2017 and to date in 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30601/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Capital Grant Funding Scheme in my Department for Play and Recreation was introduced in 2013 to support the development or refurbishment of play and recreation facilities.

€250,000 was provided each year between 2013 and 2018 for new and innovative play and recreation spaces and facilities, with a maximum grant allocation of €20,000 per Local Authority. Each Local Authority was required to match funding of the amount requested from my Department.

In 2017, 21 Local Authorities received funding under the Scheme. Tipperary Local Authority applied for €20,000 and was awarded €8,000 for the refurbishment and replacement of the safety surface at Templemore Park Playground.

In 2018, 26 Local Authorities received funding. Tipperary applied for €12,500 and was awarded €7,500. This funding was for the refurbishment of Fair Green Playground, Carrick-on-Suir and the refurbishment of Duneske Playground, Cahir, Co. Tipperary

In 2019, I increased the amount of capital funding available under this scheme from €250,000 to €450,000.

In consultation with the Local Authority Play and Recreation Network (LAPRN) we agreed to allocate a maximum of €30,000 per Local Authority for the upgrade and refurbishment of existing play and recreation facilities. This includes the provision of new equipment, the development of natural play areas, and the refurbishment of existing play facilities. The Local Authority is required to provide 25% of the funding requested from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs for the application to be considered.

In 2019 Tipperary Local Authority applied for €28,350 and was awarded €21,262 for the refurbishment/rehabilitation of Three Drives, Carronreddy, Tipperary Town Multi Use Games Area (MUGA). 23 Local Authorities receiving funding.

There is continuous engagement between my Department and the Local Authority Play and Recreation Network to ensure that the Play and Recreation Scheme is highlighted at a local and national level.

Adoption Records Provision

835. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if an adopted person who already has confirmation of the identity of their birth mother, now deceased, is entitled to information relating to their date of birth and location of birth; the location the person should go to obtain this information; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30621/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla - the Child and Family Agency offers an information and tracing service for adopted and other relevant persons in various locations throughout the country. This service is at no cost to the applicant. More information can be found at www.tusla.ie/services/alternative-care/adoption-services/tracing-service/

Under the GDPR and Data Protection legislation an individual can ask a data controller for any of the personal data held by them. However, I am aware that there can be constraints on the release of data even where a person is deceased. The Deputy may be interested to know that the Adoption (Information & Tracing) Bill, 2016 addresses this issue and explicit provision is made for the release of information to an adopted person, where a birth parent is deceased. The Bill is currently at Committee Stage in Seanad Éireann and I have 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.

Further to this the Deputy may wish to contact the General Register Office (GRO), under the aegis of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, who may be able to help individuals with finding the type of information listed above.

Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries

836. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the steps she will take to ensure local authorities and other bodies co-operate with the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes. [30641/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Commission was established by Government in February 2015 to investigate concerns related to the institutional care of unmarried mothers and their babies during the period 1922 to 1998. The Commission is tasked with providing a full account of what happened to vulnerable women and children in these institutions. Following a request from the Commission, Government granted an extension to the time frame for the delivery of its final Report. The Commission is due to report in February 2020.

The Government is satisfied that this independent Commission has sufficient scope to examine the broad range of public concerns, and to make a determination on their relevance to the central issues in question, and where appropriate to make any recommendations to Government which the Commission deems necessary.

In accordance with section 9 of the Commissions of Investigation Act 2004, it is essential to recognise that the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes is independent in the performance of its functions.

The Commissions of Investigation Act 2004 provides an effective mechanism to investigate complex and sensitive matters of significant public concern. The Act gives the Commission robust powers to compel persons to produce information and answer questions, and I do not have any role or information in this regard. The precise approach to examination of evidence are matters for the Commission to decide and progress.

Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries

837. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of a report by a person (details supplied) report into the DNA options for the site of the historic mother and baby home at Tuam, County Galway; and when she anticipates this report being finalised. [30701/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I have received Dr Shannon's report, and it is under consideration in my Department. A requirement has been identified for detailed legal advice, and this has been sought from the Office of the Attorney General. That advice will determine the options open to Government.

Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries

838. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated number of persons born in the mother and baby homes currently under investigation by the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30702/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Department of Children and Youth Affairs does not have collated information to facilitate an estimate on the numbers of persons born in the Mother and Baby Homes currently under investigation. There is no centralised records system for the fourteen specified institutions but the Deputy may wish to note that certain records from several of these former institutions are now in the possession

of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency.

Tusla has made these records available to the independent statutory Commission of Investigation on Mother and Baby Homes. The Commission has reported that when its cross-referencing of all records is complete it should provide as comprehensive an account as is possible of the pathways of entry into and exit from these institutions of the children concerned. It is reasonable to assume that this analysis will assist to estimate the numbers of children born or resident for a time in these institutions. The Commission is due to report in February 2020.

All birth records are held by the General Register Office (GRO). Information provided by the GRO on births recorded at the addresses of the main mother and baby institutions was published in the Report of the Inter-Departmental Group on Mother and Baby Homes in July 2014. This data, which is available on my Department's website, identifies a total of over 23,000 births as having taken place at the addresses of 9 of these institutions. The delivery of babies to unmarried mothers on-site was a feature of many, though not all, Mother and Baby Homes so this figure would not represent the full numbers of births to mothers resident in these homes. Practices changed over the period during which these the institutions were in operation with births increasingly taking place in maternity hospitals or maternity units in later years.

Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries

839. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has considered establishing a redress or compensation scheme for survivors of mother and baby homes. [30703/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the Deputy will be aware I have addressed the question of a redress scheme for former residents of these institutions on a number of occasions and I do appreciate that calls to establish such a scheme are genuinely made on behalf of an ageing community.

It is not possible for a Government to consider an appropriate response to matters which are currently within the scope of an independent statutory investigation, including any question of redress, prior to the Commission submitting its final reports.

Given that these specific matters have not been central to any previous inquiry, it is not feasible at this interim stage in the Commission's work to pre-empt its findings and recommendations. To date the Commission has made no findings about abuse or neglect in any of the institutions within its terms of reference. Its final report is due to be completed by February 2020.

I know that many former residents are eagerly awaiting the completion of this work. When the final reports of the Commission are available the Government will be in a position to comprehensively respond to the full account of the Commission's conclusions on all matters regarding the experiences of former residents.

In the interim I am committed to on-going engagement with former residents of these institutions. I have engaged with the community of former residents, their families and advocates on this issue and I established the Collaborative Forum. The recommendations of the Forum have recently been published and Government has committed to advancing a number of measures in response to identified issues of concern.

Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries

840. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the work of the working group established between her Department and that of the Department of Health with regard to supporting mother and baby home survivors; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30704/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Following the publication of the recommendations from the first report of the Collaborative Forum of former residents of Mother and Baby Homes, my colleague the Minister for Health has convened a working group to develop specific proposals for a package of health and well-being supports. My officials are participating in this work and I understand that there have been three meetings to date.

The working group has been tasked with reporting by September in order to facilitate considerations within the Estimates process for Budget 2020.

Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries

841. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has established a scheme to fund memorials at the location of mother and baby institutions. [30705/19]

842. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if financial support is provided to mother and baby home survivors for the purpose of commemoration events. [30706/19]

843. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the working group to develop a national memorial that commemorates, respects and honours mothers and children held in mother and baby homes. [30707/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 841 to 843, inclusive, together.

These proposed memorialisation measures to which the Deputy refers arise from the Government's initial response to the recommendations in the First Report from the Collaborative Forum of former residents of Mother and Baby Homes.

My Department has already commencing the detailed scoping work necessary to implement the proposed memorialisation measures. It is also my intention to further consult with the Forum as we develop the specific schemes.

When Government approved publication of the Forum's recommendations on 16th April, it also agreed to progress a number of initial related measures. Chief amongst these was a necessity for a comprehensive analysis of all of the recommendations in the report, with individual Department's to conduct an assessment of the policy, resource and legislative of recommendations relevant to their respective Departments. I expect to receive feedback from relevant Departments shortly. Once this initial analysis and assessment is complete, my Department will further co-ordinate the response in respect of a number of the recommendations, particularly those relating to Memorialisation.

Childcare Services Funding

844. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount

of current and capital funding provided by her Department to professional associations of child minders, crèches, montessoris or other organisations over each of the past six years by organisation in tabular form. [30708/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): During the 2000s, when major capital investment was underway, there were concerns as to how quality could be incorporated into childcare services. In that manner, it was decided by my Department to fund a small number of National Voluntary Childcare Organisations (NVCOs) whose members consisted of childcare providers who had the ability to provide quality support within the sector. My Department currently provides funding through Pobal to seven NVCOs who provide support to and represent 4,500 early education and childcare service providers.

The supports provided by NVCOs include professional development training, information and mentoring on quality practice, guidance on national childcare funding programmes, and informing policy to improve standards in the early learning and care sector.

Since 2013 my Department has provided the following funding to these organisations:

VCO	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Barnardos	553,000	549,698	551,692	553,000	553,000	553,000
Border Counties Childcare Network*	252,000	290,000	240,000			
EECE and Play Early Childhood Ireland	1,229,999	1,978,200	1,246,311	1,190,000	1,229,500	1,190,000
Forbairt Naionra Teo	210,543	168,700	142,032			
Irish Steiner Kindergarten Association	49,412	49,489	50,000	49,992	50,800	50,402
National Childhood Network				240,000	240,000	362,500
National Childminding Association of Ireland	335,372	340,000	340,000	340,000	335,305	340,000
National Parents Council of Ireland - Primary					28,572	61,500
St Nicholas Montessori Society	69,000	69,000	65,250	68,921	69,000	69,000

*Border Counties Childcare Network are now the National Childhood Network.

Childcare Services Funding

845. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number and average value of child minder development grants provided by in the past ten years by year and county in tabular form. [30709/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Officials in my Department are currently compiling the information as requested by the Deputy. This information will be supplied to the Deputy in no later than 10 working days. I have asked my officials to follow up on this to ensure delivery as a matter of urgency.

HSE Staff Data

846. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of FTE childminder advisory officers employed. [30710/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The National Childminding Initiative, which began in 2002, contained a number of strands to support child-minders. One of the strands was the appointment of Childminding Advisory Officers, some of whom were employed by the HSE and some by City and County Childcare Committees. Their

roles included offering information, support and training to childminders; maintaining the voluntary notification system; and administering other supports for childminders. The Childminding Advisory Officer posts were largely discontinued in 2012-2013 in the context of widespread budget cuts. One Childminding Advisory Officer post remains in place in a County Childcare Committee.

Notwithstanding the reduced resources, the City/County Childcare Committees and the National Voluntary Organisations, funded by my Department, have continued to play a significant role in supporting childminders as well as centre-based early learning and care and school age childcare services. Many of the actions have continued, including the continuation of the Childminding Development Grant scheme on an annual basis, through the work of other staff within City/County Childcare Committees.

My Department recently appointed a National Childminding Coordinator, who will support the implementation of the forthcoming Childminding Action Plan at national level, and who will also oversee the work of a new team of 6 regional Childminding Development Officers, for which funding was secured in Budget 2019.

The new Childminding Development Officer posts will be full-time posts, located within City and County Childcare Committees, with each regional officer supporting a cluster of City and County Childcare Committees to work with and support childminders.

Officials in my Department are currently working closely with City and County Childcare Committees to ensure the recruitment this summer of the new regional posts. Their immediate task will be to work with all the City and County Childcare Committees to maximise the number of childminders who can register with Tusla within the current regulatory framework and take part in the National Childcare Scheme. They will also play an important role in working with the City and County Childcare Committees to assist in the registration and support of a much wider cohort of childminders through the Childminding Action Plan.

Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries

847. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has considered making inspection reports from mother and baby homes that are in the ownership of her Department available to survivors; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30711/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department would consider any request for access to records in its possession on a case by case basis in accordance with the relevant rights and protections governing access to public records, in particular where such records may contain sensitive personal information.

All records held by my Department in relation to Mother and Baby Homes have been disclosed to the Commission of Investigation to assist its statutory inquiries into related matters of significant public concern.

Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries

848. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if testimony provided by survivors to the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes will be made available to these survivors after their testimony has been made. [30712/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In accordance

with section 9 of the Commissions of Investigation Act 2004, the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes is independent in the performance of its functions. The engagement with witnesses is a matter for the Commission and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs does not have any role or information in this regard. These operational considerations are managed directly by the independent Commission.

The Commission has previously confirmed that individuals who have met the Commission's Confidential Committee may visit the Commission's premises and hear the recording of their evidence and/or read the notes on their case if they so wish. Similarly, individuals who give evidence at a full Commission hearing may read the transcript of their evidence on the Commission's premises. If individuals provide personal records to the Commission, it is the Commission's policy to photocopy these and return the originals to the people concerned on the day.

The legislative framework requires that evidence is generally given in private to facilitate fact finding while also protecting the rights of all individuals and bodies to fair procedure. The Commission has discretion to hear all or part of the evidence of a witness in public if it is satisfied that it is in the interests of both the investigation and fair procedures to do so, or where the Commission agrees to the request of a witness to provide all or part of his or her evidence in public. Compliance with these requirements prohibits the Commission from providing written transcripts directly to witnesses in the course of its investigations.

I want to acknowledge the courage it takes to provide testimony on such personal experiences, and the crucial importance of this information in informing the Commission's work.

Childcare Services Data

849. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children on a waiting list for crèches by county; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30713/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department funds 30 City and County Childcare Committees across the country. Part of their role is to advise my Department on capacity issues. In the first instance I would encourage anyone having difficulty in securing a place to make contact with their local CCC. Contact details for all of the CCCs, in addition to other information about the services they provide, may be found on www.myccc.ie

Each year Pobal conducts research on behalf of my Department to examine a number of factors related to childcare services in Ireland, including the monitoring of capacity. The Early Years Sector Profile report, which was published in November and relates to the 2017/2018 programme year, indicates that existing childcare provision nationally meets current needs nationwide in terms of capacity whilst recognising that small pockets of under supply may exist within this.

Pobal reports that nationally the trend suggests a reduction in waiting lists for older children and an increase for under twos. Pobal cautions that its data on waiting lists cannot by itself be used to inform capacity decisions as parents often place their children on more than one waiting list. The following table is the latest information available taken from the Pobal report.

County	Enrolled	Waiting list	Vacant places
Carlow	2,057	260	68

County	Enrolled	Waiting list	Vacant places
Cavan	3,120	249	104
Clare	4,280	192	383
Cork City	4,246	510	295
Cork County	14,662	869	1,032
Donegal	6,575	477	882
Dublin – Dublin City	16,075	3,492	581
Dublin – Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	6,357	880	224
Dublin – Fingal	11,149	1,076	450
Dublin – South Dublin	9,294	639	373
Galway	10,514	571	620
Kerry	5,625	269	186
Kildare	8,045	350	304
Kilkenny	3,944	414	195
Laois	3,695	43	298
Leitrim	1,437	63	74
Limerick	7,805	865	278
Longford	1,685	168	59
Louth	4,297	238	197
Mayo	4,509	421	331
Meath	6,996	396	355
Monaghan	3,623	147	190
Offaly	2,697	123	225
Roscommon	2,311	172	98
Sligo	3,144	185	88
Tipperary	6,662	372	437
Waterford	4,612	274	203
Westmeath	3,781	316	385
Wexford	5,724	296	281
Wicklow	4,276	231	224
Total	173,197	14,558	9,420

Further, I secured €8.86m in capital funding for childcare in 2019 with the ultimate aim of benefitting parents and children through improving our childcare infrastructure and capacity. A particular focus will be to expand service provision for children under three years of age.

Under the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan published in 2018, I ensured that Childcare was identified as one of our nation's strategic priorities. I am delighted that €250 million in additional funding has been committed to for the expansion of high quality, early learning and care and school age childcare over the duration of the Plan.

Living Wage

850. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of implementing a living wage €12.30 for all employees directly employed and or in agencies under her remit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30765/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the Deputy may be aware, any adjustments to the salaries of public and civil servants are set out in the Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA) 2018-2020.

A suggested living wage of €12.30 per hour would equate to an annual salary of €23,747, based on a standard civil service net working week of 37 hours. In this Department, to apply the ‘living wage’ on that basis would cost in the region of €1,400 per annum based on current employee figures.

As the information requested is not readily available in respect of the agencies under my Department’s remit, I have asked the Adoption Authority of Ireland, the Children Detention School Campus and Tusla to furnish this information directly to the Deputy.

City and County Child Care Committees

851. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will ensure the appointment of a facilitator by each county childcare committee to engage and assist community childcare groups to reconfigure their services to meet the changing needs of parents within their communities rather than face closure due to competition from other providers or changing demographics; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30838/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department currently funds thirty City & County Childcare Committees (CCCs) across the country to assist in the ongoing delivery of early learning and care and school age childcare programmes. Each CCC has a number of DCYA funded staff.

The key objectives for the City/County Childcare Committees are agreed with my Department on an annual basis. One of these objectives is to identify community childcare groups that are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing sustainability challenges, and to intervene and provide support where this is required.

CCCs currently provide a number of sustainability supports to community childcare services, which are delivered in partnership with Pobal’s Case Management team, under the direction of my Department. This can include the provision of expert guidance, identifying a service to Pobal where there is a requirement for targeted sustainability funding, and also assisting a service to review and reconfigure its operational or business model.

My Department has collaborated with CCCs in developing a suite of sustainability tools to assist this form of operational review, and has recently engaged in a nation-wide programme to train CCCs in their use. My Department also funded the distribution of the *Managing Better* series to community childcare services in early 2019. These booklets provide early learning and care and school age childcare services with valuable guidance in the areas of Good Governance, Financial Management, and HR.

Demand for early learning and care and school age childcare services continues to grow, with fewer vacancies across the system. This growing demand, together with the 117% increase in investment in the last 4 years, and the forthcoming introduction of the National Childcare Scheme, should enable services operate in a viable and sustainable manner once their business model is responsive to local need.

Departmental Data

852. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the different income streams directly paid by persons to her Department or agencies under her remit, such as motor tax; the number of persons making annual payments; the value of same; the number of payments made through staged or increment payments; the value of same; the additional income generated as a result of payments being made on an incremental basis; if incremental payments are not available, the reason for same; the corresponding figures for 1999 and 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30848/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): There are no income streams, such as motor tax, paid directly by individuals to my Department or any of its agencies.

Project Ireland 2040

853. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the capital projects which have been delayed under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of her Department and agencies in tabular form; when these projects will commence; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30877/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am unaware of any delay in capital projects under Project Ireland 2040 subject to my Department's remit or of its agencies.

School Discipline

854. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the fact that the 2008 guidelines on reduced timetables in schools deem a reduced timetable to be a suspension; if in such circumstances it should be reported to Tusla; if she will engage with the Department of Education and Skills in order that schools can be informed of their obligations in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30895/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guideline for Schools (NEWB, 2008) was published as part of the then NEWB's overall strategy to support school attendance and participation. They were designed to provide support for schools in their work with students and their families to ensure that schools can maintain the best possible educational environment. The Guidelines were prepared with the help of an Expert Group, and wide-ranging inputs from management bodies, teacher unions, parent organisations, students, the Department of Education & Science (DES) and its agencies and services, non-governmental organisations, State agencies and many other contributors. The existing guidelines state that "Exclusion of a student for part of the school day, as a sanction, or asking parents to keep a child from school, as a sanction, is a suspension. Any exclusion imposed by a school is a suspension, and should follow the guidelines relating to a suspension". The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 requires that when a student is suspended from a recognised school for a period of not less than 6 days the school must inform an Educational Welfare Officer. Tusla Educational Welfare Services (EWS) participated in the recent Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills examination of the matter of the use of reduced timetables in schools. My Department and the EWS are working closely with the Department of Education

and Skills who have a lead role on this issue. It is important, however, to note that there are instances where, if agreed by all parties (the parents, child and the school) the use of a “reduced timetable” may, in certain exceptional circumstances, be deemed an appropriate short-term response to support a student’s continuation in education. In such instances it would be important that a record is maintained detailing such an agreed arrangement.

The issue of reduced timetables was the subject of a recent meeting of our National Advisory Council for Children and Young People wherein the range of issues, whereby these are used as sanctions, but in some cases supports, was considered. The National Advisory Council will continue to consider this issue and I intend to ensure that the perspectives of these experts would inform enhanced guidance which will be developed collaboratively by my Department, the Department of Education and Skills and Tusla Educational Welfare Services.

Capital Expenditure Programme

855. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the capital projects which have commenced under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of her Department and agencies in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30913/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Project Ireland 2040 is the Government’s long-term overarching capital investment strategy and is underpinned by a shared set of ten goals or National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) for every community across the country. My Department’s funding under the National Development Plan (NDP) is captured under NSO 10 – Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services. My Department has a €32 million in capital funding available to it in 2019. This funding is apportioned across the Department’s Vote as set out in the following table.

Subhead	Allocation
A.3: Child and Family Agency (Tusla)	€17.194m
A.4: Oberstown Children Detention Campus	€2.000m
B.5: Childcare Programmes	€9.606m
B.6: Youth Organisations and Services	€3.200m

Child and Family Agency

Tusla’s capital expenditure in 2019 will be split primarily between its Estates and ICT requirements. In excess of €12 million is to be spent on estates to include significant projects in Portlaoise and Limerick as well as various minor capital and equipping costs on various premises throughout the country. The ICT capital expenditure will involve €3 million on ICT infrastructure and €2 million on applications development and procurement.

Oberstown Children Detention Campus

Oberstown Children Detention Campus will commence projects on the demolition of the old campus building and on the resurfacing of an emergency fire track in 2019. A case management system that has been in development will also be completed this year.

Childcare Programmes

The capital funding will support a number of programmes in 2019 to assist providers and beneficiaries in developing capacity, quality and sustainability in the early learning and care

sector.

The Early Learning and Care and School Age Capital programmes will spend €6.106m and will support the following -

- Strand A (Early Learning and Care) (€4.2m) to create new places for 0-3 year olds. This strand will offer individual grants of up to €50,000 in value to early learning and care providers where demand is clearly evidenced.

- Strand B (Early Learning and Care) (€0.8m) to provide fire safety for community services. This strand will offer individual grants of up to €15,000 to aid community/not-for-profit childcare services in addressing fire safety issues that have been highlighted in inspection reports by Tusla, the HSE or Local Authorities.

- Strand C (School Age Childcare) (€1m) to create new school age places. This strand will offer individual grants of up to €20,000 to school age childcare providers for the creation of newplaces where demand for these is clearly evidenced.

In addition to the above, €3 million will be made available under the Affordable Childcare Scheme Capital programme for a one-off capital grant to providers to assist in meeting the governance requirements of the scheme.

€0.25m is to be provided for parent and toddler groups organised on a not for profit basis and which involve the participation of parents in the community. Grants will range from €100 to €1000. Existing Parent and Toddler Groups can apply for a maximum of €800. New start up groups may apply for maximum grant of up to €1000.

A further €0.25m is being allocated to the Childminding Development Grant. A childminder can apply for a grant of up to €1,000 through their local Childcare Community Centre to purchase equipment for childminding practice in their home.

Youth Organisations and Services

Youth Organisation and Services will receive:

- €0.450m - for Play and Recreation to support the development and refurbishment of new and existing playgrounds. This funding is to be awarded to individual Local Authorities under an application based funding scheme.

- €0.350m - to fund the start-up capital and equipment costs of the twenty three Revised Youth Funding Scheme youth services, which have commenced around the country since 2016 as part of the process of reform of our youth services.

- €2.4 million - to support small capital projects in youth services and organisations. The application criteria for these capital funding grants are currently being finalised and the application criteria will be advertised to the relevant youth groups and organisations in due course.

Capital Expenditure Programme

856. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if expenditure estimates for capital projects under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of her Department and agencies match projected cost requirements in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30959/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Project Ireland 2040 is the Government's long-term overarching capital investment strategy and is underpinned by a shared set of ten goals or National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) for every community across the country. My Department's funding under the National Development Plan (NDP) is captured under *NSO 10 – Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services*.

The National Development Plan 2018 - 2027 (NDP) published in February 2018 set out the multi annual capital allocations for all Departments out to 2027 and under the NDP my Department has secured a capital allocation of €156 million for the period 2018 – 2022.

I have also secured a commitment in the NDP of a further €250 million over the period 2023 – 2027 for investment in additional childcare provision. At this point I expect that up to 60% of this will be required in the period 2023 - 2024 to address immediate capacity issues in available childcare places through targeted capital investment. The remaining €100 million will be used between 2025 and 2027 to address further capacity demands and any emerging concerns.

In addition to childcare capital investment, capital investment has also been allocated to support continued investment in Tusla in order to address estates infrastructure deficits and improve ICT systems; to Oberstown Children Detention Campus for ongoing investment and maintenance of the campus; and to Youth Services for play & recreation grants, the upgrade and replacement of equipment and to support the provision of quality services to young people.

I am satisfied at this point in time that the projected capital allocations under the NDP to 2027 will meet projected cost requirements.

Children in Care

857. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children that died while in the care of the Tusla to date in 2019; the number of such children that died by suicide; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31057/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The information the Deputy requires is compiled by 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.

Capital Expenditure Programme

858. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of capital projects being undertaken by her Department; the final agreed tender price; the estimated cost of each capital project in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31069/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The nature of my Department's capital investment programme is that of multi-annual discreet projects. The construction of the National Children Detention Campus at Oberstown, Co Dublin has been the largest single project advanced by the Department in recent years.

My Department has a €32 million in capital funding in 2019. This funding is apportioned across the Department's Vote as set out in the following table:

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Capital Expenditure Programme

859. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the capital projects completed since 2010; the final agreed tender price for each project; the actual cost of each project; if the actual cost exceeded the tender price; the reason therefor in each case in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31085/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Officials in my Department are currently compiling the information as requested by the Deputy. I have asked my officials follow up on this to ensure delivery as a matter of urgency.

Childcare Services Staff

860. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has considered introducing pay guidelines for persons employed in the childcare sector; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31188/19]

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 or school-age childcare settings, and I cannot set wage levels or determine working conditions for these staff. My Department is not in a position at present to introduce pay guidelines for those working in the sector.

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 co-operate 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 Coordinators; 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 2019, and the Stakeholder Group held its first meeting on 9 July 2019. *First 5* also commits to develop a new funding model for the sector, which may open up new mechanisms to influence pay and conditions.

Guardians Ad Litem

861. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the projected costings and budget allocation for the proposed new body to be established in her Department to oversee the work of guardians ad litem. [31223/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In 2017, the Government approved the establishment of a new national Guardian *ad litem* (GAL) service within an executive office of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, on an interim basis, with a view to longer term arrangements for the Office being dealt with in the context of the proposed transition to a Family Courts system.

The Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2019, which I hope to publish shortly, will provide for a new GAL service to be established within an executive office of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. It will also provide for a presumption in favour of a GAL being appointed for all children in child care proceedings.

Costing projections indicate that the new service can be provided within existing resources and the restructuring of the service will provide scope to extend the service to all children who are the subject of child care proceedings within the current expenditure envelope. The costs associated with the provision of GAL services amounted to €14.65m in 2018 and €14m in 2017. My Department is working closely with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on the provision of funding for the establishment of the Guardian *ad litem* Executive Office.

Childcare Services

862. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 231 of 27 June 2019, the reason the number of children in a given facility that can be funded under the community childcare subvention programme is based on a snapshot window in September and October (details supplied); if parents are alerted to the fact in order that they can plan for same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31232/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the Deputy will be aware the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) Programme is only available through participating community not-for-profit childcare services. CCS is determined based on a snapshot of children registered in services contracted under CCS during a particular snapshot period and eligibility for approval of funding is based on the parent and/or child meeting the CCS eligibility criteria in that snapshot period.

The snapshot (which initially was for one week only and subsequently got extended to a four week period) is in place to assist the managing of the process for verifying client eligibility with DEASP and as a budget control mechanism. Funding is approved to services, for the full programme year based on the level of service provision as submitted through the child registrations and the final 'CCS band approval'. Funding is committed to the services for the full

programme year on the basis that if a child leaves the services before the planned childcare end date, the service can retain the funding but should make all efforts to provide the CCS funding subsidy to another child who may not have been registered in the services over the snapshot period but who may otherwise have been eligible for CCS funding. Funding is approved for the full programme year to allow the service the ability to determine their annual budgets for the year and manage on this basis.

However, the Community Childcare Subvention Plus (CCSP) scheme which was introduced in 2016, and is not based on a “snapshot” period. It allows for greater flexibility with start dates and a child can be registered at anytime during the 52 week programme year. Community services can be in contract for both CCS and CCSP.

To assist with the transition to the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) the CCS programme will be streamlined for this coming 2019/20 programme year. The CCS Scheme will be merged with the CCSP scheme once the current programme year comes to an end in August 2019. All CCS eligible children must be registered on CCSP for the new programme year 2019/20. As CCSP has identical eligibility criteria, levels of service and band rates to CCS, this will have no impact on the levels of funding to parents.

Departmental Communications

863. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the oversight of her Department of directives, circulars, advice or requirements issued since 2016; if surveys have been carried out of compliance with these communications to date; the surveys carried out; the results of the surveys; the compliance rate; the actions taken by her Department following these results; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31319/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The information requested is currently being collated by my Department and will be forwarded directly to the Deputy as soon as it is finalised.

Climate Change Policy

864. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the recurring weekly meetings attended by either her or the Secretary General of her Department in 2019 at which climate change and or preparations within her Department to enact a climate plan has been an agenda item; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31335/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I can inform the Deputy that there were no recurring weekly meetings attended in 2019 by either myself or the Secretary General of my Department at which climate change or a climate action plan for my Department has been an agenda item.

Charitable and Voluntary Organisations

865. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the 50 Pobal posts that were announced for Mullingar, County Westmeath; when the positions will be located in the town; the timeline for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31455/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Pobal is a *not for profit* company established by the Irish Government in 1992. It works on behalf of the Irish Government in managing and supporting programmes in the areas of Social Inclusion and Equality, Inclusive Employment and Enterprise, and Early Years and Young People.

Pobal are currently negotiating on the rental and fit out of a new office space in Mullingar, County Westmeath. The new space is expected to accommodate up to 50 seats. Whilst negotiations are ongoing, once the office is secured a number of new jobs will be created and these will be advertised in the Autumn on www.pobal.ie, their twitter account @Pobal and other sources.

Cyber Security Protocols

866. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if it has had a cybersecurity breach in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30593/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department's ICT services are provided by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform through the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO).

The OGCIO implements a multi-layered approach to cyber security and to protecting ICT systems, infrastructures and services. OGCIO implements a defence-in-depth security strategy which is achieved through the effective combination of People, Processes, and Technology to support the implementation of appropriate security measures and provisions. With the threat landscape constantly evolving, significant effort is expended to continually enhance and strengthen ICT security to mitigate against emerging threats, risks, vulnerabilities and cybersecurity issues.

I am advised that in terms of cyber security strategies, OGCIO also continues to work closely with the National Cyber Security Centre which is a division of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and encompasses the State's national/governmental Computer Security Incident Response Team.

My Department has no evidence to indicate any cybersecurity breaches in the past 12 months

LEADER Programmes Data

867. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he is satisfied with the level of drawdown under the LEADER programme in County Meath. [30599/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The LEADER programme is administered in County Meath by the Meath Local Action Group (LAG). The LAG is the Meath Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) in partnership with Meath County Council and Meath Partnership CLG. The total amount of funding allocated to the county for the duration of the LEADER Programme is in excess of €6.9 million.

To-date, 50 projects with a combined grant value of over €2.1 million have been approved by the LAG. This amounts to almost 43% of its project budget. A further 11 projects, with a value of €669,806, are at an earlier stage of the approvals process.

Claims totalling €288,898 have been paid for projects in County Meath. Project payments

will increase as project works are completed and claims for payment are submitted by the project promoters.

As advised previously, my Department has reviewed the delivery of the programme with the Meath LAG and explored implementation issues with all of the delivery partners in Meath. Following on from this review, the LAG has stated that at least 80% of the project budget available in Meath will be allocated by the end of 2019. This would be consistent with the objectives of the programme nationally and I will continue to monitor the achievement of this target in the coming months.

Tidy Towns Committees Funding

868. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he will make funding available to tidy towns groups. [30600/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Tidy-Towns competition was originally launched by Fáilte Ireland over 60 years ago. Since its inception, the competition has grown from 52 entrants in 1958, to 915 entries this year. The continued success of the competition is due to the countless hours of effort from TidyTowns Committees the length and breadth of the country.

As Minister for Rural and Community Development, I was delighted to be in a position to announce grant funding to TidyTowns Committees of €1.4 million for each of the years 2017 and 2018, to mark the 60th anniversary of the competition. This funding has allowed the Committees to better prepare for the annual competition through the purchase or upgrade of small equipment and other materials.

Under the 2017 allocation, 906 TidyTowns Committees received grant funding of between €1,000 and €4,000 each, depending on the size of their town or village. Under the 2018 allocation, 858 TidyTowns Committees availed of similar levels of funding.

I will consider, later this year, whether I will be in a position to allocate funding to the TidyTowns Committees through this particular funding stream in 2019. It should be noted that TidyTowns Committees can apply, as community groups, for funding to other schemes within my Department, such as the Community Enhancement Programme. That programme is administered through the Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) and in 2018, 158 Tidy Town Committees were approved for funding totalling €536,816 under this scheme.

Living Wage

869. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the estimated cost of implementing a living wage €12.30 for all employees directly employed and or in agencies under his remit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30777/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department has calculated that, as of July 2019, the cost of implementing a Living Wage of €12.30 per hour is estimated to be €120,186.30 for all staff in respect of a full year.

In respect of the bodies under the aegis of my Department, information relating to pay in those bodies is a matter for the bodies concerned.

Departmental Data

870. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the different income streams directly paid by persons to his Department or agencies under his remit, such as motor tax; the number of persons making annual payments; the value of same; the number of payments made through staged or increment payments; the value of same; the additional income generated as a result of payments being made on an incremental basis; if incremental payments are not available, the reason for same; the corresponding figures for 1999 and 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30860/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I can confirm that my Department is not in receipt of any such income streams.

Project Ireland 2040 Implementation

871. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the capital projects which have been delayed under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; when these projects will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30889/19]

872. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the capital projects which have commenced under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30925/19]

873. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if expenditure estimates for capital projects under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies match projected cost requirements in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30971/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 871 to 873, inclusive, together.

My Department does not have direct responsibility for delivery of any capital project being undertaken under Project Ireland 2040. However, my Department is responsible for the administration and implementation of the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, one of four funds established under Project Ireland 2040.

The Fund seeks to support ambitious and strategic projects which have the potential to transform rural economies and communities. The Government has committed €1 billion over 10 years to the Fund and €315 million is allocated to the Fund for the period 2019-2022.

It should also be noted that as part of Project Ireland 2040, it is intended that the broad range of other initiatives delivered by my Department in order to support rural regeneration and economic growth, such as the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, Ceantair Laga ÁrdRiachtanais (CLÁR) and the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, will in the future be integrated into the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund and under the larger Project Ireland 2040 umbrella to ensure more strategic use of this funding.

In terms of the implementation of the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, applications for the first call under the Fund, which is competitive in nature, closed in September 2018. Following the conclusion of the first call in February 2019, a total of 84 successful projects had been announced, with funding of €86m provided from the Fund. This funding supported a total

investment of €117m by these projects in rural areas.

Each of these projects is being led, implemented and delivered by a State-funded body, such as a local authority, LEADER Local Action Group or State Agency. However, projects are collaborative in nature, often involving direct support by other such bodies or by philanthropic organisations or community bodies.

Following the announcement of the successful projects, my Department engaged with each lead party to complete due diligence requirements. Final approval for projects is only issued following the completion of the relevant procurement processes, thereby providing a degree of certainty in relation to the cost of projects, many of which are small in scale. Contractual arrangements are also drawn up with the release of funding based on the achievement of key milestones in the projects.

No significant time delays or cost overruns have yet been identified through this process and good progress is already being made on the implementation of successful projects. A number of the projects have already met their first milestone and had funding released. To date, €1,722,043 has been drawn down from the Fund by seven separate projects. I expect that payments from the Fund will significantly accelerate over the coming weeks and months as further milestones are achieved across all the 84 projects.

Capital Expenditure Programme

874. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of capital projects being undertaken by his Department; the final agreed tender price; the estimated cost of each capital project in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31081/19]

875. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the capital projects completed since 2010; the final agreed tender price for each project; the actual cost of each project; if the actual cost exceeded the tender price; the reason therefor in each case in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31097/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 874 and 875 together.

My Department utilises capital funding to promote rural and community development and support sustainable communities.

The majority of capital funding is routed through local authorities who directly deliver projects utilising this funding.

I can confirm that my Department has not directly procured or delivered any capital project since its establishment in 2017.

Community Development Initiatives

876. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the level of protections and supports available to a local community which is anxious to preserve and continue to use a historical community and former school building (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31153/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department provides a range of supports to communities and community centres nationwide, in both urban and rural areas, by helping citizens to participate in the development of their communities and by providing funding to improve facilities.

My department funds the Community Enhancement Programme which funded capital projects to the total value of €12.5m in 2018 and can be used to contribute towards the renovation of community infrastructure. There is an initial allocation of €4.5m nationally under this programme in 2019. The Programme is administered locally by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) in each Local Authority area.

My Department supports the LCDCs who are responsible for the delivery of the community elements of their Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs). These plans, adopted in each local authority area, identify local needs, such as essential community infrastructure, in each area.

Separately, once a Community Centre is in place, the Community Services Programme supports community businesses to provide local services and create employment opportunities for disadvantaged people. Where an application is successful under the programme, my Department can provide a contribution to the cost of a manager and an agreed number of full-time equivalent positions.

Dog Breeding Industry

877. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his plans to hold an inquiry into the case of a person (details supplied) and the role of an organisation in inspecting and raiding the same premises in a matter of months and the role of Carlow County Council in granting a licence with conditions yet refusing the information under FOI; and his views on whether the organisation is the correct body to be involved in view of subsequent events at the premises. [31224/19]

878. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if a cap will be placed on the maximum number of animals permitted in dog breeding establishments; and if so, if the number will be checked going forward in view of the case of a person (details supplied). [31225/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development (Deputy Seán Canney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 877 and 878 together.

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.

Section 18 of the Dog Breeding Establishments Act, 2010, permits a local authority to enter into arrangements with an organisation or persons connected with animal welfare with whom it has an arrangement under Section 15(3) of the Control of Dogs Act 1986. The procurement of any service in that regard, therefore, is a matter solely for each local authority.

Access to information sought under Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation, is also a matter for the relevant local authority, which is obliged to comply with FOI legislation, and I have no function in the matter.

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.

Some of the issues raised, including the issue referenced in the Deputy's question, relate to matters beyond the scope of the guidelines and are being considered as part of a wider review of the legislation, in order to identify any necessary legislative amendments that may be required in the Act to further improve standards. My Department is considering these and other related matters as part of the review of the legislation that is in place.

CLÁR Programme

879. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if an application for CLÁR funding for a charity (details supplied) will be granted. [31262/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I launched the 2019 CLÁR programme on 28 February last. The programme provides funding for small scale infrastructural projects in disadvantaged rural areas that have experienced significant levels of de-population.

Calls for proposals under the 2019 CLÁR programme were invited under the following measures:

Measure 1: Support for Schools/Community Safety Measures; Measure 2: Play Areas (including MUGAs); Measure 3: Community Wellbeing Supports, comprising of:

- 3(a) First Response Support Measure
- 3(b) Support for Mobility and Cancer Care Transport, and
- 3(c) Sensory Gardens.

The closing date for receipt of applications under the 2019 CLÁR Programme was 25 April 2019 and more than 400 applications were received by my Department.

I can confirm that an application has been received in respect of the charity referred to by the Deputy.

My officials are currently assessing all applications received and I hope to be in a position to announce the successful 2019 CLÁR projects shortly.

Departmental Communications

880. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the oversight of his Department of directives, circulars, advice or requirements issued since 2016; if surveys have been carried out of compliance with these communications to date; the surveys carried out; the results of the surveys; the compliance rate; the actions taken by his Department following these results; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31331/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department was established on 19 July 2017. There are universally accepted governance principles and norms that apply to civil service and public sector organisations. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has published its 'Corporate Governance Standards for the Civil

Service' which details the standards that should be met by bodies in the civil and public service including by my Department.

The circulars and guidance of relevance to my Department issue from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Where relevant, all staff are made aware of these circulars and/or guidance. For example, all new staff are provided with information on the most relevant circulars at the commencement of their employment. In general, these pre-date the establishment of the Department in July 2017 and include, for example, the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour, and the Civil Service Disciplinary Code. In most instances, new circulars and guidance are for the attention of specific business units within the Department, for example the Human Resources unit with regard to pay and pensions, or annual leave and the Finance Unit with regard to the Public Spending Code or Appropriation Account circulars. In these cases it is those business units responsible who are made aware of the circulars, and who ensure application or implementation, and follow up to ensure compliance, as appropriate.

My Department recognises that good governance is about delivering priorities, achieving objectives, behaving with integrity and acting in the public interest, and in ways that are consistent with legal, regulatory and Government policy obligations. The Department's Governance Framework seeks to underpin this and its continued development will be informed and developed on foot of the learning experiences of the Department and its stakeholders.

Climate Change Policy

881. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the recurring weekly meetings attended by either him or the Secretary General of his Department in 2019 at which climate change and-or preparations within his Department to enact a climate plan has been an agenda item; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31347/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Neither I nor the Secretary General of my Department are currently attending recurring weekly meetings featuring climate change as an agenda item.

However, ongoing issues surrounding climate action and the Government's Climate Action Plan are discussed at various meetings as required.

The Secretary General of my Department is also a member of the Climate Action Delivery Board which is being established by the Department of the Taoiseach.

The purpose of the Delivery Board is to ensure effective whole of Government delivery of the Climate Action Plan, which was published by Government last month.

Rural Development Programme Data

882. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which he has received applications under the various rural development schemes in the past two years and to date in 2019, by county; the extent of the approvals in the past; his expectations for 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31382/19]

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

883. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the degree to which he expects to spend all the funds at his disposal through the various schemes available to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31383/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Gross funding of €291.2 million has been allocated to my Department in 2019. This funding is being used to deliver a coherent package of supports to strengthen rural and urban communities. The most significant programme areas in terms of funding are:

- the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (€52 million allocation);
- the Community Services Programme (€46 million allocation);
- the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (€43 million allocation);
- LEADER (€30 million allocation);
- National Rural Development Schemes (€20 million allocation); and
- Town and Village Regeneration (€15 million allocation).

These programmes and schemes, along with a range of smaller scale supports, enable economic growth and development and also support communities to address gaps in meeting social needs, including those caused by higher levels of deprivation. As in 2018, I expect that the available funding will be fully used this year.

Departmental Programmes

884. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the degree to which he continues to offer grant aid under one or other headings to various community groups involved in social or economic enhancement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31384/19]

885. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which he grant aided various community groups in County Kildare involved in social and economic enhancement in the past two years and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31385/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 884 and 885 together.

My Department is committed to the successful delivery of a number of programmes which have provided financial and other supports to community groups and organisations in County Kildare and elsewhere across the country.

The Department has been provided with a gross budget of €294.2 million for 2019 and I intend for this money to be fully allocated through the wide range of programmes and supports under my Department's remit, which focus on ensuring that all communities have the opportu-

nity to grow and develop economically and socially.

I can confirm that, to date in 2019, more than €196 million has been allocated nationally, and I am delighted to say that in excess of €5.4 million has thus far been allocated to projects and organisations in Co Kildare. This follows allocations of €2,891,432 to the county in 2017 and €4,212,415 in 2018.

Funding has been, or will be, made available under each of the following schemes in 2019 to support groups or organisations involved in the social or economic enhancement of their communities:

- The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, which I launched in 2018 as part of Project Ireland 2040, supports ambitious and strategic projects which have the potential to transform rural economies and communities. Three projects located in County Kildare were awarded funding of €2,865,500 from the first call to the Fund. The second call for applications to the Fund was launched in April 2019, and will close on 6 August 2019.

- The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme is our country's primary social inclusion intervention. More than €3.1 million in funding has been allocated through SICAP to Kildare since 2017

- The Community Enhancement Programme, which I launched in 2018, provided funding of €468,671 to projects in Kildare in 2018, including more than €26,000 to Men's Sheds groups. The funding allocation to Kildare for 2019 is €148,013.00.

- The LEADER Local Action Group (LAG) in Kildare has been allocated €5,261,600 to invest in the economic and social development of County Kildare over the period of the programme to 2020. Since 2017, more than €1 million has so far been approved for LEADER projects in Kildare.

- Under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, €936,000 has been approved for projects in Kildare in 2017 and 2018. The deadline for the 2019 scheme closed last month.

- Kildare has been allocated almost €580,000 for works to private and non-public roads in rural areas under the Local Improvement Scheme since I reintroduced the scheme in 2017.

- In 2019, the Community Services Programme is providing funding of some €440,628 towards the cost of employing approximately 17.5 full-time equivalent positions and three managers in five community based organisations and social enterprises based in County Kildare.

- There has also been funding made available for Tidy Towns groups and Agricultural Shows in the county in 2017 and 2018.

Details of all these programmes, including eligibility criteria, how to apply, and other information, can be found on the Government's website, gov.ie.

Rural Transport Services Provision

886. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which he has assisted the provision or improvement of rural transport nationwide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31386/19]

887. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which he has assisted with the provision and improvement of rural transport

in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31387/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 886 and 887 together.

Responsibility for overall Government transport policy and funding lies with my colleague the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport.

This includes funding for the national road network and public transport services in rural areas.

Work being funded through Project Ireland 2040 and the National Development Plan underlines the Government's commitment to ensuring that people living in rural Ireland remain connected with their local communities and beyond, through investment in public transport and the road network.

My Department provides some funding for transport measures which help connect those in rural areas.

These include the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS), a programme for improvement works on small private or non-public roads in rural areas. I reintroduced the LIS in September 2017 and since then have allocated €48 million to the Scheme. Just under €580,000 of this funding has been approved for works to 20 roads in Kildare.

My Department also continues to provide funding for projects such as trails and blueways that may help connect rural towns and villages across the country under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme.

I have also provided €1.4 million under the CLÁR Programme for Supports for Mobility and Cancer Care Transport.

The €1 billion Rural Regeneration and Development Fund is currently open for applications and will consider applications for funding for the development of community or public facilities infrastructure including improvements to roads, bridges and car parking facilities but only in the context of wider rural regeneration projects.

Additionally, my Department is the coordinating Department in respect of the Action Plan for Rural Development. This all of Government Plan for rural Ireland contains a number of actions relating to improvements in transport services, the majority of which are delivered by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and agencies under their aegis.

We are now looking towards the next phase of rural development policy. We are currently consulting with stakeholders and interested parties around the country on the future policy and welcome all views on improving connectivity in rural Ireland as part of that process.

Rural Development Policy

888. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which he has and continues to address issues of rural isolation and the need for services to counter same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31388/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The response to the issue of loneliness and isolation is delivered across a number of Government Departments and organisations.

The Government's Action Plan for Rural Development includes a range of measures which contribute significantly to addressing isolation and social inclusion in rural areas. Specific examples of measures in the Plan which are being delivered and will assist those who feel isolated or vulnerable in rural areas include:

- Significant investment in the Seniors Alert Scheme, which facilitates valuable community-based support for vulnerable older people living alone. Over €6.9 million was invested in the Seniors Alert Scheme in 2018. The Scheme had a total of 44,763 participants at the end of 2018.

- Investment of €46 million in Garda fleet to ensure that Gardaí are mobile, visible and responsive to prevent and tackle crime. Of that allocation, €10 million will be available for purchases for the fleet in 2019.

- Continued operation of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), the main social inclusion programme of Government supporting local community groups and disadvantaged communities and individuals. The new SICAP 2018–2022 programme was launched in April 2018 and is providing opportunities for people to engage in a range of employment supports including the development of personal skills, lifelong learning, labour market training and one-to-one employment supports.

- Support for 450 Men's Sheds across rural Ireland which provide a safe space where men can gather and participate in their communities, develop social networks and potentially gain new skills and access information.

- Maintaining the network of senior helplines in operation throughout the country, which offer a listening service for older people to help address issues such as loneliness and isolation in rural areas.

- Continued support for community crime prevention through schemes such as Neighbourhood Watch and Text Alert.

- Funding allocation of over €14 million for Local Link rural transport services in 2019, providing a vital service for rural communities. In 2018 Local Links services had 74,486 users, a significant rise from the 2017 total of 20,168 users.

The issue of isolation, whether in urban or rural areas, is one which should concern us all and I am committed to continuing my Department's response to this issue through programmes such as Seniors Alert and progressing measures contained in the Action Plan for Rural Development.

Question No. 889 answered with Question No. 10.

Local and Community Development Programme

890. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the degree to which he expects to be a position to address issues of isolation in either urban or rural settings in respect of persons who may be affected by age or socioeconomic issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31390/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The issue of isolation, whether in urban or rural areas, is one which requires a response containing a combination of policy initiatives and actions delivered across a number of Government Departments.

For my part, I am committed to continuing my Department's response to the issue, which

includes ongoing contact with local and community groups and other stakeholders where appropriate to identify potential measures to assist communities affected.

The Government's Action Plan for Rural Development and Framework Policy for Local and Community Development include a range of measures which will contribute significantly to addressing isolation and social inclusion in both rural and urban areas and as Minister for Rural and Community Development I will continue to advocate for a cross government approach to ensuring the rural and community voice is heard in relation to matters of policy.

The current Action Plan runs to the end of 2019 and we are engaging with communities throughout the country on a new Government rural development policy. An implementation plan for the Framework Policy for Local and Community Development in Ireland, published in 2016, is also currently at an advanced stage, and I am confident that these plans will propose further actions that will address isolation issues in our communities.

Specific examples of actions being delivered by my Department which are helping those who feel isolated or vulnerable in communities include:

- Significant investment in the Seniors Alert Scheme, which facilitates valuable community-based support for vulnerable older people living alone. During 2018, spend on the Scheme amounted to almost €7 million, with over 19,200 applications for personal alarms approved. There have been a further 10,000 approved applications in the first six months of 2019. This is an important programme which enables older persons of limited means to continue to live in their own homes at the heart of their communities with confidence, independence and peace of mind.

- The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, or SICAP, commenced a new five-year programme at the start of 2018, and is our country's primary social inclusion intervention. This is a national programme that is delivered locally with funding of €190 million over a five-year period to help those in the greatest need.

- Support for approximately 400 Men's Sheds across Ireland, with sheds present in all 32 counties, which provide a safe space where men can gather and participate in their communities, develop social networks and potentially gain new skills and access information. Ireland continues to enjoy the highest per capita concentration of Men's Sheds in the world. I provided funding of €500,000 to support the work of Men's Sheds in 2018 and this year I have decided to build on that with a further €500,000 in recognition of the contribution these groups are making to life in Ireland. A number of Women's Sheds have emerged in communities in recent times and in order to support this positive development I have decided to make this funding also available to these groups.

- The LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 which will provide €250 million in financial resources to address the challenges facing rural areas over the course of the programme period, particularly under the themes of economic development and social inclusion.

- Volunteering plays a critical part in empowering individuals to become more involved in their communities and is proven to assist with the development of mental health wellbeing. My Department is currently in the process of developing a draft National Volunteering Strategy which it is anticipated will be completed later this year.

Capital Expenditure Programme

891. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the capital spend to 30 June 2019; the capital carry over from 2018, by subhead; the provision under each subhead including the capital carry over from 2018 provided for in the Revised Estimates Volume for 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31441/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Further Revised Estimates for 2019 in respect of the Department of Rural and Community Development provides for gross capital expenditure of €138 million. There was no capital funding carried forward from 2018.

To date, €28.1 million of this capital allocation has been spent. I have set out expenditure to date in the table against the total capital provision for 2019.

At the start of each year my Department profiles expected spend for that year, and the capital expenditure to date represents 92% of the profiled expenditure for this point in the year.

As is usual for capital programmes, the majority of claims for payment will be made in the final quarter of the year as projects progress to completion and capital grant approvals are drawn down. This is particularly true for the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, for which projects were only recently approved following due diligence.

Continued close monitoring of expenditure is a matter of significant priority so as to ensure full use of our allocated resources, and that value for money is delivered in respect of our funding. I intend to ensure that the resources made available to my Department this year are fully utilised, delivering benefits for all communities and for rural Ireland.

Capital Expenditure to 30 June 2019

	REV 2019	YTD - Actual
V42 – GROSS (€'000s)	138,000	28,061
A - REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT & REGIONAL AFFAIRS	122,882	27,235
A.2 - ADMINISTRATION - NON PAY	182	69
A.4 - NATIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES	15,000	4,797
A.5 - LEADER - RURAL ECONOMY SUB PROGRAMME	30,000	16,617
A.7 - TOWN AND VILLAGE REGENERATION	15,000	3,242
A.8 – REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	700	4
A.9. - LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES	10,000	2,083
A10 - RURAL REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT FUND	52,000	423
B - COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	15,118	826
B.2 - ADMINISTRATION - NON PAY	151	49
B.3 –SUPPORTS FOR COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY SECTOR	1	-
B.6- SUPPORTS FOR DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES	1,767	9
B.7- DORMANT ACCOUNT MEASURES	2,500	140
B.8- PROGRAMME FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION	650	-

	REV 2019	YTD - Actual
B.10 - LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHIVE SERVICE	6,049	628
B.11 - COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME	4,000	-

Disability Allowance Applications

892. **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. [30469/19]

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 28 February 2019. Payment will issue to her nominated bank account on 25 July 2019. Any arrears due from 28 February 2019 to 24 July 2019 (less any overlapping social welfare payment) will issue as soon as possible. The lady in question was notified of this decision on 09 July 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

School Meals Programme

893. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the provision of a service at a school (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30485/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As part of Budget 2019, it was announced that DEASP would commence a pilot scheme from September 2019, providing Hot School Meals in 36 primary schools for an estimated 7,200 children at a cost of €1m for 2019 and €2.5m in 2020.

All 3,239 primary schools have been issued with an invitation to submit an expression of interest to participate in the pilot. An expression of interest has been received from the school concerned. All expressions of interest received will be considered and 36 schools will be selected to participate in the pilot. All schools who submitted an expression of interest to participate in the pilot will be contacted soon.

The selection of schools will be random, but will give regard to geographical spread, numbers enrolled, range of suppliers and the overall budget available for the pilot in 2019 and 2020 (€1m and €2.5 respectively).

Cyber Security Protocols

894. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the cybersecurity protocols under the remit of her Department; if it has had a cybersecurity breach in the past 12 months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30586/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department takes Information Security (IS) issues very seriously and has a comprehensive set of Information Security policies, procedures, plans and controls in place to safeguard and

strengthen its ICT systems against cyber-attacks.

My Department has a dedicated cyber security unit which constantly monitors for cyber security breaches and carries out security reviews on a regular basis. Details of specific measures taken or products in use, are not publicised for security reasons. I am advised that in the past 12 months, my Department has not recorded any cyber security breaches.

My Department also works closely with the Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT-IE) and monitors cyber threat intelligence information from domestic sources such as National Cyber Security Centre as well as international sources and undertakes all appropriate follow-up actions and remediation.

Social Welfare Appeals

895. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason for the planned move of the social welfare appeals office from its present location; her views on whether this will have implications for the perceived independence of the office, privacy, accessibility and the general deterioration of service; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30608/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Appeals Office is currently located in accommodation which will require to be upgraded. The lease on the property has expired but the tenancy is rolling over on an annual basis. The Commissioners for Public Works are currently in negotiation on a new lease with the landlord. Whilst the Department is reviewing alternative locations, no decisions have been made. Any alternative location will have regard to all requirements of the office, including independence of role, accessibility and privacy.

Invalidity Pension Applications

896. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when an invalidity pension claim by a person (details supplied) will be processed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30613/19]

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 2 August 2018. This claim was disallowed as the gentleman did not reply to requests for information required by the Department in order determine his eligibility for IP. He was notified on 12 March 2019 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review and appeal.

To date he has not requested a review or sought an appeal of the disallowance decision.

It is open to him to request a review of this decision and provide all the information requested by the Department to determine entitlement or, if his circumstances have changed, to submit a new application for IP.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

897. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made on a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30623/19]

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 29 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.

State Pensions Reform

898. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons negatively impacted by the changes in the criteria contributions for the State (contributory) pension. [30654/19]

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 homecaring 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 Registrations 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 a person's rate does not increase under this pension review, the person will continue to receive their existing rate of payment. No one will be worse off as a result of this review.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Living Wage

899. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of implementing a living wage €12.30 for all employees directly employed and or in agencies under her remit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30770/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Living Wage is based on research identifying the income required for the Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) for a single-adult household in Ireland. It is an estimate made by a Living Wage Technical Group, led by the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice (VPSJ).

The living wage approach starts with an analysis of the expenditure likely to be incurred by an individual in an independent household for the essentials of life and calculates the minimum income required to support this. Not everybody in the labour force is living independently and therefore do not necessarily need to achieve a MESL on a personal basis to achieve MESL on a household basis.

By contrast, the national minimum wage is the legally-binding lowest average hourly rate that can be paid by an employer to an employee. This rate is set and governed by the National Minimum Wage Act, 2000, which applies to all employees, including full-time, part-time, temporary and casual employees, with some exceptions. The Low Pay Commission was specifically established to make evidence-based recommendations regarding the national minimum wage, having regard to a range of criteria such as the state of the economy and labour markets, international comparisons and likely impacts on employment and competitiveness. The current rate is €9.80 per hour.

The national minimum wage approach seeks to find the balance between a fair and sustainable rate for low paid workers and one that will not have significant negative consequences for employers and competitiveness. It is a pragmatic approach providing a clearly defined minimum hourly rate for employers, and giving them the freedom to pay higher rates, whilst also providing a measure of security for low-paid workers. As it is legally enforceable, it provides protection for workers.

The national minimum wage applies to all employee's including, if applicable, those employed in my area of responsibility.

Rent Supplement Scheme Administration

900. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if landlords are permitted to request and or receive top-up payments in respect of recipients of rent supplement; and if not, the penalty applying. [30783/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Rent supplement continues its important role in housing families and individuals, with the scheme supporting approximately 20,160 recipients for which the Government has provided €132.4 million for 2019.

Under the legislative provisions governing rent supplement, the Department's relationship is with the tenant. There is no contractual relationship between the landlord and the Department in the administration of the scheme. The tenant's engagement with the Department usually takes place after they have reached an agreement with their landlord regarding their tenancy arrangement.

With high premiums in place for vacant properties, and high rental inflation being experienced for in situ tenancies, the Department has had in place since start of 2015, a 'price flexible case-by-case' award approach for both new and existing tenancies. This approach is set out in the National Tenancy Sustainment Framework. The Framework specifically includes a provision for 'top-up' payment arrangements - where a 'top-up' arrangement is in place these can be regularised with the additional support provided.

Where a tenant provides details of a 'top-up' arrangement, seeking additional support, no penalty is raised by the Department against the tenant, with the main consideration to ensure the person can remain in their current home.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Payments

901. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when the adequacy of the rules relating to the typical amount provided under the supplementary welfare scheme for items such as replacement washing machines were last reviewed and changed. [30786/19]

902. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount budgeted for and spent on exceptional and urgent needs payments in each of the past ten years; the number of payments issued in each of the years; and the number of recipients. [30787/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 901 and 902 together.

Under the supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) 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 out of their weekly income. An urgent needs payment (UNP) may be made to persons who may not normally qualify for SWA but who have an urgent need which they cannot meet from their own resources or where an alternative is not available at that time.

In total €38.8 million has been provided for ENPs and UNPs in 2019.

The Tabular Statement below shows the revised estimate, expenditure and the number of payments for exceptional and urgent needs payments for each year since 2008.

ENPs are payable at the discretion of the officers administering the scheme taking into account the requirements of the legislation and all the relevant circumstances of the case in order to ensure that the payments target those most in need of assistance. There is no automatic entitlement to a payment under this scheme. Payments are made at the discretion of the officers administering the scheme taking into account the requirements of the legislation and all the relevant circumstances of the case in order to ensure that the payments target those most in need of assistance.

Guidance provided to staff included recommendations in relation to the maximum amounts payable for a number of items covered under the scheme. These recommended maximum amounts were last reviewed in 2018. The guidelines assist Departmental staff and do not limit the discretionary powers available to officers administering the scheme to assist an individual or household in any particular hardship situation which may arise.

If the Deputy is aware of particular cases where the recommended maximum amounts have caused difficulties, I would ask that she bring these to the attention of the Department.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Tabular Statement - ENPs and UNPs: Revised Estimates, Expenditure and Number of Payments 2008-2018

Year	Revised Estimate	Expenditure	No. of Payments
2008	€76.5m	€82.3m	259,900

Year	Revised Estimate	Expenditure	No. of Payments
2009	€102.00	€75.2m	239,000
2010	€90.0m	€69.9m	218,000
2011	€72.1m	€62.6m	226,200
2012	€51.60	€52.7m	197,500
2013	€47.5m	€35.7m	132,990
2014	€31.3m	€30.1m	107,100
2015	€27.9m	€31.0m	101,600
2016	€30.3m	€32.2m	100,100
2017	€31.5m	€38.1m	103,500
2018	€36.4m	€42.3m*	112,500

* Provisional outturn

Departmental Data

903. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the different income streams directly paid by persons to her Department or agencies under her remit, such as motor tax; the number of persons making annual payments; the value of same; the number of payments made through staged or increment payments; the value of same; the additional income generated as a result of payments being made on an incremental basis; if incremental payments are not available, the reason for same; the corresponding figures for 1999 and 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30853/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department does not receive any incremental staged payments.

All of the Department's streams of income are reported annually in the statutory accounts being Vote 37 Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection Appropriation Account and the Social Insurance Fund financial statements.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Project Ireland 2040

904. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the capital projects which have been delayed under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of her Department and agencies in tabular form; when these projects will commence; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30882/19]

905. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the capital projects which have commenced under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of her Department and agencies in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30918/19]

907. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if expenditure estimates for capital projects under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of her Department and agencies match projected cost requirements in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30964/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 904, 905 and 907 together.

The National Development Plan 2018 to 2027 which forms part of Project Ireland 2040 sets out there two projects that come under my Department's remit, *viz.* additional ICT modernisation and the refurbishment of my Department's Áras Mhic Dhiarmada building.

In relation to ICT modernisation, my Department continues to invest in projects to modernise its business systems and ICT infrastructure every year. This involves the continued migration of business functionality to the Department's strategic ICT platform and the development of a digital services platform. It also includes continued investment in data centres, physical ICT infrastructure, security systems, and ensuring that the complex ICT environment remains fit for purpose. This work is always ongoing within available resources and, as such, there is no estimated overall cost.

The Áras Mhic Dhiarmada building was completed in 1953 and continues to be of significant architectural interest. It is now in need of major refurbishment and my Department is currently engaging with the Office of Public Works to identify the necessary works. Until the refurbishment plan is agreed I am not in a position to establish the estimated cost of the project.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Review

906. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she has considered a review of the role of community employment scheme participants between labour activation and social inclusion benefits; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30954/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy will be aware, the Government agreed to establish an Interdepartmental Group (IDG) to explore how social inclusion schemes might best be organised into the future including which Department should hold lead responsibility for sponsoring CE schemes focused on social inclusion, the Rural Social Scheme and the Job Initiative scheme.

Meetings of the IDG have taken place along with bilateral meetings with appropriate Departments. There has also been a consultative process with relevant Stakeholders and their submissions are being considered as part of the deliberation process. I expect to have a final report shortly.

Question No. 907 answered with Question No. 904.

State Pensions Reform

908. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the ongoing reviews of contributory pensions for those in receipt of reduced amounts; when they are expected to be concluded; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31020/19]

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 homecaring 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 Registrations 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.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

909. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person (details supplied) in receipt of a reduced contributory pension would be entitled to an increased payment if homecaring credits could be taken into account under the averaging calculation of pension rather than the total contributions calculation used as part of the reviews; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31021/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): For those people who reached state pension age since September 2012, two different methods of calculating their entitlement to a contributory state pension are used. There are several differing elements involved in each calculating method. For example, the Yearly Average (YA) method does not include a limit on credited contributions. The interim Total Contributions Approach (TCA), as launched in January 2018, does have a limit on credits but allows up to 20 years HomeCaring periods be added to paid contributions to increase a person's rate. The YA method rewards those with a shorter timespan between first and last social insurance contributions while TCA looks at a person's aggregated contributions without regard for timespan. Under YA, there is no maximum number of contributions required, while under TCA 40 years is the maximum required.

The elements which make up each method are set out in law. Accordingly, it is not possible to choose those elements from either method that may prove most advantageous to an applicant. To allow pensioners choose the elements in how their pension is calculated would likely incur very significant costs which could further undermine the sustainability of the State Pension. My department will spend over €8 billion on pensions in 2019 and this figure is already increasing year on year to the tune of c.€1 billion every five years based on demographic changes alone. Instead, pensioners are paid using whichever of the two methods of calculation is most beneficial to them.

The person in question applied for a pension and was assessed with having a yearly average of 21 based on 922 reckonable paid contributions and 107 reckonable credited contributions over 48 years. This places the person into the 20-29 rate band which equates to a payment rate equal to 85% of the maximum rate pension.

A review took place on the person concerned as part of the on-going rate review project. The review resulted in a payment rate equal to 82.02% of the maximum rate pension based on 922 reckonable paid contributions combined with 677 HomeCaring periods and 107 reckonable credits.

As the person is already in receipt of 85% of the maximum rate of pension, it is more financially beneficial for them to remain on their existing payment. A review outcome letter has issued informing the person concerned that their existing rate of payment will continue unchanged.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Capital Expenditure Programme

910. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of capital projects being undertaken by her Department; the final agreed tender price; the estimated cost of each capital project in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31074/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department's capital allocation is split over three subheads i.e. A.2. (v) Office Equipment and External IT Services, A.2. (vi) Office Premises Expenses and A.2. (ix) eGovernment Related Projects.

The following table outlines my Department's plans for the 2019 capital allocation of €15m (including €1m capital carry over from 2018).

A.2. (v) Office Equipment and External IT Services

Projects	Estimated Cost/Tender Price
Ongoing purchase of computer hardware, photocopiers, other non-IT office machinery, software licenses including storage technology, investment in server infrastructure and in virtualisation technology etc.	€8.5m (This estimate relates to the ongoing purchase of a range of equipment and software to support the Department in its daily functions – it is not project specific)
Intreo Centre Online Self Service	€0.3m (no tendering process as this is an in-house project).
Sub Total	€8.8m

A.2.(vi) Office Premises

The following table outlines the Department's planned contribution towards the costs of refurbishment on Departmental Buildings in 2019. The Deputy may wish to note that in relation to refurbishment costs, all accommodation works are contracted by the Office of Public Works (OPW) who will be best positioned to provide details on the final agreed tender price. The OPW may also be providing part funding for some of the projects.

Project	Estimated Project Cost	DEASP Contribution 2019
	€	
Dungarvan	200,000	200,000

Project	Estimated Project Cost	DEASP Contribution 2019
	€	
Lifford	600,000	200,000
Fermoy	600,000	500,000
Killybegs	100,000	100,000
Mallow	600,000	300,000
Clonakilty	125,000	25,000
Limerick City - Consolidation	400,000	200,000
Blanchardstown - Expand public office	200,000	200,000
Kilmainham	350,000	200,000
Kilbarrack	350,000	200,000
Bantry	1,000,000	200,000
Nenagh	800,000	200,000
Ballybofey Residual	100,000	100,000
Longford	300,000	150,000
Sligo - residual plus glass office	100,000	100,000
Buncrana	200,000	200,000
Gandon	150,000	150,000
Infinity	3,000,000	100,000
Generators - Residual	175,000	175,000
Reserve - project reserve	500,000	500,000
AMD Building Projects - Canteen / M&E Services	500,000	500,000
Energy Efficiency - LED lighting / EV charging points	500,000	500,000
Front Office Back Office (FOBO) / Digital Signage Programme	550,000	550,000
AMD - Building Refurbishment - Plans	450,000	450,000
Sub-Total	11,850,000	6,000,000

A.2. (ix) eGovernment Related Projects

Projects	Estimated Cost/Tender Price
No specific project identified. Budget allocated in the event of projects arising during 2019.	€0.2m
Subtotal	€0.2m

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Capital Expenditure Programme

911. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the capital projects completed since 2010; the final agreed tender price for each project; the actual cost of each project; if the actual cost exceeded the tender price; the reason therefore in each case in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31090/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I understand the Deputy is seeking information on projects with a spend of €5 million or above since 2010.

The capital allocation for my Department is primarily used to deliver IT modernisation and carry out refurbishments on the Department's buildings. There have been no individual capital projects with a spend of €5 million or above since 2010.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Pension Provisions

912. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her Department is responsible for and responsive to inquiries from the general public as to tracing their unclaimed pension entitlements; if its host mailing service and associated efforts are limited solely to inquiries from pension scheme administrators; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31099/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department has arrangements in place to assist with member tracing. Where the administrator of a pension scheme is unable to trace a member using their own resources they can use my Department's host mailing service.

Following discussions between my Department, the Pensions Authority and the Irish Association of Pension Funds, a revised protocol was put in place in October 2013. The protocol sets out the Department's requirements for organisations using the host mailing service. The pension provider must have made an unsuccessful attempt to contact the scheme member. The Department will forward letters to the last known address of the member based on its records if this address differs from that which the pension provider has. It is important to note that in all such cases the Department does not share personal data with any third party, and relies on Article 6(f) of the GDPR to perform the communication with the customer.

The Department does not hold information on individuals' private pension entitlements and therefore the host mailing service cannot help people trace unclaimed pensions. If a person believes that they may have an unclaimed pension entitlement the person should contact former employers and pension companies so they can check their records.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Redundancy Rebates

913. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of restoring redundancy rebates to businesses by 25%, 50%, 75% and 100%; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31104/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): It is an employer's responsibility to pay statutory redundancy to eligible employees. Previously

employers were entitled to a rebate from the state of 60% of the relevant redundancy payment. These rebates were abolished from 2013 due to the high cost to the Social Insurance Fund. These Employer rebates were paid to employers regardless of the financial situation of the company and their ability to make statutory redundancy payments.

The Department receives some information from employers through notifications of collective redundancies and also has data on applications received under the redundancy payments scheme. However, this data does not reflect the total number of actual redundancies that take place across the workforce.

The cost to the Social Insurance Fund arising from the restoration of redundancy rebates to employers may also be impacted by the overall performance of the economy and how that performance impacts on the labour market and whether decisions taken by employers would lead to redundancies, temporary lay-offs or putting workers, for example, on a 3 day week.

For these reasons I am advised that my Department is not in a position to provide an accurate estimate of the cost of restoring redundancy payments to businesses.

Redundancy Rebates

914. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her views on restoring redundancy rebates to businesses which previously facilitated small and micro-sized businesses to hire staff; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31105/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The purpose of the redundancy payments scheme is to compensate employees for the loss of their jobs, where the employer is unable to pay statutory redundancy due to financial difficulties or insolvency. The scheme was never intended as a support to businesses to hire staff. The scheme is funded from the Social Insurance Fund (SIF).

Up to 2011, the scheme provided a rebate of 60 per cent to employers who provided statutory redundancy payments to their employees. I am advised by my Department that in Budget 2013, the rebate payment was abolished. This decision was made because of the high cost of the rebate and its impact on the financial sustainability of the social insurance fund at the time of the economic crisis. Furthermore, the rebate to employers was paid regardless of a company's financial situation and ability to pay, thus benefitting viable and profitable companies, including multinational companies. It was not a targeted use of the resources of the Social Insurance Fund.

The redundancy payments scheme as it now operates benefits employees whose employers are unable to make statutory redundancy payments. Employers who declare they cannot sustain the cost of redundancy payments, while continuing to trade, are required to submit verified financial information to prove this and are liable to the Social Insurance Fund for any redundancy payments made on their behalf. This ensures that the current scheme takes into account both an employer's ability to pay redundancy payments and that the Social Insurance Fund can be reimbursed in the future, through debt repayment if an employer's financial position improves.

Any proposals to restore the redundancy rebate scheme and any development of policy in this area would have to have regard to: the level of costs involved in restoring the rebate; the many other demands on the Social Insurance Fund including this Government's decisions to extend social insurance benefits to self-employed workers and to provide for paternity benefit and parental leave benefit; and other supports available to businesses who wish to hire staff.

Public Services Card

915. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if legislation will be passed in order for a public services card to be produced as a form of identification (details supplied). [31142/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Under current legislation, a Public Services Card (PSC) cannot be requested by any public or private body or person that is not designated as a specified body in Schedule 5 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 (as amended). The PSC can only be used by public bodies specified in this legislation when conducting a public transaction with the person concerned.

One of the provisions set out in Section 5 of the Social Welfare, Pensions, and Civil Registration Bill 2017 would, if enacted, enable citizens to volunteer their PSC where they wish to use it as a form of proof of identity and/or age. However, it is important to note that a non-specified body could not request or demand the production of a PSC. It simply gives individuals the option to use their PSC if they wish, as proof of identity and/or age, in transactions with non-specified bodies.

The Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2017 proposes a number of amendments to the Social Welfare Acts, the Pensions Act 1990 and the Civil Registration Act 2004 in addition to the provisions relating to PSC use.

The amendments to the Pensions Act contain a number of key measures relating to Defined Benefit 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. These provisions in particular 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 these 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 Pensions Payments

916. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a payment for a person (details supplied). [31200/19]

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 homecaring periods.

The person concerned was assessed as having a reduced rate entitlement to state pension (contributory) earlier in 2019 and was informed at the time that they were financially better off to remain as a qualified adult on their spouse's claim.

In May 2019, the person concerned supplied information about their HomeCaring periods. Under the new arrangements, the maximum permissible number of HomeCaring periods 1,040

(as set out in legislation) were awarded to the person concerned. Following a review of their state pension (contributory) entitlement, the person is now entitled to a weekly payment equivalent to 70.46% of maximum rate state pension (contributory). The person has been transferred to their own pension as their entitlement now exceeds the rate of qualified adult increase that was in payment.

A review outcome has issued to the person concerned, outlining details of their increase and arrears, backdated to 31 January 2019, have issued. The first payment was available for collection in the post office on 5 July 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Farm Assist Scheme Data

917. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of recipients of farm assist; the amount paid by county in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31203/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): A detailed breakdown of the number of recipients of Farm Assist by county in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019 is attached in table 1.

An equivalent breakdown of Farm Assist expenditure by county is not available. However, the nationwide expenditure in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019 is detailed in table 2.

Tabular statement attached/.....

Table 1: Farm Assist recipients by county 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 (June)
Carlow	102	95	84	75	76	69	58	60	52	47
Cavan	401	407	404	344	326	300	265	254	219	217
Clare	637	643	609	566	521	455	400	346	307	274
Cork	917	957	922	840	788	689	606	542	475	441
Donegal	1,389	1,491	1,534	1,492	1458	1,299	1,294	1,265	1,086	1,123
Dublin	11	35	37	28	32	30	33	27	23	21
Galway	1,133	1,137	1,112	1,035	1000	858	767	714	635	601
Kerry	742	819	818	766	721	717	568	523	548	433
Kildare	56	53	53	39	37	28	19	21	18	18
Kilkenny	173	154	146	128	120	108	91	86	74	73
Laois	149	177	158	128	116	104	94	85	71	62
Leitrim	331	377	394	396	377	366	331	301	275	253
Limerick	265	247	250	231	216	180	164	139	128	113
Longford	176	258	260	232	205	177	139	130	126	111
Louth	81	84	87	79	82	72	59	60	59	56
Mayo	1,684	1,869	1,813	1,691	1614	1,471	1,289	1,156	1,084	1,013
Meath	90	82	93	81	81	67	55	49	48	44
Monaghan	516	545	504	468	446	386	344	319	286	273
Offaly	127	133	130	107	97	89	76	72	60	59

Questions - Written Answers

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 (June)
Roscommon	407	433	424	384	356	319	276	262	235	214
Sligo	478	315	310	283	283	251	228	210	182	173
Tipperary	350	402	404	363	336	300	269	252	223	215
Waterford	84	96	92	85	78	70	64	61	52	51
Westmeath	134	193	197	166	153	131	120	99	91	81
Wexford	202	255	248	224	223	195	166	151	137	129
Wicklow	79	76	79	72	67	59	53	50	41	37
Total	10,174	11,333	11,162	10,303	9,809	8,790	7,828	7,234	6,535	6,132

Farm Assist expenditure 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019.

Year	Expenditure€million
2010	110.93
2011	113.72
2012	108.17
2013	99.18
2014	93.63
2015	88.49
2016	78.83
2017	78.18
2018	73.82
2019 (Provisional outturn end June)	34.25

Social Welfare Benefits Data

918. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of recipients of fish assist; the amount paid by county in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31204/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): A breakdown of the number of recipients of Fish Assist by county in each of the years 2012 to 2018 and to date in 2019 is detailed in the attached tabular statement. I regret that expenditure on Fish Assist is not segregated from overall expenditure on Jobseeker's Allowance, so that I cannot provide the corresponding expenditure figures.

Tabular statement attached/.....

The number of recipients by county at the end of December in each of the years 2012 to 2018 and to date in 2019

COUNTY	June 2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
CAVAN			1	1	2			
CLARE		2	2	2	2	2	2	3
CORK	5	7	5	10	13	20	17	11
DONEGAL	8	8	5	10	10	9	10	13

COUNTY	June 2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
DUBLIN				1	1	1		
GALWAY	19	18	19	24	28	27	26	23
KERRY	4	4	4	7	6	7	7	9
LOUTH	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
MAYO	5	8	8	7	9	9	8	9
SLIGO	2	2	2	5	5	5	5	4
WATERFORD	12	13	10	10	10	11	11	17
WEXFORD	7	8	8	7	6	7	7	8
Total	63	72	65	85	93	99	94	98

Carer's Benefit Applications

919. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for a carer's benefit by a person (details supplied) County Sligo has been received in April 2019; when the application will be processed; when a decision will be made on the application; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31219/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): It is a condition for receipt of Carer's Benefit (CARB) that the person being cared for must have such a disability that 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.

An application for CARB was received from the person concerned on 12 April 2019.

The application for CARB was disallowed on the grounds that the evidence submitted did not indicate that the requirement for full-time care was satisfied.

The person concerned was notified on 26 June 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.

Community Employment Schemes Administration

920. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the fact that a school (details supplied) submitted a request to sponsor or sub-sponsor a community employment scheme; if her attention has been further drawn to the fact that in a response of 16 May 2019, it was stated that educational provision is the domain of the Department of Education and Skills; if her attention has been drawn to the fact that the Constitution acknowledges the role of a parent and guardian as the primary educator of the child; and if the application by the school will be reviewed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31220/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Community Employment (CE) projects are typically sponsored by groups wishing to benefit the local community, namely voluntary and community organisations and, to a lesser extent, public bodies involved in not-for-profit activities.

The private school outlined by the Deputy provides an alternative to the mainstream model of education. Charges are applied in respect of those attending the school.

Schools are not permitted to sponsor CE schemes and CE participants cannot be employed by or work in schools. This includes the provision of security, caretaking and other services to schools. As the Deputy may be aware, FAS who had responsibility for CE up until 2012, withdrew the CE services from schools from September 2001. As a result, the budget for schools-based CE schemes was transferred to the Department of Education and Skills.

My colleague, Minister Joe Mc Hugh T.D. has overall responsibility for the services and initiatives provided for the whole education sector including the control of policy, funding and direction.

It is a matter for all private schools to determine how the provision of their services are resourced.

Departmental Communications

921. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the oversight of her Department of directives, circulars, advice or requirements issued since 2016; if surveys have been carried out of compliance with these communications to date; the surveys carried out; the results of the surveys; the compliance rate; the actions taken by her Department following these results; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31324/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I understand that the Deputy is referring to the DPER website www.circulars.gov.ie where circulars and guidelines relating to corporate governance matters for Government Departments and Agencies are held. These circulars would provide guidance in matters such as pay, pensions and promotions. In this regard, my Department would take the necessary steps and measures to implement the provisions of the circulars, as appropriate.

In the period from January 2016 to date, approximately 500 circulars and guidelines have been loaded on to the DPER website. If the Deputy has a query in relation to particular circulars or guidelines, he can submit the details to my office and I will undertake to respond setting out how my Department has adhered to the relevant provisions.

Climate Change Policy

922. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the recurring weekly meetings attended by either her or the Secretary General of her Department in 2019 at which climate change and or preparations within her Department to enact a climate plan has been an agenda item; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31340/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department continues to engage with the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment; the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI); the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) and the Office of Public Works (OPW) to deliver the Government's energy efficiency and climate action plan.

The Management Board of my Department has recently approved the Department's Facility Management Strategy 2019-2022. This Strategy includes the key areas of the Department's en-

vironmental plans and is informed by the Government Plan on Climate Action and the responsibilities of the Department therein. The Secretary General has also established an innovation and engagement team, comprising management and staff representatives to examine and report on ways to further improve and develop a sustainable corporate culture.

The Management Board will be kept fully apprised of progress on the implementation of the Strategy and climate action plan goals.

Carer's Allowance Applications

923. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a carer's allowance will be awarded to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31366/19]

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.

The department informs me that there is no application by the person concerned for CA registered. If the person in question wishes to make an application, she should complete and return an application form (CR1) to CA section in the social welfare services office, Longford, as soon as possible. An application form for CA can be found on www.welfare.ie.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

924. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a carer's allowance will be approved for the carer of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31368/19]

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.

The department informs me that there is no application by the person concerned for CA registered. If the person in question wishes to make an application, she should complete and return an application form (CR1) to CA section in the social welfare services office, Longford, as soon as possible. An application form for CA can be found on www.welfare.ie.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Exceptional Needs Payment Eligibility

925. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the review of an exceptional needs payment application by a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31380/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The

request from the person concerned for an independent review was received by the Department on the 27th June 2019. A full review of the case has been completed and an Exceptional Need Payment to the value of €2000.00 has been approved. The signed determination of the Review Officer was posted to the person concerned on 09th July 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

926. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a disability allowance appeal by a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [31391/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Disability allowance (DA) is subject to periodic reviews. This lady's entitlement was recently reviewed and it was established that she no longer satisfies the medical condition for receipt of DA. The person concerned was notified of this on 8 April 2019.

Further medical evidence was received and a review of this decision was carried out. The original decision was upheld and the person concerned was notified in writing on 8 May 2019. She was also advised of her right to appeal this decision to the independent social welfare appeals office (SWAO).

On 24 June 2019 the person concerned requested an appeal of her DA with the independent (SWAO). All the relevant papers requested by that office were prepared and submitted by this Department to the SWAO who 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

927. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a person (details supplied) will have a decision on their social welfare appeal. [31392/19]

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. 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 14 June 2019 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

928. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [31393/19]

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 26 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.

Invalidity Pension Applications

929. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a person (details supplied) will have a decision on an application for invalidity. [31412/19]

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 30 April 2019. The deciding officer (DO) is satisfied that the medical conditions for the scheme are satisfied.

The gentleman in question has claimed an increase for a qualified adult (IQA) and the fuel allowance. The DO has requested further information from him in order to assess eligibility for the IQA and fuel allowance. As soon as this information has been received the IP claim will be finalised as quickly as possible and he will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Waiting Times

930. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the waiting times to process applications for carer's allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31418/19]

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.

My Department is committed to providing a quality service to all its customers. This includes ensuring that applications are processed as quickly as possible.

In general, social welfare schemes with a number of complex qualifying conditions can take longer to process. In some cases the documentary evidence provided at initial application stage

is incomplete or insufficient and this can lead to delays in processing.

To qualify for CA, the carer must show that they are habitually resident in the State, that they are providing full-time care and attention to a person who requires this level of care and that their means are less than the statutory limit.

Where any scheme area experiences delays, all possible steps are taken to improve processing times. This includes the assignment of additional resources, where available, and the review of business processes, to ensure the efficient processing of applications.

At the end of June 2019 the average waiting time for a decision on a new CA claim was 13 weeks. A review of business processes has identified opportunities to implement a number of improvements and efficiencies. Additional resources will be applied to claim processing to reduce delays. The position is being closely monitored and kept under review by the Department to ensure that all CA applications are dealt with promptly

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

931. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the waiting times to process applications for domiciliary care allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31419/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Applications for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) are currently taking approximately 10 weeks to process, with 94% of applications finalised during May completed within this timeframe. The departmental standard for DCA is to have 90% of claims finalised within 10 weeks and this standard has been met consistently over recent months. There are currently some 1,200 applications on hand to be processed, with claims received in late April and early May being deal with at present.

Over 8,500 DCA applications were finalised in 2018.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Applications

932. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the waiting times to process applications for the State pension (contributory); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31420/19]

933. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the waiting times to process applications for the State pension (non-contributory); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31421/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 932 and 933 together.

The average waiting time to award a state pension (contributory) or a state pension (non-contributory) at the end of June was 8 and 10 weeks respectively.

Disability Allowance Applications Waiting Times

934. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the waiting times to process applications for disability allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31422/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): My Department is committed to making decisions on entitlement as quickly as possible.

The target processing time for the DA scheme is to process 75% of new claims within 12 weeks. In June 2019, the average waiting time for new DA applications was 15 weeks.

My Department recognises that the current processing times for DA must be improved and is working to achieve this. The current processes in place and resources assigned to this area of my Department, along with the number of Medical Assessors available to provide medical opinions are kept under constant review to ensure that any delays are minimised.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Waiting Times

935. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the waiting times to process applications for invalidity pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31423/19]

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 average time taken to process a new IP claim in June 2019 was 11 weeks. The Department is committed to ensuring that claims are processed as expeditiously as possible.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Respite Care Grant Applications

936. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the waiting times to process applications for the respite care grant; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31424/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Carer's Support Grant is paid by the Department, on the 1st Thursday in June each year, to persons in receipt Carers Allowance or Carers Benefit or Domiciliary Care Allowance. The annual grant is paid at the rate of €1,700 in respect of each person being cared for. Over 90% of all payments of the grant are made on this date.

A carer who is not in receipt of one of these payments can still qualify for the grant, once they make an application and satisfy certain conditions. As entitlement to the grant has to be established, the waiting time for decisions on such claims is currently eight weeks. Work is ongoing to reduce this processing time.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Child Benefit Payments

937. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the way in which persons selected for review of their children's allowance payment are selected; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31425/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Child benefit is a monthly payment made to families with children in respect of all qualified children. It is currently paid, to almost 632,000 families in respect of over 1.2 million children, with an estimated expenditure of €2.1 billion this year.

The Department operates control programmes on all payment schemes.

A number of methods are used to select claims for review. Targeted reviews happen when the Department becomes aware of a potential change in circumstances from information supplied internally, from other Government Departments or from Social Security Agencies from other EU member states.

The Department also randomly sends review forms to all customers that receive payment via Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) approximately every 12 - 18 months. Customers that collect payment in their post office must collect payment in person and are therefore not reviewed as frequently.

In 2018 nearly 348,000 child benefit reviews were undertaken, generating €59.5 million in savings and overpayments of €4.3 million. To the end of June 2019 there have been 218,000 reviews initiated and these have generated savings of €34 Million with €2.1 million in overpayments assessed.

The Department is constantly evaluating its control programme and where efficiencies can be found they will be implemented.

I trust that this helps clarify the matter for the Deputy.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

938. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a domiciliary care allowance will be awarded in respect of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31456/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): There is no record of a recent domiciliary care allowance (DCA) application having been received from the person concerned. The latest application in respect of this child was received on 11th December 2013. This application was not allowed as the child was not considered to satisfy the qualifying conditions for the allowance. A letter issued on the 10th March 2014 setting out the decision of the deciding officer.

This decision was subsequently upheld by an Appeals Officer and a decision letter issued on the 16th September 2014 setting out the basis of their decision. A review of the decision was requested on the 23rd July 2015 and the person concerned was notified on the 29th October 2015 that the review had been completed but the original decision remained unchanged.

A further appeal was registered by the Social Welfare Appeals Office on the 16th November 2015. As part of the appeals process the application was again reviewed by a deciding officer and the person concerned was notified on the 10th February 2016 that the review was unsuccessful. The decision was subsequently upheld by the Social Welfare Appeals Office on the 20th May 2016.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Housing Adaptation Grant Eligibility

939. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if grant assistance is available for persons with autism that need to adapt their houses for sensory needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30674/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department provides exchequer funding to local authorities to support the Housing Adaptation Grants for People with a Disability in private houses. These grants are available to assist in the carrying out of works, which are reasonably necessary for the purposes of rendering a house more suitable for the accommodation of a person with a disability who has an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment.

The detailed administration of the grants, including the assessment, approval and payment of individual grants to applicants, is the responsibility of the relevant local authority. The types of works allowable under the scheme include the provision or adaptation of rooms, for example downstairs toilet facilities or a sensory space, and the provision of stair-lifts, access ramps, accessible showers, adaptations to facilitate wheelchair access or other works which are reasonably necessary.

Housing Assistance Payment Administration

940. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the Department responsible for the administration of the way in which HAP is means tested and calculated; and the legislation used in this regard. [30487/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is a form of social housing support for people who have a long-term housing need. It is available in all local authority areas and its introduction ensures that all social housing supports can be accessed through the local authorities, allowing tenants to take up full-time employment and keep their housing support, subject to adjustment of their differential rent.

If a household has been deemed eligible for social housing support, it is a matter for the local authority to examine the suite of social housing supports available, including the HAP scheme, to determine the most appropriate form of social housing support for that household in the administrative area of that local authority. Accordingly, the determination of entitlement to HAP, including the assessment of an applicant's means, is governed by the same arrangements as for other social housing supports.

The qualification criteria for social housing support are set down in section 20 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and in the Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011, as amended, and are applied by all housing authorities in assessing individual households

for support.

The Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011 prescribe maximum net income limits for eligibility for social housing supports in each housing authority, in different bands according to the area, with income being defined and assessed according to a standard Household Means Policy. There are currently three bands - with maximum income limits per individual (main applicant) set at €35,000, €30,000 and €25,000 (the limits are higher for households with multiple adults and with children).

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, 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.

Housing Adaptation Grant Eligibility

941. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if there is grant aid available to persons that wish to incorporate a granny flat to their dwelling to accommodate an elderly parent that wishes to reside there rather than be placed in a nursing home; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30500/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): There is no grant aid available from my Department for the provision of granny flats.

My Department does provide funding to local authorities in respect of the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability, to assist eligible people in private houses to make their accommodation more suitable for their needs. The suite of grants includes the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability, the Mobility Aids Grant and the Housing Aid for Older People, which are 80% funded by the Department, with a 20% contribution from the resources of the local authority. The scheme is more sharply focused towards lower income households with the greatest needs. A means test applies to the scheme in order to achieve fairness and value for money in its operation.

The Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability assists people with a disability to have necessary adaptations, repairs or improvement works carried out in order to make their accommodation more suitable for their needs. Grants of up to €30,000 are available for works including the provision of access ramps, stair lifts, accessible toilet and shower facilities, wheelchair access and extensions.

The Housing Aid for Older People scheme provides grants of up to €8,000 to assist older people living in poor housing conditions to have necessary repairs or improvements carried out. Grant eligible works include structural repairs or improvements, re-wiring, repairs to or replacement of windows and doors, provision of water supply and sanitary facilities, provision of heating etc.

The Mobility Aids Grant is available to fast track grants of up to €6,000 to cover a basic suite of works to address the mobility problems of a member of a household. Qualifying works include the provision of stair lifts, level access showers, access ramps, grab rails and some minor adaptation works.

The detailed administration of the grants, including the assessment, approval and prioritisation of applications, is the responsibility of the local authorities.

Cyber Security Protocols

942. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if it has had a cybersecurity breach in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30590/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department recognises fully that cyber security is of central importance in ensuring the security and integrity of its systems, files and data and implements a multi-layered approach to cyber security. This is achieved through a combination of awareness-raising for staff, having appropriate processes in place, ICT security policies, Business Continuity Planning, Cyber Incident Response planning and ensuring that appropriate technological solutions are in place also. Future work in this regard will be supported by a new Departmental Cyber Security Strategy 2019-2022, which is currently being finalised.

My Department works with the State's Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT-IE), a division of the Department of Communication, Climate Action and Environment, who provide advice relating to threats and the necessary mitigating actions that should be taken. Protocols exist to report cyber security incidents, both internally and to the relevant authorities, including to An Garda Síochána if necessary.

For security reasons, My Department does not comment on details of its ongoing cyber security management.

Housing Issues

943. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will enter negotiations to acquire lands (details supplied) for public housing in view of the high levels of homelessness; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30638/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The statutory role in relation to the provision of housing is vested in the local authorities in their capacity as housing authorities. Accordingly, consideration of the purchase of lands for housing is a matter for the relevant housing authority, rather than my Department, in the first instance.

The existing significant public land bank for housing is already being activated extensively through the investment of over €6 billion under the Government's Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness, under which 50,000 social housing homes, which are key to addressing the challenges in relation to homelessness, are being delivered over the period 2016 to 2021.

Living Wage

944. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the estimated cost of implementing a living wage €12.30 for all employees directly employed and or in agencies under his remit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30774/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Payment of salaries to staff of my Department is made in line with pay scales approved by the

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. If a living wage of €12.30 was introduced, the increased annual cost to my Department would be approximately €3,600, based on the civil service 37 hour standard net working week. This figure will reduce as and when the staff concerned progress along an incremental scale.

The details requested in relation to bodies under the aegis of my Department are a matter for the individual bodies concerned. Arrangements have been put in place by each Agency to facilitate the provision of information by State Bodies directly to members of the Oireachtas. The contact email address for each agency is set out in the following table.

Agency	Email address
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

Rental Sector

945. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if landlords are permitted to request and-or receive top-up payments in respect of recipients of HAP and RAS; and if not, the penalty applying. [30784/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) established in 2004 placed responsibility on housing authorities to meet the accommodation needs of people in receipt of rent supplement for 18 months or longer, and, who are assessed as having a long-term housing need. RAS tenancies are governed by the Residential Tenancies Acts 2004 -2019. Under the terms of the RAS scheme, payments by the tenant in excess of the rental amount specified in the RAS contract to the landlord are not permitted. In a scenario where a landlord has requested a payment in excess of the agreed rental amount, the tenant has the option of referring a complaint to the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) under the Residential Tenancies Acts 2004 – 2019 and it would be a matter for the RTB to decide on the appropriate sanctions to apply.

Under the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme, a tenant sources their own accommodation in the private rented sector. The tenancy agreement is between the tenant and the landlord and is covered by the Residential Tenancies Acts. The accommodation sourced by tenants should be within the prescribed maximum HAP rent limits, which are based on the household size and the rental market within that area.

Each local authority has statutory discretion to agree to a HAP payment up to 20% above the prescribed maximum rent limit to secure appropriate accommodation for a household that requires it. In addition, the normal 20% discretion beyond the rent limits is increased to 50%

for homeless households in the Dublin Region.

My Department is aware that some HAP recipients are making payments directly to their landlords, beyond the amount of HAP being paid on their behalf. There is no legislative provision precluding HAP supported households contributing towards the monthly rent to their landlord. This reflects the fact that, unlike Rent Supplement, where payment ceases in certain circumstances, HAP support can continue to be paid where a household's income increases, including for reasons of the tenant taking up full-time employment. In those cases, it would therefore be expected that some tenants would consider rental options, which they source themselves in the private rental market, that would involve them paying an element of rent beyond the HAP rent limits, enabled to do so by their improved income position.

It should be noted that local authorities have a responsibility to ensure that HAP tenancies are sustainable and are advised not to provide HAP support to tenancies where they are not satisfied that the household would be in a position to meet the rental costs being sought.

At the end of Quarter 1 2019, there were over 45,000 active tenancies being supported under the HAP scheme. Collection of data in relation to the number of households making a top-up payment to their landlord does not form part of the standard reporting process of my Department. However, the information available to the HAP Shared Service Centre operated by Limerick City and County Council indicates that approximately three quarters of all HAP tenancies are fully supported.

Departmental Data

946. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the different income streams directly paid by persons to his Department or agencies under his remit, such as motor tax; the number of persons making annual payments; the value of same; the number of payments made through staged or increment payments; the value of same; the additional income generated as a result of payments being made on an incremental basis; if incremental payments are not available, the reason for same; the corresponding figures for 1999 and 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30857/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Details of income streams paid directly to my Department are recorded as Appropriations-in-Aid in the annual Appropriation Accounts which are published by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General and made available via their website www.audit.gov.ie. Copies of the Appropriation Accounts for this Department for 1999, 2009 and 2017 (the most recent Appropriation Account published) are available at the link below:

<https://www.audit.gov.ie/en/Find-Report/Publications/Appropriation%20Accounts/>

Payments to my Department relate primarily to pension related deductions on local authority remuneration, rather than to payments by individuals as referred to in the Question.

The information requested in relation to bodies under the aegis of my Department is a matter for the individual bodies concerned. 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
An Bord Pleanála	Oireachtasqueries@pleanala.ie

Agency	Email address
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

Capital Expenditure Programme

947. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the capital projects which have been delayed under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; when these projects will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30886/19]

948. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the capital projects which have commenced under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30922/19]

949. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if expenditure estimates for capital projects under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of his Department and agencies match projected cost requirements in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30968/19]

950. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of capital projects being undertaken by his Department; the final agreed tender price; the estimated cost of each capital project in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31078/19]

951. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the capital projects completed since 2010; the final agreed tender price for each project; the actual cost of each project; if the actual cost exceeded the tender price; the reason therefor in each case in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31094/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 947 to 951, inclusive, together.

Local authorities and bodies under the aegis of my Department enter into capital contracts in the course of their work, some of which is funded through the Department's Vote; my Department itself does not directly engage in any major capital projects. As regards relevant contracts for which local authorities are responsible, information on expenditure and multi-annual capital commitments is set out in Note 2.9/2.10 to the Department's Appropriation Accounts for the relevant years (Vote 25 up to 2014; Vote 34 thereafter) which are published by the Comptroller and Auditor General and are available at <https://www.audit.gov.ie/en/Publications>,

by clicking on “Appropriation Account”. The Department’s 2018 Appropriation Account will be published later this year when the audit is completed.

Details in relation to specific projects (which are being advanced primarily by local authorities and Irish Water) under my Department’s range of capital programmes as part of Project Ireland 2040: National Development Plan 2018-2027 are set out in the Investments Projects and Programmes Tracker published in by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on their website at the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6db7c4-investment-projects-and-programmes-tracker/>

In addition, the recently announced MyProjectIreland, a new citizen-focused interactive map developed as part of Project Ireland 2040 in partnership with Ordnance Survey Ireland, provides details of projects around the country. This is available to be viewed at the following weblink: <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/09022006-project-ireland-2040/?referrer=/2040>.

In relation to housing projects, my Department publishes comprehensive status reports on a quarterly basis of all social housing construction schemes for all local authority areas, showing details such as their locations and a range of information relating to their advancement. The most recent of these reports covers the period up to the end of Quarter 1 of 2019. The report can be accessed at the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/rebuilding-ireland-progress-report-published-2019-quarter-1/>.

With respect to water services projects, Irish Water has established a team to deal with queries from Oireachtas members on issues arising in relation to its activities. The team may be contacted via email to oireachtasmembers@water.ie or by telephone on 1890 578 578. Alternatively, Irish Water provides full details of their projects and plans to improve water and wastewater services on their website. The details can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.water.ie/projects-plans/>.

Fire Service

952. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he is satisfied that the Dublin Fire Brigade has all the necessary equipment and resources to protect the public in view of the increasing density and height of commercial and residential buildings in the city; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31151/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The provision of fire services is a statutory function of fire authorities under the provisions of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003. In the case of Dublin, the City Council also provides fire services on behalf of the other three Dublin local authorities. My Department supports the fire authorities through setting national policy, providing a central training programme, issuing guidance on operational and other related matters and providing capital funding. The capital programme includes recoupment for the purchase of fire appliances and emergency equipment and the construction and upgrading of fire stations within the overall funding available.

While the fire authorities obviously have a critical role, the people that control buildings have primary statutory responsibility for ensuring the safety of persons using the building. In this regard, inbuilt features such as layout and fire resistance are critical as are fire detection and alarm systems. Safety features should support early detection, safe evacuation of occupants and the containment of fires. The appropriate measures vary based on the scale, density and height of buildings and are set out in Building Regulations and associated Technical Guidance and Codes of Practice.

It is important to note that there has been a steady decline in the number of fire incidents and the number of fatalities resulting from fires in Ireland. With a three year averaged annual fire death rate of less than six per million of population, Ireland is among the countries where fire fatalities are deemed to have been minimised. Of course, we must remain vigilant and work to avoid the tragedy of fatalities from fire, the vast majority of which occur in the home. However, it is important to recognise the positive impact of improvements in community fire safety strategies and fire brigade response.

In terms of equipment, management of the number, type and age profile of fire appliances is a matter for each of the fire authorities based on their local needs and requirements. Continued investment in the national fleet is one of the key priorities for the Fire Services Capital Programme. Under the capital programmes since 2008, my Department has funded nine ‘Class B’ appliances and two turntable ladders for Dublin and close engagement continues with fire authorities in relation to future needs. In this regard, in assessing requirements, fire service management use multi-annual data of actual fires to determine “Area Risk Categorisation” (ARC) for each fire station area benchmarking against national standards, set out for the first time in the 2013 policy document “Keeping Communities Safe”.

The ARC process helps fire service management establish a risk grading of: very high risk (A); high risk (B) medium risk (C); low risk (D); or very low risk (E) categories across areas. The initial fire station risk ratings for Dublin are published in the 2016 report “Local Delivery – National Consistency – Fire Services in Ireland”, and are set out in the following table.

FIRE SERVICE	FIRE STATION	ARC RATING
DUBLIN	Tallaght	A1
DUBLIN	Tara Street	A1
DUBLIN	Dolphins Barn	A2
DUBLIN	Finglas	A2
DUBLIN	Kilbarrack	A2
DUBLIN	Phibsboro	A2
DUBLIN	Swords	A2
DUBLIN	Blanchardstown	B1
DUBLIN	Dunlaoghaire	B1
DUBLIN	North Strand	B1
DUBLIN	Rathfarnham	B1
DUBLIN	Donnybrook	B2
DUBLIN	Balbriggan	C1
DUBLIN	Skerries	D1

The “Keeping Communities Safe” policy document indicates that local authority fire services should have an initial response capability in place which is linked to the assessed Area Risk Category, as set out in the following table.

Risk Category Description	Risk Category	Standard Fire Appliance (Class B) Response Capability	Fire Brigade Travel Times	Associated Crew Levels (incl. crew commanders)
Very High	A	1st 2nd 3rd 4th	in 8 mins in 10 mins in 15 mins in 20 mins	5 9 13 17

Risk Category Description	Risk Category	Standard Fire Appliance (Class B) Response Capability	Fire Brigade Travel Times	Associated Crew Levels (incl. crew commanders)
High	B	1st 2nd 3rd	in 10 mins in 15 mins in 20 mins	5 9 13
Medium	C	1st 2nd 3rd	in 10 mins in 20 mins in 30 mins	5 9 13
Low	D	1st 2nd	in 20 mins in 40 mins	5 9
Very Low	E	1st 2nd	in 30 mins in 60 mins	5 9

The National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management (NDFEM) oversees an external validation process across fire services. The External Validation Report “Local Delivery – National Consistency” indicates that the fire services provided in Dublin areas are meeting, and indeed exceed, the appropriate standards.

Operational response to a particular incident or category of incidents is a matter for each fire service, taking account of national policy and guidance. A National Incident Command System was developed by the NDFEM in 2009, including appropriate training and support materials. The Incident Commander decides on the appropriate course of action to be taken in any given situation, taking into consideration the balance of needs, risk and resources with particular regard to health, safety and welfare.

In relation to fighting fires in high-rise buildings, my Department issued guidance titled “Fighting Fires in High-Rise Buildings” in April 2011. This was part of a suite of 47 Standard Operational Guidance (SOG) documents developed between 2010 and 2012 by fire service personnel and issued by the NDFEM. A copy of the SOG concerned, SOG 3.02, is available on my Department’s website at the following link: <https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/migrated-files/en/Publications/Community/FireandEmergencyServices/FileDownload%2C33367%2Cen.pdf>.

Based on the foregoing the current arrangements in place at both national and local level for fire safety and fire service response, including in Dublin, are deemed appropriate and effective. These matters are kept under constant review by the NDFEM and its dedicated Management Board made up of key stakeholders, including chief executives of local authorities/fire authorities.

Planning Guidelines

953. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the new revised planning guidelines will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31244/19]

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.

Land Development Agency

954. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the land development agency will be established; the properties to be transferred to the body; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31253/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Land Development Agency (LDA) has been established on an interim basis by statutory instrument under the Local Government Services (Corporate Bodies) Act 1971. The Establishment Order is an initial and enabling measure to get the LDA up and running as quickly as possible, ahead of the provision of a more comprehensive primary legislative basis for the Agency and its intended scope of powers and operations.

The Government has recently approved an updated General Scheme of the LDA Bill for priority drafting. It is intended that the LDA Bill will be brought before the Oireachtas later this year for early enactment.

On establishment, the Agency had access to an initial tranche of 8 sites – listed below - that have near term delivery potential for 3,000 new homes. The LDA is also currently engaged in the progression of a number of other sites with potential for significant housing output.

1. Central Mental Hospital Site, Dundrum
2. Hampton, Balbriggan

3. Hacketstown, Skerries
4. Devoy Barracks, Naas
5. Former Meath Hospital, Dublin City Centre
6. St. Kevin's Hospital, Cork
7. Columb Barracks, Mullingar
8. Dyke Road, Galway

Significant preparatory work is underway in relation to the initial sites, with feasibility, planning and other preparatory works already initiated. Construction activity is envisaged to commence on the first homes by mid-2020, subject to the grant of planning permissions.

Departmental Communications

955. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the oversight of his Department of directives, circulars, advice or requirements issued since 2016; if surveys have been carried out of compliance with these communications to date; the surveys carried out; the results of the surveys; the compliance rate; the actions taken by his Department following these results; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31328/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department has a broad remit with responsibility for housing, planning, water, local government and the provision of weather information and related services. In the period since 2016, the Department would have issued a vast array of communications of the kind referred to and has a variety of arrangements in place, ranging from formal statutory arrangements through to more informal mechanisms, and from written or statistical reports to reporting through workshops or other bilateral or Department/sector-wide engagement, for monitoring consequent actions taken by local authorities. Compilation of the range of information sought would involve a disproportionate amount of time and work. However, if there is a more specific issue in respect of which the Deputy wishes to table a question, I will endeavour to provide the information concerned.

Climate Change Policy

956. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the recurring weekly meetings attended by either him or the Secretary General of his Department in 2019 at which climate change and or preparations within his Department to enact a climate plan has been an agenda item; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31344/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department has played an active part in the development of the Government's Climate Action Plan 2019 and has also been assigned lead and supporting roles in the implementation of a range of actions set out in the Plan. In addition, prior to the finalisation of the Climate Action Plan, I met on a bilateral basis on several occasions with my colleague, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, who has the lead responsibility for climate change agenda.

My Department's engagement with the climate agenda is multifaceted. Accordingly, rather

than dealing with the issue in recurring weekly meetings as referred to by the Deputy, I and my Department engage actively on the issues involved on a thematic basis, in different meeting/engagement formations, on a regular basis, often multiple times per week as circumstances demand. These arrangements include work undertaken through the Department's own work programmes, on issues such as Nearly Zero Energy Buildings, the Department's engagement with the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action, attendance at which was led by the Secretary General, and through meetings of the relevant Senior Officials Group dealing with climate issues (including the preparation of the Climate Action Plan), chaired by the Department of An Taoiseach, and the associated Cabinet Committee and Cabinet discussions, in which I lead my Department's participation.

As the Deputy may be aware, the Climate Action Plan provides for its implementation to be overseen by a Delivery Board, chaired by the Department of An Taoiseach and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, the first meeting of which is scheduled to take place next week. The Secretary General of my Department will be a member of the Delivery Board, which will report to Cabinet through the relevant Cabinet Committee, in which I will continue to engage actively.

Regeneration Projects Status

957. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the regeneration of the Blackhall area of Mullingar, County Westmeath. [31414/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In 2018, bids were invited from public bodies for funding support from the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) either under Category A, for projects that were proposed as being ready to be initiated, or under Category B, as projects that required further consideration and development. On 26 November 2018, initial URDF support of €100m was provisionally allocated to a total of 88 projects throughout the country under the first call for proposals.

Westmeath County Council has been approved for URDF support in respect of preliminary costs, including technical assistance, for the development of a masterplan for the comprehensive regeneration and redevelopment of the southwest quadrant of Mullingar's urban core.

The advancement and completion of this Category B project is, in the first instance, a matter for Westmeath County Council. It will also be a matter for the Council to consider the advancement of subsequent elements of the wider project, and whether additional funding support should be sought for them under a future URDF call for proposals.

Housing Adaptation Grant Expenditure

958. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount each council received under housing aid for elderly, mobility and housing adaptation grants for 2019; the amount each council has allocated; and the average processing time for each council for an application. [31442/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In 2019, a total of €71.25 million is available for the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability Scheme, in respect of private houses. This is made up of €57 million exchequer funding, which is an increase of some 8% on the 2018 figure, with the balance of €14.25m being contributed by the local authorities. Information on the individual exchequer al-

locations and the respective funding contributed by each local authority is publicly available on my Department's website, at the following link - <https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/special-housing-needs/older-people/minister-english-announces-eu7125-million-funding-improve>.

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 processing times for applications. This information may be available directly from the local authorities.

Cyber Security Protocols

959. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the cybersecurity protocols under the remit of her Department; if it has had a cybersecurity breach in the past 12 months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30583/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department views ICT security as being of central importance in ensuring the security and integrity of systems, files and data. Working with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), an operational arm of the Department of Communication, Climate Action and Environment, my Department ensures that we are aware of the latest threats and necessary actions are taken to offset risks to the Department's ICT facilities.

My Department has deployed various market leading, latest generation ICT security systems and tools to ensure that the risk of attacks are mitigated as effectively as possible.

For security reasons, my Department does not provide public details of our cyber security management.

National Parks and Wildlife Service

960. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the reason the NPWS will not erect signage making persons aware of ticks and Lyme disease in national parks, for example, Killarney National Park; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30675/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Ticks are widespread throughout the countryside and in areas of rough vegetation and forestry. They are not confined only to National Parks or Nature Reserves. The issue of warning notices is a matter for the HSE/Local authorities to consider. Any such signs would need to be countrywide as opposed to specifically located in particular National Parks or Nature Reserves. The National Parks & Wildlife Service of my Department is willing to engage with the Local Authorities on any county-wide initiatives they (or the HSE) wish to propose.

Ticks can be found on a variety of domesticated and wild animals including sheep, goats, horses, cattle, dogs, deer and various wild mammal species. Information on Lyme Disease is available to the public from the HSE website <http://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/vectorborne/lymedisease/informationforthepublic/>. The HSE booklet on lyme disease also contains useful information in this regard.

With regard to Killarney National Park, information on ticks is contained within the health and safety section of the dedicated park website for members of the public who intend on visiting the National Park: <https://www.killarneynationalpark.ie/plan-your-visit/safety-in-the->

park/ and is also available in the visitor centre at Killarney House. The HSE booklet is also available to download from the Killarney National Park website: <https://www.killarneynationalpark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Lyme-DL-April2017-D2.pdf>.

National Parks and Wildlife Service

961. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if the NPWS will place fire belts on its property to prevent fires spreading within national parks; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30676/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I would first like to thank the Deputy for raising this important matter. Significant environmental damage is caused by wildfire and, more specifically, illegal burning. This issue has become more acute in recent years, as evidenced by the recent spate of fires in various parts of the country, including earlier this year at Torc Mountain in Killarney National Park, Co. Kerry. Wild fires are not a natural phenomenon in Ireland and can have a local impact on species that cannot escape, or that lose breeding habitat as a result. Such impacts are generally fairly short term, but could be very serious for species that are already in decline, such as curlew. Some plant and moss species may be lost or greatly reduced. UK research showed that where scrub such as gorse is burned it can have a lasting impact on soils and cause increased erosion which can in turn impact on rivers through increasing siltation of the water, especially if this burning happens repeatedly.

I strongly condemn the spate of wildfires in recent years and would appeal to members of the public to be conscious of the dangers posed by fire on open ground. Even planned and/or “controlled” burning can get out of hand very quickly, so it is critically important that every member of society realises the damage that can be caused to property and, indeed, the health and welfare of family, neighbours and the wider community, and the responding emergency services. The main source of wild fires is thought to be the deliberate starting of fires without concern for the consequences. Aside from such malicious activities, one of the main challenges is to encourage members of the public, (including landowners, farmers and recreational users of publicly accessible land), to act responsibly at all times, to be mindful of their own safety and the safety of others, to be mindful of the need to protect property, both publicly owned and privately owned and to appreciate the value of our natural heritage, particularly in our National Parks, Nature Reserves and Designated (Natura 2000) Sites.

With regard to the National Parks, on an on-going basis, officials from my Department are in close liaison with both the Gardaí and the Fire Service. With regard to gorse fires in particular, there are a number of Inter-Agency Gorse Fire Groups that explore issues surrounding such fires. My Department, through its National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), is one of a number of agencies represented on such groups. An Garda Síochána is also represented on these groups and lead any criminal investigation). There are a number of these groups in different locations around the country. They are convened by the Fire Services Department of the relevant Local Authority and the Chief Fire Officer for the Local Authority. Generally, the Chief Fire Officer for the Local Authority would chair the meetings and maintains records. Usually, the membership of such groups would include representation from stakeholders such as:

- Fire Services Department of the Local Authority
- Gardaí
- Forest Service Section of the Department of Agriculture and Food

- NPWS
- Coillte
- Teagasc

My Department (NPWS) meets and liaises with the Fire Officer directly as appropriate and necessary. For example to review arrangements and practical details in respect of our National Parks and other recreational properties e.g. re access point, codes, etc.

Some 14 per cent of the terrestrial area of the State is designated and this includes many remote and inaccessible areas. Most land in special areas of conservation, special protection areas and natural heritage areas is in private ownership. Through the NPWS, my Department directly manages a property portfolio in respect of national parks and reserves of approximately 87,000 hectares. These important biodiversity areas are located all around the country. Given the sensitivity of these habitats, with regard to firebreaks, there are a number of ecological concerns with regard to their use. A balance has to be achieved between works necessary or desirable to assist in the control of wild fires within designated areas on the one hand and the sustainable conservation and protection of the qualifying interests within such sites. Where possible, targeted and minimal on site work – including the cutting back of combustible material (furze, heathers, over-grown grassland areas) – to create these “natural fire breaks” could help to control the spread of wild fires, without impacting significantly on habitats. My Department remains very committed to the prevention, early detection and minimisation of the impacts of such fires, and recently piloted a joint action with Coillte using drones to assist in the early identification of fires and communication of real-time information to my staff when they work with the emergency services to prevent such fires from spreading.

Given the sheer scale of property involved, (for example, Killarney National Park on its own comprises over 10,000 Hectares (26,000 acres) coupled with the remote locations of much of the designated lands and the sporadic occurrence and dynamic nature of such fires, it is very difficult to provide a visible “presence” on the ground to discourage and prevent unauthorised burning in the countryside. Equally, trying to identify those who deliberately set fires in open areas without concern for the consequences can be challenging. NPWS staff remain ever-vigilant when conditions exist that might result in fires in the National Parks.

Living Wage

962. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the estimated cost of implementing a living wage €12.30 for all employees directly employed and or in agencies under her remit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30767/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I am informed that the annualised cost of implementing a wage of €12.30 per hour for all employees employed directly by my Department or in agencies under the remit of my Department is estimated to be in the order of €600,000.

Departmental Data

963. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the different income streams directly paid by persons to her Department or agencies under her remit, such as motor tax; the number of persons making annual payments; the value of same;

the number of payments made through staged or increment payments; the value of same; the additional income generated as a result of payments being made on an incremental basis; if incremental payments are not available, the reason for same; the corresponding figures for 1999 and 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30850/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): As the Deputy will appreciate, and my Department and those bodies under its aegis are responsible for a broad range of activities. While some of these activities may be subject to charge none would constitute an income stream of the type instanced by the Deputy.

Details of income and expenditure by my Department and those bodies under its aegis are set out in the Annual Report and Accounts published each year which are subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Project Ireland 2040

964. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the capital projects which have been delayed under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of her Department and agencies in tabular form; when these projects will commence; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30879/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department has been allocated nearly €1.2 billion in capital expenditure over the course of the National Development Plan, 2018-2027, as part of Project Ireland 2040. My Department has developed a detailed sectoral investment plan, Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage, which sets the high-level, strategic capital priorities for the Department from 2018 to 2027. The plan will deliver on this investment through the following activity strands; capital investment and infrastructure programmes, capital grant schemes and major capital projects.

The plan provides for an allocation of:

- €725 million towards enhancing our cultural infrastructure, incorporating,
- A €460 million investment in our National Cultural Institutions and,
- €265 million for a national Culture and Creativity Investment Programme;
- €285 million towards a heritage investment programme; and,
- €178 million towards investment in our language, the Gaeltacht and the Islands.

My Department manages its annual capital expenditure in the context both these programmatic allocations and the 5-year multi-annual Departmental capital allocations outlined in Project Ireland 2040 - National Development Plan. Investment programmes and capital grant schemes progress on a multi-annual basis, while major capital projects are being undertaken as part of the National Cultural Institutions Investment Programme.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Further Revised Estimates for 2019 provides for a capital allocation for my Department of €73.8 million. This reflects a deferral of €2 million of capital expenditure from 2019 into 2020 through changes to the timing of payments relating to certain capital investment programmes operated by my Department. I am confident that the flow of liabilities maturing in 2019 will be managed in line with the resources available and that this deferral of expenditure will not impact on the overall delivery of the Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht elements of Project Ireland 2040.

No capital projects have been delayed to date and we continue to manage the flow of capital projects through the phases set out in the Public Spending Code. At present, two of our major capital projects have passed the detailed appraisal stage: a four-year redevelopment of the National Library of Ireland involving the upgrading of the East and West Wings of the Library, and the provision of a secure environmentally-controlled archival repository at the National Archives. The first phase of the National Library project, comprising 4,700 linear metres of storage and the movement of 350,000 volumes, was unveiled last month. Detailed plans have been prepared for the National Archives Repository Redevelopment and it is expected that this project will go to tender later this year.

Capital Expenditure Programme

965. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the capital projects which have commenced under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of her Department and agencies in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30915/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department has been allocated nearly €1.2 billion in capital expenditure over the course of the National Development Plan, 2018-2027, as part of Project Ireland 2040. To direct this investment, my Department has developed a detailed sectoral investment plan, Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage, which sets the high-level, strategic capital priorities for the Department from 2018 to 2027. This plan involves three types of investment activity; capital investment and infrastructure programmes, capital grant schemes and major capital projects.

The plan provides for an allocation of:

- €725 million towards enhancing our cultural infrastructure, incorporating,
- A €460 million investment in our National Cultural Institutions and,
- €265 million for a national Culture and Creativity Investment Programme;
- €285 million towards a heritage investment programme; and,
- €178 million towards investment in our language, the Gaeltacht and the Islands.

Capital projects under the plan are appraised, planned, implemented and evaluated in line with the Public Spending Code and best practice guidance outlined in the Capital Works Management Framework published by the Office of Government Procurement.

While the majority of capital projects under Project Ireland 2040 are moving through the early appraisal stage, two major capital projects have already commenced: a four-year redevelopment of the National Library of Ireland involving the upgrading of the East and West Wings of the Library, and the provision of secure environmentally-controlled archival repository at the National Archives. The National Archives project is being carried out in partnership with the Office of Public Works, and the National Library project with the Office of Public Works and the National Library.

The first phase of the National Library of Ireland redevelopment project, comprising the completion of a new book repository in the East Wing of the Library comprising 4,700 linear metres of storage and the movement of 350,000 volumes, was unveiled last month. Enabling works to prepare for the construction work at the National Archives was completed last month.

It is intended to undertake the tender for the National Archives Repository Redevelopment later this year.

National Cultural Institution	Lifecycle Phase	Commenced
National Library of Ireland	Construction	2018
National Archives	Pre-tender for main construction contract	2018

Capital Expenditure Programme

966. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if expenditure estimates for capital projects under Project Ireland 2040 under the remit of her Department and agencies match projected cost requirements in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30961/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department will invest some €1.2 million in capital expenditure as part of Project Ireland 2040 - the National Development Plan. To direct this investment, my Department has developed a detailed sectoral investment plan, Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage, which sets the high-level, strategic capital investment priorities for the Department from 2018 to 2027. The investment plan sets out three strands of activity, capital investment and infrastructure programmes, capital grant schemes and major capital projects, across the following programme areas:

- €725 million towards enhancing our cultural infrastructure, incorporating,
- A €460 million investment in our National Cultural Institutions and,
- €265 million for a national Culture and Creativity Investment Programme;
- €285 million towards a heritage investment programme; and,
- €178 million towards investment in our language, the Gaeltacht and the Islands.

My Department manages its annual capital expenditure in the context of both these programmatic allocations and the 5-year multi-annual Departmental capital allocations outlined in the National Development Plan. Investment programmes and capital grant schemes progress on a multi-annual basis, while major capital projects are being undertaken as part of the National Cultural Institutions Investment Programme.

Capital projects are appraised, planned, implemented and evaluated in line with the Public Spending Code and best practice guidance outlined in the Capital Works Management Framework published by the Office of Government Procurement.

Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage outlined indicative investment levels for capital projects in each of the National Cultural Institutions. These are not project budgets, but are rather intended to guide the scale and scope of proposed capital investment in each National Cultural Institution.

As provided for by the Public Spending Code and the Capital Works Management Framework, broad budgetary parameters are established and approved on the basis of the detailed appraisal of the capital project in question. Accordingly, it is not possible to provide an expenditure estimate until a detailed appraisal has been completed and budgetary parameters for the project in question have been approved. In line with the Capital Works Management Frame-

work, the project budget is assessed at key stages of the project lifecycle, including throughout the planning and design and implementation phases.

Given that the sites upon and buildings within which many of our National Cultural Institutions reside are themselves distinctive parts of our built and architectural heritage, capital works will necessarily be complex and significant investigation work will need to be undertaken to further establish the risks and costs association with each project. Moreover, it is important to ensure that the Institutions can, insofar as possible, remain open to the public throughout construction. Accordingly, a number of the capital projects at the National Cultural Institutions may be undertaken in discrete phases, to assist both planning, cost control and to ensure continuity of services to the public.

I have approved the detailed appraisals of two major capital projects within the National Cultural Institutions Investment Programme: a four-year redevelopment of the National Library of Ireland involving the upgrading of the East and West Wings of the Library, and the provision of secure environmentally-controlled archival repository at the National Archives. The National Archives project is being carried out in partnership with the Office of Public Works, and the National Library project with the Office of Public Works and the National Library.

The first phase of the National Library of Ireland redevelopment project, comprising the completion of a new book repository in the East Wing of the Library comprising 4,700 linear metres of storage and the movement of 350,000 volumes, was unveiled last month. The final cost of the first phase was broadly in line with the project budget.

It is intended to undertake the tender for the National Archives Repository Redevelopment later this year. Accordingly, the cost plan for the Redevelopment is currently under review following planning and design phase and prior to going to tender, in line with the requirements of the public spending code.

Heritage Sites

967. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she is still considering the purchase of an estate (details supplied); if so, the stage at which discussions are at; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31007/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The position of my Department with regard to estate referenced in details supplied remains unchanged. As has been stated in my previous responses, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has no direct role in the sale process of the estate in question as it is a commercial matter between the owners of the property and any parties interested in the purchase.

While the estate in question would be a significant addition to the Department's stock of publicly owned heritage lands, acquisition of this property could only be considered if the price fell to within a certain range, or in the context of a donation or bequest. This is known to the vendors.

It should be noted that in late 2016 the Department negotiated the extension of the Wicklow Mountains National Park by purchasing almost 4,900 acres of Dublin Uplands at Glenasmole at a cost of €800,000. The purchase underpins the Government's on-going commitment to the preservation of our natural heritage for future generations of citizens and visitors alike to enjoy.

I am aware that concerns have been raised regarding the use of the area by hillwalkers, climbers and the public in general. It should be noted that this Department has no statutory

function regarding the provision of access to private lands. However, the Estate has allowed a permissive access to its hugely popular walking route for many decades and the Department hopes that this would continue under any new ownership arrangements and the Department has conveyed this desire directly to the vendors and their agent.

Furthermore, the Estate has been an excellent neighbour to the National Park, working closely with it on habitat management and the promotion of our stunning Wicklow Mountains for tourism, film making and amenity. It is my wish that this close co-operation would continue too in future.

Capital Expenditure Programme

968. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of capital projects being undertaken by her Department; the final agreed tender price; the estimated cost of each capital project in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31071/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department has been allocated nearly €1.2 billion in capital expenditure under Project Ireland 2040 - National Development Plan, 2018-2027. To delivery on this investment, my Department has developed a detailed sectoral investment plan, Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage, which sets the high-level, strategic capital investment priorities for the Department from 2018 to 2027. This plan is being delivered through the following strands of activity: capital investment and infrastructure programmes, capital grant schemes and major capital projects.

The plan provides for an allocation of:

- €725 million towards enhancing our cultural infrastructure, incorporating,
- A €460 million investment in our National Cultural Institutions and,
- €265 million for a national Culture and Creativity Investment Programme;
- €285 million towards a heritage investment programme; and,
- €178 million towards investment in our language, the Gaeltacht and the Islands.

My Department manages its annual capital expenditure in the context of both these programmatic allocations and the 5-year multi-annual Departmental capital allocations outlined in the National Development Plan. Investment programmes and capital grant schemes progress on a multi-annual basis, while nine major capital projects are being undertaken as part of the National Cultural Institutions Investment Programme.

Capital projects are appraised, planned, implemented and evaluated in line with the Public Spending Code and best practice guidance outlined in the Capital Works Management Framework published by the Office of Government Procurement.

Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage outlined indicative investment levels for capital projects in each of the National Cultural Institutions. These are not project budgets, but are rather intended to guide the scale and scope of the proposed capital investment in each National Cultural Institution.

As provided for by the Public Spending Code and the Capital Works Management Framework, broad budgetary parameters are established and approved on the basis of the detailed ap-

praisal of the capital project in question. Accordingly, it is not possible to provide an estimated cost for a project until a detailed appraisal has been completed and budgetary parameters for the project in question have been approved. In line with the Capital Works Management Framework, the project budget is assessed at key stages of the project lifecycle, including throughout the planning and design and implementation phases.

Given the sites upon and buildings within which many of our National Cultural Institutions reside are themselves distinctive parts of our built and architectural heritage, capital works will necessarily be complex and significant investigation work will need to be undertaken to further establish the risks and costs association with each project. Moreover, it is important to ensure that the majority of the Institutions can, insofar as possible, remain open to the public throughout construction. Accordingly, a number of the capital projects at the National Cultural Institutions may be undertaken in discrete phases, to assist both planning, cost control and to ensure continuity of services to the public.

To date, I have approved the detailed appraisal of two major capital projects within the National Cultural Institutions Investment Programme: a four-year redevelopment of the National Library of Ireland involving the upgrading of the East and West Wings of the Library, and the provision of secure environmentally-controlled archival repository at the National Archives. The National Archives project is being carried out in partnership with the Office of Public Works, and the National Library project with the Office of Public Works and the National Library.

The first phase of the National Library of Ireland redevelopment project, comprising the completion of a new book repository in the East Wing of the Library comprising 4,700 linear metres of storage and the movement of 350,000 volumes, was unveiled last month.

It is intended to undertake the tender for the National Archives Repository Redevelopment later this year.

The table below outlines the indicative allocation for each capital project currently being undertaken (indicating the broad budgetary parameters provided following the completion of a detailed appraisal under the Public Spending Code) and related contract sums.

National Cultural Institution	Indicative allocation	Contract Sum
National Library of Ireland	€23m	€1.618m in relation to contracts for phase 1
National Archives	€22m	€0.309m for enabling works. Main contract to go to tender in 2019.

A number of other projects under the National Cultural Institutions programme are currently progressing through the appraisals stages under the Public Spending Code including the Crawford Art Gallery, the Natural History Museum, the National Concert Hall, the National Gallery of Ireland and the Abbey Theatre.

Capital Expenditure Programme

969. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the capital projects completed since 2010; the final agreed tender price for each project; the actual cost of each project; if the actual cost exceeded the tender price; the reason therefor in each case in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31087/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): As previously advised to the House in response to Dáil Question No. 283 of 14th February last the information requested by the Deputy in relation to the capital projects valued in excess of €10m completed by my Department since its establishment in 2011 is set out in the following table.

Project	Initial Contract Value	Final Cost
Phase 3 of the Master Development Plan of the National Gallery of Ireland including refurbishment of the Dargan and Milltown Wings (Completed in 2017)	€31.4m	€31.7m subject to final account
Cill Rónáin Harbour Development (Completed 2011)	€44.1m	€46.5m

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is not possible to provide a final outturn cost where work is ongoing on establishing the final account.

In April 2018, I was pleased to announce details of the ten year plan, “Investing in Our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 - 2027” setting out the Government’s commitment for capital investment of almost €1.2 billion in Ireland’s culture, heritage and language infrastructure as part of Project Ireland 2040 and I can assure the House that capital projects are appraised, planned, implemented and evaluated in line with the Public Spending Code and best practice guidance outlined in the Capital Works Management framework published by the Office of Government Procurement.

Architectural Heritage

970. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the level of protections and supports available to a local community which is anxious to preserve and continue to use a historic community and former school building (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31152/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My role, as Minister, with regard to the protection and management of our built heritage is set out in the provisions of relevant legislation, including the Planning Acts and the National Monuments Acts, as are the role of local authorities and the responsibilities of owners.

Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, gives primary responsibility to planning authorities to identify and protect the architectural heritage by including particular structures on their Record of Protected Structures. Inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures places a duty of care on the owners and occupiers of protected structures and also gives planning authorities powers to deal with development proposals affecting them and to seek to safeguard their future.

The building in question is recorded in my Department’s National Inventory of Architectural Heritage as being of Regional Importance, qualifying it for recommendation to the local authority for inclusion in its Record of Protected Structures.

My Department provides financial support for the protection of heritage buildings and historic structures through the Historic Structures Fund (HSF), formerly the Structures at Risk Fund and the Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS), which are administered by local au-

thorities. This year I have allocated €1.824m and €2.5m respectively to these schemes. Details of these projects and funding, and the criteria by which they are assessed, are available on my Department's website and local authority websites. While the closing dates for applications have now passed, my Department will remain in close contact with local authorities throughout the year to ensure the best possible use is made of all funds, including by reallocating funds where certain projects do not proceed within agreed timeframes.

In the context of a particular building or historic structure, the best advice is generally to contact the Heritage Officer or Architectural Conservation Officer in the local authority who is well placed to advise on the various types of funding available to assist with its renovation or conservation.

Wildlife Protection

971. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 777 of 25 June 2019, if her Department has responsibility for and/or an obligation under its statutory responsibilities for species and habitat management to take a proactive role in the protection of fauna from harmful levels of predation by other species. [31226/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department has a role in relation to the conservation of habitats and species which is achieved in part through the designation of Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Natural Heritage Areas under European and national legislation. My Department works with farmers, other landowners and users, and national and local authorities, to achieve the best balance possible between farming and land-use on the one hand, and requirements for conserving nature in these selected areas, on the other. Details of these conservation areas are provided in the website of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of my Department at <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites>. My Department has also a role in relation to the conservation of habitats and species under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 and the Wildlife Acts 2016 to 2018.

As outlined in my reply to Parliamentary Question No. 777 of 25 June 2019, there is a facility under Section 42 of the Wildlife Acts whereby permission may be obtained on a case by case basis, to prevent serious damage caused by certain animals and species and such damage could include damage to other fauna.

Wildlife Rangers

972. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 777 of 25 June 2019, if wildlife rangers have raised the issue of the negative impacts of urban seagulls on other fauna or reported same to her Department in relation to St. Stephen's Green and or Marlay Park. [31227/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Officials of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department have not raised any such issues.

Wildlife Control

973. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

further to Parliamentary Question No. 777 of 25 June 2019, if she has received reports of negative impacts of urban seagulls on persons since 2016 in relation to St. Stephen's Green and Grafton Street. [31228/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department received one item of correspondence in relation to the impact of seagulls in the St. Stephen's Green/Grafton Street area in Dublin for the period question.

Departmental Legal Services

974. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if Dublin City Council consulted her Department in regard to the legal advice as read to council members at the debate held by the council on 12 June 2017 in relation to urban seagulls; and if so, if copies of the request by the council for the legal advice and a copy of the advice given to the council by her Department will be provided. [31229/19]

975. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the reason advice (details supplied) did not include points relevant to the deliberations of the council concerning her legal power to issue derogations and licences to legally permit the removal of nests and eggs and the well established precedents and practice in her Department. [31230/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 974 and 975 together.

My Department has no record of providing any such advice nor indeed of any such consultation. Deliberations at local authority meetings are not within the ambit of my Department, nor does my Department provide legal advice to Local Authorities.

Criminal Prosecutions Data

976. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of convictions under the Wildlife Acts in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [31315/19]

977. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of convictions under the Heritage Act 2018 to date. [31316/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 976 and 977 together.

There were 30 successful prosecution cases taken by my Department under the Wildlife Acts, which incorporate relevant provisions in the Heritage Act 2018, for the period 2016 to date. A yearly breakdown is as follows:

- In 2016, 9 successful prosecutions
- In 2017, 8 successful prosecutions
- In 2018, 11 successful prosecutions and
- To date in 2019, 2 successful prosecutions

These prosecutions cover a variety of offenses under the Wildlife Acts including destruction of vegetation, illegal hare and duck hunting, the laying of poison and the sale of illegal traps.

Departmental Communications

978. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the oversight of her Department of directives, circulars, advice or requirements issued since 2016; if surveys have been carried out of compliance with these communications to date; the surveys carried out; the results of the surveys; the compliance rate; the actions taken by her Department following these results; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31321/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): As the Deputy will be aware, in addition to their statutory responsibilities, both my Department and those bodies under its aegis are subject to normal Civil and Public Service Governance practices and procedures across all areas of operations including Corporate Governance, Finance, Human Resources, Procurement etc. and are also subject to audit by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

As such it is standard practice that directives, circulars, advice or requirements issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, or other Government Departments or Agencies in relation to matters under their remit, are brought to the attention of Department staff and the management of bodies under the remit of the Department. The Department will also on occasion develop and issue internal guidance to management and staff to assist in achieving compliance with operating policies.

Compliance with Civil and Public Service policies and procedures, including internal Department policies is subject ongoing and periodic monitoring and review by line management and the Department's Evaluation Unit and Internal Audit Unit in keeping with the Department's Governance Framework. Similar controls are in operation in those bodies under its aegis, and my Department continues to engage with the management of those bodies to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

Climate Change Policy

979. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the recurring weekly meetings attended by either her or the Secretary General of her Department in 2019 at which climate change and or preparations within her Department to enact a climate plan has been an agenda item; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31337/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I am briefed on a regular basis by senior officials in relation to climate action initiatives in my Department and on biodiversity initiatives with a climate action impact. I have published for consultation two draft climate adaptation plans - one on built heritage, and one on natural heritage and I intend to complete these plans on time for final publication by the end of September 2019.

My Department has had significant input into the Climate Action Plan published by my colleague Minister Bruton and I met with him recently to discuss the details of that contribution.

In February this year, I hosted the first National Biodiversity conference and I am currently promoting the 40 Seeds for Nature initiative arising from the conference. Many of these Seeds

have a significant climate action impact, and I am regularly briefed on the progress of this initiative.

The Secretary General of my Department is a member of the Climate Action Delivery Board, comprising Secretaries General from Departments responsible for the delivery of actions outlined in the Climate Action Plan. The Delivery Board will ensure an effective whole of Government delivery of the Plan and will report on progress in implementing the Plan on a quarterly basis to the Cabinet Committee and the Government.

In summary, and given the important links between climate action, biodiversity and nature conservation, both myself and the Secretary General are in regular contact with relevant officials, and my Department is progressing climate action and biodiversity policies as a core component of its remit in the heritage area in particular.

Foreshore Licence Applications

980. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if an application for funding from Donegal County Council to complete a foreshore licence application for Rannagh Pier, Arranmore Island, County Donegal has been received; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31354/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): I can confirm that my Department recently received an application for funding from Donegal County Council in relation to the development of Rannagh Pier, Árainn Mhór, County Donegal.

My officials are currently examining this application and a decision will be made in due course. It is important to restate that, as with all such projects, the Rannagh Pier development will have to be examined under the terms of the Public Spending Code and in the context of the funding available for island infrastructure development and the various demands on that funding.